



My name is Jacqueline Ingram and I'm the spokesperson for the B.C. Herdshare Association, a legal non-profit society. It's been a while since you have heard what our activities and progress have been; this newsletter will bring you up to speed about what's happening in B.C. regarding legalising Herdshares.

When asked if I would take on this challenge I said yes because, after I reviewed what was (or was not) happening in B.C., I felt that the battles that were playing out across Canada and B.C. could only ever be won through negotiation in a boardroom and **not** a courtroom. A logical, political and collaborative approach with the government in power would be the only way I could see the success of legalising herdshares in BC as a viable option.

Twenty-seven years ago, your right to drink, buy, and collect raw milk was rather ungraciously taken away from you and all British Columbians by the B.C. government. Only when farmers tried to build a herdshare did they find themselves facing health inspectors with cease-and-desist letters.

Having spent some time talking and meeting with raw milk farmers in B.C., I thought it best to share some of their questions with you:

**What meetings and phone calls have you had with the government?** This journey began when I was fortunate to have a one-on-one conversation at a restaurant with our premier Christy Clark a few years ago and to this day I will never know exactly how that came about.

Since then, we have had various meetings and phone calls. We have suggested new regulation documents, presented detailed research papers, showed the

excellent test results that our BCHA trained agisters are achieving (zero pathogens and fewer bacteria than the standard for post-pasteurized milk on grocery stores shelves) and submitted a brilliant recent new paper by Nadine Ijaz, new research and evidence, which until now was missing.

**Do I believe in what we are doing?** Yes I do, but it's not going to happen overnight

**Why I am doing this?** Because it is the right thing to do.

**What results have we got so far?** A positive dialogue with both the Ministries of Agriculture and Health. In May 2014, we brought both Ministries together in one meeting. In twenty-six years, that has never happened before regarding this issue.

**How will this proceed?** Slowly. One step at a time

**In what time period?** We estimate that change will take at least a year. It would be unwise to say that twenty-six years after banning raw milk as a health hazard in B.C., (the only province in the only country in the world where milk its classed as a health hazard) that the law can swiftly be removed.

What follows is an article giving more detail on the advocacy activities, which BCHA has done on your behalf. This is just the beginning of a process, and we hope that you will join with us, to have a voice and play a role in making change happen.

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# Advocating for the Herdshare Community: A Progress Report

Before BCHA was founded in June 2014, the [raw milk community was surveyed](#) to find out what services members wanted their new organization to provide. The answer was **Support, Education, and Advocacy**.

In July 2014, BCHA started its Advocacy program, to initiate dialogue with decision-makers about changing the laws, which make raw milk illegal in B.C. In July 2014, we wrote to [Minister of Health Dr. Terry Lake](#): *"We would like to request 10 minutes of your time, at your convenience, to discuss some ideas we would like to present for renewing and updating the regulation of unprocessed milk and dairy products. Our organization would like to talk about ways in which this safe, healthy, nutritious product could be provided legally to those consumers who wish to access it."*

In August 2014, a staff person responded, stating that the Minister was going to be extremely busy over the next few months, and a meeting wasn't possible "at this time." We asked if there were others in the Ministry who might be available, and a meeting took place in November 2014 with an assistant deputy minister and an executive director, to establish a dialogue where none had existed before.

Our presentation to them included information on the history of the B.C. law (the only law of its type in Canada), a map showing American states with legal herdshares and/or sales, the impact of a "cease and desist" order on farmers, and the excellent milk sample test results that our trained farmers achieve.

The concerns they expressed in response were all about safety, and they said **in order to consider legalization, our agisters would have to have training in a food safety program**, which they want all farmers in the province to learn anyway. **There had to be standards for bacteria counts, and zero pathogens in the milk. And there had to be some sort of licensing or registration of herdshares.**

We asked for a moratorium on the enforcement actions that health authorities are taking against herdshares, and they responded that no moratoriums would be granted as long as there were court cases against government.

In October 2014, we met with [Minister of Agriculture Norm Letnick](#), who told us what we would need to do in order for them to look at updating Ministry of Agriculture laws to legalize herdshares: Not to try to find loop-holes, but to work through the process to change the law. He also directed us to meet with the B.C. Dairy Association, which represents commercial dairy farmers.

Meeting then with B.C. Dairy, we learned that they want to see training and certification of our agisters, similar to

[Canadian Quality Milk program](#) training, which is mandatory for their own members.

We met again with the Ministry of Health in January 2015 to continue discussion. They stated that in order to change the law, they need empirical evidence that raw milk can be produced safely. We showed them more of our agisters' test results and a research proposal that a B.C. research university was interested in carrying out. The meeting seemed to end on a positive note, with willingness to meet again and work together to find a solution.

A May 2015 meeting brought together the two Ministries of Health and Agriculture. We assumed that productive dialogue would continue, but something had changed. They started the meeting with two messages: (1) No further dialogue would occur as long as there was a civil suit against government (*Jongerden vs. the Province of B.C.*) and (2) a briefing paper about raw milk safety had informed them that, all the academic research says that it is too dangerous to legalize. **Their position is that if we want the law changed, we need to provide peer-reviewed academic evidence stating otherwise.**

We were able to inform them that we had received news that the court case had been dropped. We also told them that we would indeed be able to present them at a later date with this evidence, as studies were ongoing to provide this proof.

**To sum up: What would be necessary for the *Health Hazards Regulation* to be changed to legalize herdshares is:**

- A training and certification program for agisters
- Bacteriological standards and regular testing.
- Provide evidence that farm-fresh, unprocessed milk can be produced safely.
- No more lawsuits.

There is still a lot of dialogue that needs to happen, a lot of work our community needs to do, before the law is changed. This means, not only BCHA talking with government, but also, members of the community meeting with their local MLA's to educate them and win their support for changing the laws, and writing to government to ask them to change the law. More agisters need to be trained and start testing, to provide the evidence of safety we need. We can all play an important role in getting this law changed.



## Mark McAfee's Visit to BC

In September 2014, BCHA hosted Mark McAfee, spokesperson for the [Raw Milk Institute \(RAWMI\)](#) and CEO of [Organic Pastures Dairy](#), on a short visit to British Columbia to visit with farmers and speak to the public. We thank all of you for patience with us "learning the ropes" with our first invited guest.

Mark visited farmers, spoke to a class of students and gave a public talk at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, gave a public talk at the University of Victoria, and met with professors at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops.

You can watch a video recording of his UVic talk, "The New Science of Farm-Fresh, Unprocessed Milk: Does It Still Constitute a Health Hazard?" [on our website](#). Many thanks to [Saanich Voice Online](#) for their videography.

## "Grass to Glass" Fresh Milk Training Agisters - help change the law in BC!

The message from government is that in order for raw milk to be legalized, our agisters must prove that they can produce a safe product, that it is not a "health hazard."

In 1988, the original *Health Hazard Regulation* (now Clause 2(a) of the *Health Hazards Regulation*) was passed with **NO** evidence to support it and **NO** consultations with members of our community.

But governments are changing the way they do things, and "evidence-based decision-making" is the new trend. So – ironically– the herdshare community, must now ourselves provide the evidence to government that farm-fresh milk is not a health hazard, if we want to get this law changed.

There is a way that way our community can achieve this. Compiling test results from milk produced by BC farms can provide the proof that farm-fresh, unprocessed milk is not a "health hazard."

The more herdshares participate, the more evidence our community can provide. Government is listening.

If you are a farmer producing farm-fresh, unprocessed milk for direct consumption, we invited you to participate in this project.

BCHA will provide you with free "Grass to Glass" training and ongoing mentoring. We will arrange confidential and convenient testing for your samples. Your test results will be gathered along with those of other farms, to provide the proof our community needs. And, we will be asking government for a moratorium, for farms which are participating in this project to be protected from receiving cease-and-desist orders and other legal action from health authorities until the law is changed.

Please email BCHA at [contact@bcherdshare.org](mailto:contact@bcherdshare.org) or call 1-800-983-7749 if you are interested in participating in this important project

**Fact: There are 43 licensed farms\* and over 100 stores legally selling raw milk in Washington State.**

\* Source: WA State Department of Agriculture

# We need your help! BCHA needs people and funding!

In early 2014, the herdshare community of B.C. formed the B.C. Herdshare Association, to represent the community and do as a group what individuals cannot do alone. In its first year, the BCHA was able to obtain five meetings with the B.C. Government to lobby for changing the law to legalize raw milk.

The government defined their conditions for changing the law: We must **repeal clause 2(a)** of the [Health Hazards Regulation](#); and **standardize practice**. BCHA can achieve these things.

## Repeal the Clause

We must present government with peer reviewed academic evidence, stating that raw milk is not dangerous to legalize, in order to repeal clause 2(a) of the Health Hazards Regulation. This step is well on its way. We have distributed our research proposal to B.C. Universities and they have shown interest with support for our objectives. The pilot project analyzing the microbial content of the milk has been completed, and we are in discussion with academic partners to scale up. View results of the pilot project at <http://tinyurl.com/bcfm-test-results> Now, we need funding and volunteers to make it happen. We appreciate any and all donations. BCHA volunteer positions still needed are listed below. We invite B.C. agisters and raw milk farmers, to participate in this exciting project. Make history and take part to help us change this law! Find out how your herdshare can be involved in the study by emailing [contact@bcherdshare.org](mailto:contact@bcherdshare.org)

## Standardize Practice

In all other countries and U.S. states where raw milk is legalized, it is tightly regulated with licensing, testing standards, registration of farms, etc. In Canada, all food sectors are under the control of laws such as B.C.'s [Natural Products Marketing Act](#), which gives the provincial government control over all food produced in the province, even privately. Various boards are set up under this Act and supervised by the [Farm Industry Review Board](#) (FIRB). Currently, ALL milk in B.C. is under the control of the B.C. Milk Marketing Board (BCMMB) under FIRB supervision. Unless we want raw milk to remain under BCMMB's supply-management quota system control, a new "herdshare regulation" needs to be passed under this Act to allow the herdshare community to **self-regulate** and follow **free-market principles**.

To meet this objective, BCHA is already providing free "[Grass to Glass](#)" training to agisters and is compiling test results from trained agisters to provide evidence of safety.

BCHA could become an independent certification body operated by the herdshare community itself -- an alternative to fresh milk being under supply-managed, quota-system B.C. Milk Marketing Board control.

As you can see, the outlook is positive. We are closer to our goal, but we need your help.

## Can you help us meet this goal?

### Volunteer Positions Available:

- **An outreach coordinator** to reach out to herdshares province-wide, listen to their concerns, find out their needs, and thus enable to BCHA to better serve and represent them.
- **VP Fundraising** to oversee fundraising and marketing activities.
- **Writers for Newsletter** to write content and issue regular newsletters.

If you can help at all please email Rick House at [rick.house@bcherdshare.org](mailto:rick.house@bcherdshare.org)

### We need to raise funds for:

- **A spokesperson to represent us to the media and government.**
- **A trainer** to bring our "Glass to Grass" training program to agisters province-wide.
- **Research Project** to fund milk testing and transporting milk samples from farm-to-lab.

To make a donation go to <http://www.bcherdshare.org>