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To: AASHE STARS Committee

Dear STARS Committee Members,

This letter is in support of the University of Victoria's STARS Innovation Credit for Leadership in Sustainable Food Procurement Practices.

Our company, Islands West Produce, is a wholesale produce and distribution company servicing southern Vancouver Island. Since 1986, we have worked closely with the food purchasing staff at UVic to source and provide a reliable supply of locally grown produce whenever possible. This has included developing relationships with local farmers and encouraging them to grow produce that is in demand by this very large institutional purchaser. On several occasions both the individual farmers and the head of the Saanich Vegetable sellers co-op have commented on how much they appreciate those who wholeheartedly support local growers and companies. It should be noted that when the season allows some of the farms that are growing produce used by UVic are truly their neighbors, with the closest being less than 5km away. Since UVic prepares all its own meals in the student dining areas, restaurants and catering services, it creates a strong demand for fresh produce in large quantities, at stable prices. Servicing this demand can be challenging, but also very rewarding for both Islands West and the farms that we work with throughout the year. In addition to the fresh produce that we deliver daily to UVic we are also proud to supply fresh baked bread from our sister company Portofino Bakery. Also located within minutes of UVic Portofino provides fresh baked products that are all locally made in Victoria using locally grown wheat whenever possible. UVic has demonstrated a clear understanding of the need for support of local business, growers and the overall reduced carbon footprint associated with minimizing the distance from farm to plate. Dedication to these responsible purchasing decisions has substantial impact throughout the community and environment and should be applauded.

I am proud of our relationship with UVic and how the university is committed to supporting local businesses. And I am pleased that we can be part of UVic's success and drive for a STARS Gold rating.

Yours truly,

Richard Aspden
Vice President