



# Provincial Agricultural Land Commission - Applicant Submission

**Application ID:** 59968

**Application Status:** In Progress

**Applicant:** Choice School for Gifted Children Society

**Agent:** Choice School for Gifted Children Society

**Local Government:** City of Richmond

**Local Government Date of Receipt:** This application has not been submitted to local government yet.

**ALC Date of Receipt:** This application has not been submitted to ALC yet.

**Proposal Type:** Non-Farm Use

**Proposal:** This application proposal is to exempt the current ALC agricultural restrictions on this 0.88 Acre parcel to bring it into conformance with its long-standing City of Richmond ASY zoning. Choice School for Gifted Children Society was established in 1985 as a Not-For-Profit Society which has operated the School on this parcel since 1992 and has owned the property since 1997. Our society also owns the adjacent west parcel, which we use for our school playground, septic field and gravelled parking lot.

Choice is an independent school designated by the BC Ministry of Education as a Special Education School. Although we provide an education for gifted students, the majority of our students are often referred to as twice exceptional, a term used to describe a child who is both exceptionally able, but also has learning difficulties or a disability and presents a very complex profile. Such physical or emotional disabilities, or autism, require specialist teachers and support staff to respond to their twice exceptional nature. The school is 40% funded by the Ministry of Education and 60% from fees paid by our student families. Most of our families were not seeking a private education for their child, but after a realization that the public school system was not able to provide adequate support for their circumstances they sought us out. Due to the unique education service we provide, the school enrolment has steadily increased over the years and we have now reached the capacity of our existing buildings with the current enrolment of 73 students. Consequently, in January 2019, our society embarked on a project to add a 1500 sq ft modular building to the parcel which would provide classroom spaces for up to 30 new students. The existing long-standing ASY city zoning allows up to 3,300 sq ft of additional building space. However, before accepting a building permit application for the modular building, the City of Richmond requires a letter from the ALC confirming if any agricultural restrictions apply to the parcel. After requesting and receiving such a letter from the ALC (ALC Inquiry Ref. 51574, letter dated September 30th, 2019), our society was surprised to learn that despite this parcel's long standing City of Richmond ASY zoning and previously received Building Permits, agricultural land restrictions do apply to this parcel. To resolve this ALC restrictions versus historical zoning anomaly, and allow us to progress our building permit application, the ALC and the City recommended that we submit an application for Non-Farm Use.

Relevant to this application is the fact that the school also owns the adjacent west parcel which is free of any agricultural restrictions (ALC Inquiry Ref. 51575, letter dated September 30th, 2019). However, the property is in the ALR, zoned by the city as AG1 and currently houses our school playing field, septic field and a portion of our gravel parking lot. Recognizing that this lot is not subject to any ALC restrictions but is historically zoned AG1, as part of this application, our society is looking forward to working with the City of Richmond to find a solution to bring its use into conformance with AG1 zoning. Richmond Planning has suggested that a farm use complimentary to childhood education such as fruit and vegetable growing may be favourably viewed for the current use of the site.

Since 1992, these two properties on Westminster Highway have been a critical part of our school's success in helping close to two thousand young children achieve educational goals. With this in mind we respectfully request support for this application to allow us to move forward with our modular building project and allow us to educate additional gifted and twice-exceptional students from Richmond and the

Lower Mainland.

## Agent Information

**Agent:** Choice School for Gifted Children Society

**Mailing Address:**

62 Summer Place

Delta, BC

V4M 3Y6

Canada

**Primary Phone:** (604) 943-7098

**Mobile Phone:** (604) 961-3517

**Email:** philip\_gray@telus.net

## Parcel Information

### Parcel(s) Under Application

1. **Ownership Type:** Fee Simple

**Parcel Identifier:** 003-934-268

**Legal Description:** L 78 SEC 4 BK 4 NORTH R 4 W NEW WESTMINSTER DISTRICT PL 1593

**Parcel Area:** 0.4 ha

**Civic Address:** 20451 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC

**Date of Purchase:** 08/07/1997

**Farm Classification:** Yes

**Owners**

1. **Name:** Choice School for Gifted Children Society

**Address:**

20451 Westminster Highway

Richmond, BC

V6V 1B3

Canada

**Phone:** (604) 273-2418

**Cell:** (604) 961-3517

**Email:** info@choiceschool.org

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## Ownership or Interest in Other Lands Within This Community

1. **Ownership Type:** Fee Simple

**Parcel Identifier:** 003-937-160

**Owner with Parcel Interest:** Choice School for Gifted Children Society

**Parcel Area:** 0.3 ha

**Land Use Type:** Other

**Interest Type:** Full Ownership

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## Current Use of Parcels Under Application

1. **Quantify and describe in detail all agriculture that currently takes place on the parcel(s).**

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None.

**2. Quantify and describe in detail all agricultural improvements made to the parcel(s).**

None

**3. Quantify and describe all non-agricultural uses that currently take place on the parcel(s).**

*The parcel is zoned ASY by the City of Richmond and currently houses an independent school campus. The main school structure was originally built as a church circa 1980 and remodelled to a school in circa 1992. At that time a second building was constructed on the parcel housing a school gymnasium and classroom space. The original main building construction and subsequent remodelling in 1980 and 1992 respectively, together with the gymnasium building was constructed under City of Richmond building permits.*

**Adjacent Land Uses**

**North**

**Land Use Type:** Other

**Specify Activity:** Cranberry Processing Factory - Ocean Spray of Canada

**East**

**Land Use Type:** Commercial / Retail

**Specify Activity:** Commercial Crane Rental Business - Reliable Equipment Rentals Ltd.

**South**

**Land Use Type:** Transportation/Utilities

**Specify Activity:** Highway 91

**West**

**Land Use Type:** Other

**Specify Activity:** Choice School Playing Field

**Proposal**

**1. How many hectares are proposed for non-farm use?**

0.4 ha

**2. What is the purpose of the proposal?**

*This application proposal is to exempt the current ALC agricultural restrictions on this 0.88 Acre parcel to bring it into conformance with it's long-standing City of Richmond ASY zoning. Choice School for Gifted Children Society was established in 1985 as a Not-For-Profit Society which has operated the School on this parcel since 1992 and has owned the property since 1997. Our society also owns the adjacent west parcel, which we use for our school playground, septic field and gravelled parking lot. Choice is an independent school designated by the BC Ministry of Education as a Special Education School. Although we provide an education for gifted students, the majority of our students are often referred to as twice exceptional, a term used to describe a child who is both exceptionally able, but also has learning difficulties or a disability and presents a very complex profile. Such physical or emotional disabilities, or autism, require specialist teachers and support staff to respond to their twice exceptional nature. The school is 40% funded by the Ministry of Education and 60% from fees paid by our student families. Most of our families were not seeking a private education for their child, but after a realization that the public school system was not able to provide adequate support for their circumstances they*

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sought us out. Due to the unique education service we provide, the school enrolment has steadily increased over the years and we have now reached the capacity of our existing buildings with the current enrolment of 73 students. Consequently, in January 2019, our society embarked on a project to add a 1500 sq ft modular building to the parcel which would provide classroom spaces for up to 30 new students. The existing long-standing ASY city zoning allows up to 3,300 sq ft of additional building space. However, before accepting a building permit application for the modular building, the City of Richmond requires a letter from the ALC confirming if any agricultural restrictions apply to the parcel. After requesting and receiving such a letter from the ALC (ALC Inquiry Ref. 51574, letter dated September 30th, 2019), our society was surprised to learn that despite this parcel's long standing City of Richmond ASY zoning and previously received Building Permits, agricultural land restrictions do apply to this parcel. To resolve this ALC restrictions versus historical zoning anomaly, and allow us to progress our building permit application, the ALC and the City recommended that we submit an application for Non-Farm Use.

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### **3. Could this proposal be accommodated on lands outside of the ALR? Please justify why the proposal cannot be carried out on lands outside the ALR.**

It would be impractical, disruptive and unaffordably expensive for the school to operate a satellite classroom space on land outside the ALR. We are aware that a satellite campus was established in the past but proved to be unsustainable and failed. Due to our relatively small number of gifted and twice exceptional students, and to optimize the teaching and specialist support and therapy staff across the whole student body, the school operates a fine tuned daily schedule for education, support and therapy. Classes and group and individual therapy sessions are interleaved throughout the school day, all within our compact campus. Addressing a group of students in a satellite location with all their educational and individual support and therapy requirements would involve the need to either hire additional staff, or to inefficiently and disruptively move staff and/or students between locations. A key reason for the school's success is the sense of safety, connection and community that the school offers to students. Many of our students have social-emotional needs such as high anxiety and challenges interacting with others. In the supportive culture of our multi-age school community, they are able to learn and thrive. This effect would be lessened significantly if the students were split up and not learning together. Consequently, the society does not see any practical, effective or affordable way to operated a satellite campus while continuing to provide for the unique needs of each individual student. Also, utilizing a satellite campus for our enrolment expansion would do nothing towards resolving the current conflict between the city zoning of ASY versus the agricultural restrictions currently in force on this parcel. The society believes the only practical and affordable way to increase our enrolment is to add a modular classroom unit on this parcel.

### **4. Does the proposal support agriculture in the short or long term? Please explain.**

Other than a commitment from the society to explore conformance options with the City for our directly adjacent west parcel, agriculture is not supported on the parcel directly addressed by this proposal. This does not represent any change from the historical use of this parcel since its original ASY zoning and from 1980 when the original church building was erected and subsequently converted to a school in 1992. All this, since 1980, in conformance with City of Richmond Building Permits.

### **5. Do you need to import any fill to construct or conduct the proposed Non-farm use?**

No

## **Applicant Attachments**

- Agent Agreement - Choice School for Gifted Children Society
- Proposal Sketch - 59968
- Certificate of Title - 003-934-268

## **ALC Attachments**

None.

## **Decisions**

None.