



## Cabinet Concept Paper

**Ministry:** Agriculture

**Date:** 07/10/2013

s.12

Pages 2 through 3 redacted for the following reasons:

-----

s.12

## MINISTRY OF ENERGY MINES AND MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR CORE REVIEW

### BRIEFING NOTE

**Date:** October 27, 2013

**Topic:** Meeting with Adam Olsen, Interim Leader Green Party

**Issue:** Meeting requested by Adam Olsen regarding the core review of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC).

#### **Background:**

- Adam Olsen presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on October 2, 2013.
- In his statement he made the following points:
  - He has four or five years' history with the agricultural land reserve as a resident of Central Saanich. "It's not perfect. There are lots of issues with it. I don't mind having a discussion about it."
  - "I'm hoping that in coming years the direction of this government will be to strengthen the ALR and the ALC within its current mandate to preserve agricultural land and to encourage farm business. The industry of agriculture could be very profitable for this province."
  - "I encourage the government to reinvest in enforcement and to limit the non-agricultural activities on agricultural land that have been increasing over the past few years. The ALC and the ALR do a great job of protecting the zoning. It has not addressed the economics of farming, and that's what we've struggled with in Central Saanich."
- He was particularly concerned that there be a public consultation process, and consultation process with municipalities, if government is to look at changes to the Agricultural Land Commission. He expressed frustration with the apparent confusion on whether the Select Standing Committee would hear feedback on the core review of the ALC.

#### **Discussion:**

- The Select Standing Committee did accept feedback from all presenters. Key questions on the efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and services were included from the beginning of the consultation process.
- There will be other opportunities for the public and key stakeholders to give feedback as core review progresses.

- 
- Regarding the Agricultural Land Commission:
    - This government is committed to protecting high quality agricultural land.
    - The overarching goal of the core review process is to ensure the best possible use of government resources and respect for the interests of taxpayers.
    - It is important to understand that no decisions have been made and we are open to hearing ideas.
    - Minister Pimm did an extensive tour of the province in the summer and received feedback on the mandate and options of the ALC.

---

Prepared by: Kim Henderson

Approved by: Kim Henderson

## Ferguson, Susan M MEM:EX

---

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Friday, August 16, 2013 10:08 AM  
**To:** MEM Correspondence MEM:EX  
**Subject:** FW: A Letter in Support of Your Review of the ALR / ALC

For appropriate action

---

From: Bennett.MLA, Bill [mailto:Bill.Bennett.MLA@leg.bc.ca]  
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2013 7:57 AM  
To: Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
Subject: FW: A Letter in Support of Your Review of the ALR / ALC

---

**From** s.22  
**Sent:** August 14, 2013 1:55 AM  
**To:** Bennett.MLA, Bill  
**Subject:** A Letter in Support of Your Review of the ALR / ALC

Dear Mr. Bennett,

I'm writing this in **FULL** support of your review of the ALR / ALC. I'm so glad that our Premier has put you in charge of reviewing a program that absolutely, 100%, needs to be reviewed, reworked, reconsidered.

I know that at the moment, you're seeking to provide some help and support for land owners in the East Kootenays who are hamstrung by the ALR and I sure hope you're able to get them some relief from what I've read to be incredibly irrational and illogical decisions made by the ALC, especially regarding land, as has been described, that "never should have been in the ALR in the first place."

If you can indulge me, I just want to tell you about s.22 our own struggles with having land in the ALR.

s.22 just as the ALR was  
being implemented. s.22 were not aware at all and  
had no information about the ALR, about the politics around the ALR, or any sense of how buying farmland in BC was going to condemn them to a life of agricultural servitude. s.22 came from a farming family in Saskatchewan, they had just s.22 and they parlayed that money into the purchase of small orchard in s.22

s.22 and they are still working the orchard!!! (In spite of their age and all their physical ailments, which are numerous.) According to the ALR rules, as you know, if they don't generate enough income off the orchard, (\$2500.00 / yr) they will lose farm status for property tax purposes and they just wouldn't be able to afford that, so they continue to slave away, growing fruit and veggies and selling them from the yard, working so incredibly hard all growing season, just to generate the minimum in farm sales each year. s.22 y and I have to come back to s.22 to help with the pruning in the winter / spring, thinning in the summer, and picking in the fall, just to keep the farm running, as they can't manage all that work and can't afford to hire someone to do it. Hence,

my "working holidays at home."

Here is a summary of how the ALR has been so frustrating for us, as a family...

1. s.22

s.22

it was replanted with high density apples or cherries, might be around \$50,000.00 a year (if very lucky) before expenses!!! And, to make matters worse, once you deduct expenses, there's also:

- the threat of bugs, diseases, hail! (like we had in s.22 yesterday) ruining one's crop each year.

- no health or dental benefits for a farmer and his family.

- no pension plan.

- difficulty finding local labour to assist with any of the orchard necessities (pruning, thinning, picking)

Many of the big, local orchardists are bringing in hundreds of workers from Mexico and elsewhere

abroad to help. One can't afford to do that with s.22

2. And even if s.22 did decide to move to the orchard to s.22 we're not even allowed to build a 2nd home on the orchard! (Heaven forbid a farm family be allowed to have 2 homes on a piece of property, that might mean that a farmer down the road might actually make a little extra money selling a 2nd home ..now that wouldn't be right, would it?)

3. Renting out the orchard is a possibility but that comes with all kinds of hazards that most people have little understanding of or can appreciate. Most renters want a 10 or 15 year lease so they can replant and reap a decent reward off the land. However, how many people would feel comfortable renting out their homes or condos for 10 - 15 years??? You have no idea how well (or not) the renter may work the land, whether there will be proper accounting of the crop taken off each year, and it makes it extremely difficult to sell land leased for that long. And at s.22 don't want to be signing a 10 - 15 year lease with anyone, understandably.

4. s.22 an try to sell the land but they would only get a small fraction of what the land could be worth if they were allowed to subdivide. The city has grown out around us and homes are all around us, but yet, we can't sell to subdivide, not even a part of our land. A few years back, about s.22 a large tract of land was allowed to come out of the ALR to develop all along s.22 Yet, we're stuck in the ALR. There was nothing wrong with all the farmland that is now homes, condos, seniors retirement complexes, and strip malls. Yet, s.22 and all the other orchardists around us, have been penalized because their home wasn't in that development zone.

Plus, GST is applied to the sale of the farmland making it even more of a challenge to try to sell it. Plus, it is so difficult selling any size of farm but especially a small acreage like ours because the cost of land is high enough that if a person were to buy it, it would be extremely difficult for them to make their money back by farming it!!! So who would want to buy it? And after working the land and providing food for s.22 why



should s.22 not be allowed to reap some decent reward on the sale of their land, or be allowed to subdivide it, or a part of it, like people who can buy and sell and develop homes / condos, at will, making huge profits (especially in the Lower Mainland.)

5. And every time there's even a mention of a review of the ALR, there are those who start fear mongering about the loss of our food supply and what a dangerous precedent this is setting, etc... Come on. Governments across Canada have similar concerns, but how many have trapped their farmers with something like the ALR? And they seem to be managing their local food supplies, in conjunction with global movements of food products, just fine.

In addition, how many of those who are so concerned about any changes to the ALR truly give a dam about the farmer, the person providing the food, the person who is enslaved by the rules of the ALR. I would love to sentence every single person who complains about land being taken out of the ALR to a lifetime on an orchard of s.22 so that they can truly experience the hardship many farmers have in trying to deal with very low, annual incomes (on that size of a parcel of land), annual threats to their crop value (be it from adverse environmental or market conditions) and extreme restrictions (many of which are truly ridiculous) on how they can generate income from that land. I recall a very recent article I read written by a UBC (I think) Professor Emeritus who was so indignantly abhorred at how our BC government could even dare to consider a review of ALR policy and procedures. (Most likely written in the comfort of a wonderfully posh, able to be sold at anytime, luxurious retirement home in Point Grey, living off a glorious pension provided by his employer, and written while savouring some tea and piece of apple pie made from BC MacIntosh apples that a local grower in Kelowna got paid 9 cents a pound for, not even enough to cover the cost of production.)

Politically, as you know, the challenge is that many urban voters (the vast majority of voters in BC) have absolutely no idea at all about anything to do with farming and can be easily swayed by the doomsday type rhetoric of a few who love to raise the alarm bells when farmers start asking for a basic right to make a decent living off of land they purchased and have worked hard for many years. Farmers make up such a small part of the electorate and have such a small voice that it makes it really difficult for them to be heard with any force.

So, thank you so very, very much for indulging me and allowing me to pen this diatribe. Please stay the course, fight for the rights of your constituents who are farmers and are seeking some common sense relief from the shackles of the ALR. And please have a look at other situations, in other regions around the province, like ours here in Kelowna, so that you can give people a chance who have worked so hard, for so long, a chance to truly benefit from what they have given to the people of this province over many decades, so that they may have a decent financial future and a comfortable retirement. If you're ever in s.22 Mr. Bennett, you'd be most welcome to drop by for a visit to have a look at our farm and our situation as I'm sure there are many small acreage farmers in the province who are, likewise, desperate for some kind of relief from the austere restrictions of the ALR and ALC.

Sincerely,

s.22

s.22

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 10, 2013 11:29 AM  
**To:** s.22  
**Subject:** A Letter in Support of Your Review on the ALR / ALC  
**Attachments:** terms of ref attch..pdf

Ref: 39

Email: s.22

Dear s.22

Thank you for your August 14, 2013 email. As the Minister Responsible for Core Review, I am pleased to respond.

Premier Christy Clark made a promise to British Columbians that this Government would grow the economy, control Government spending, and balance the budget. The Core Review is a key part of delivering on this commitment. We know that Government has already done a good job of managing costs, but we believe more can always be done. The Core Review, which will include all ministries, agencies, boards, commissions and the SUCH (School Districts, Universities, Colleges and Health Organizations) sector, will ensure the best possible use of Government resources and the highest respect for taxpayers' dollars.

The Core Review will ensure that Government is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible and that the programs and activities of ministries are focused on achieving Government's vision of a strong economy and secure tomorrow. In addition, the Core Review will reduce red-tape and unnecessary regulations that hinder economic development, identify opportunities where savings could be redirected to high-priority programs and ensure public sector management wage levels are appropriate. I have attached a copy of the Terms of Reference for Core Review for your information.

Further details on the Core Review process will be provided through specific instructions to ministries this fall.

My colleagues and I serving on the Cabinet Working Group on Core Review greatly appreciate all suggestions for improvements to Government programs and operations and will consider suggestions received from members of the public as part of the Core Review process.

Thank you, again, for writing.

Sincerely,

Bill Bennett  
Minister

Attachment



## Firth, Janet MEM:EX

---

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 11, 2013 10:13 AM  
**To:** MEM Correspondence MEM:EX  
**Subject:** FW: Core Reviews  
  
**Importance:** High

Draft minister's reply. Incorporate some of the standard reply but also address her concerns over the ALR.

---

**From** s.22  
**Sent:** August 5, 2013 5:11 AM  
**To:** Bennett.MLA, Bill  
**Subject:** Core Reviews  
**Importance:** High

Hello Mr. Bennett

I understand you are doing a "core review" of different government committees and bodies. Please Please do something about the unfair practises of the Agricultural Land Reserve. I know they are more interested in keeping the stats looking good for themselves to justify this agency.

The truth of the matter is never EVER looked at ! No one , government, reporters, investigators will step on their toes because someone is a friend of someone. This agency NEEDS to be answerable to someone! This agency should have the qualified personal to make good decision bases on the applications they receive. Did you know there is not one agrologist on staff since 2007.

Ms. Diane Katz did a whole review of this commission. She has no anterior motive behind her findings. She is not ever from Canada yet her findings for most of us has been right on! Yet you and your colleques choose to ignore her.

This commission destroys people who want to farm, This commission destroys peoples dreams, This commission has nothing to do with keeping agriculture land for food source. This Commission has dictated to us what we should do on our land. Discounting all evidence and agrologist reports we have submitted to back up our position. This commission wants me to put out money or s.22  
s.22 they want me to put money out on s.22 – even after we proved that this would be impractical due to the inability to access water and economically friendly heat source, Not to mention it would mean clear cutting our land,

The commission has insinuated to me that it doesn't care if we make or loose money but we should stay as a large piece of land for agricultural use. This is ignorance talking and we have no recourse. Our land is rock and clay, They ignore the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that raising dogs is no different than raising any other type of FARM animal

This property along with fighting for our rights as Canadian citizen with the ALC has put us in a financial situation that we came pretty close to loosing every thing. This Commission doesn't care about peoples dreams for the property they own.

We can not sell this land because of the prices dropping and when we did try to dump it we could not get anyone to even be interested. We had two couples look at the property, looked at the soil and we never heard a word after.

This commission knows this land will never EVER in anyone's life time grow food.

s.22

s.22 has spent loads of money to get a grape farm going. He needed to sell 5 acres to get the capital to continue. He was denied this and now will not continue. Again another example of how the commission works to encourage people to keep farming.

Vancouver island has very very little land that can support agriculture for food. The land that is very viable is being taken out for houses, warehouse, yet the land that will not produce is being left!

We don't even want out of the ALR but we lost one partner and can't continue to support useless land because some one things we should be doing something else. I have also been given the reasoning that the s.22 we have is a large parcel and should be kept as such to support agriculture. In actual fact (farmers and ranchers know this) s.22 is not large enough for anyone to make a living off this land. However it is large enough to make three parcels for hobbyists or people who just want to live in the country.

PLEASE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS COMMISSION. As a Canadian citizen that has proved the quality of our land we should not have to fill the courts to get fair treatment.

s.22

## Firth, Janet MEM:EX

---

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 27, 2013 11:47 AM  
**To:** MEM Correspondence MEM:EX  
**Subject:** FW: ALR  
**Attachments:** Scan0019.pdf

file

-----Original Message-----

**From:** s.22  
**Sent:** Friday, August 23, 2013 5:20 PM  
**To:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Subject:** ALR

Dear Mr. Minister,

I have attached a message from the chair of the ALR Mr. Bullock written while he was chair in 2012. I would think you have read it. This message is the sanest approach I have heard in s.22 and I hope you can do something about the mistakes made when the original fly over was done, also adjust for changes that have been done for the greater good such as freeways etc. in the last s.22 without adjustments to the boundary.

We had a meeting with the ALR 5 years ago and they came and looked at our land and said you are not farm land, but you are a buffer to the farm land. How defensible or sensible is that? Since then a freeway has been added behind us which is a mighty big and noisy buffer. We have s.22 that can not be farmed as it is too close to a creek so no fertilizer or lime. The freeway behind us is making s.22 a freeway feeder and not a quiet street which it was. We have a subdivision across the street consisting of one acre and 7000 square foot lots.

Mr. Bullock stated that if the ALC is to truly achieve its purpose, the ALC must be willing to adapt to changing circumstances and must be willing to re-examine previous ways of doing business and that to avoid change because some people do not support change is not good enough.

We know a boundary review process requires care but land use must be appropriately designated as ALR. A boundary review is an excellent way to fine tune. I wish you all the luck in this process. Engaging local governments, agricultural organizations, and the general public will all lead to the best outcome. All leading to less pressure in the future.

Sincerely,

s.22



## **PROVINCIAL AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION**

### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

**August 23, 2012**

#### **CHANGING THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS: AN UPDATE ON THE TRANSITION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION**

##### **I. THE NEED FOR CHANGE**

On November 26, 2010, in my role as Chair of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), I issued a report laying out a strategic vision for the ALC. That strategic vision was based on two fundamental propositions.

The first proposition is that the ALC's mandate – to preserve agricultural land, to encourage farming on such land in collaboration with other communities of interest and to encourage all governments to accommodate farming in their planning processes – is as important today as it was when the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) was created almost 40 years ago. As noted in my report, there continues to be overwhelming support for the ALR. That support reflects a consensus within society about the importance of preserving a stable and coherent agricultural land base in British Columbia.

It is widely understood that there are serious challenges to the preservation of British Columbia's limited agricultural land base. Those factors include urban sprawl, increasing populations, changing weather patterns, competing land uses and land speculation. People readily understand that, in addition to the critical importance of the \$10.5 billion agri-food sector to the provincial economy, food security is not something we can take for granted in British Columbia.

The second proposition on which my report was based is that if the *Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA)* is to truly achieve its purpose, the ALC itself must be effective. Like any other organization or business, the ALC must be willing to adapt to changing circumstances, and must be willing to re-examine previous ways of doing business. It is not good enough to operate a certain way because that is the way it has always been. It is not good enough to avoid change because some people do not support change, or because their vested interests are



affected. It is not good enough to allow the work demands related to one part of the ALC's mandate (for example, the consideration of non-farm use, subdivision and exclusion applications) to unduly take away from other important statutory responsibilities such as policy and planning, and compliance and enforcement. The ALC has to look for creative ways to become more efficient, and has to make hard decisions about how to triage and use its resources.

In September 2010, the Auditor General of British Columbia produced a report that examined the ALC and made 9 recommendations. These recommendations encouraged the ALC to be more proactive with local government planning processes, to have a sufficiently robust compliance and enforcement scheme, and to fully evaluate decisions with a view to reviewing our overall policy direction.

The 20 months since my report was submitted have only reinforced the need for the ALC to introduce changes to the way it does business. The ALC has had time to reflect on the Auditor General's report and my November 2010 report, and to consider the legislative changes passed in November 2011 to allow the ALC to better manage parts of our workload. I consider it appropriate now to publicly outline the changes we have decided to make in order to better achieve our mandate under the *ALCA*.

## **II. THE NOVEMBER 2010 CHAIR'S REPORT**

My report set out a "Strategic Vision for Future Generations", with the following components:

1. ***An ALR that has defensible boundaries.*** The boundaries of the ALR, and any decisions to change the boundaries, should be based upon a consistent method of evaluating scientific and technical information. The boundaries should be defensible in order to discourage speculation and the proliferation of non-farm uses and subdivisions that erode the agricultural land base and drive up agricultural land prices. Communities should be encouraged to adopt compact and efficient development patterns that minimize pressure on the ALR boundary.
2. ***An ALR that places agriculture first.*** The use of lands for agriculture should take priority over all other uses within the ALR. Although the ALR permits many non-farm uses and may protect other public values that occur within it, it is first and foremost a working agricultural landscape. The ALC must have adequate resources to advocate for farmers, ranchers and the agricultural industry to encourage farming.



3. *An ALC that places priority considerations on bona fide farmers and ranchers, and issues that may impact, positively or negatively, bona fide farmers and ranchers.* (This requires) flexible, risk-based approach to reviewing and deciding upon proposals that are intended to support and enhance bona fide farms and ranches.
4. *An ALC that builds strong alliances with farm and ranch groups and other organizations to identify and cooperatively address emerging issues that may impact, positively or negatively, bona fide farmers or ranchers.* Through regular communication and consultation, the ALC will be better positioned to participate at an early stage in dialogue on issues of importance to farm and ranch communities.
5. *An ALC that is able to respond to and enforce against improper use of ALR land.* Ensuring that ALR lands are being used properly will maintain a high quality land base for farming and reduce the potential for lands to be degraded to the extent that they can no longer be used for agricultural production. The ALC must continue to strive to build partnerships with other government agencies and local governments to assist in compliance and enforcement related matters.
6. *An ALC that moves away from being reactive and focused on applications towards becoming a proactive planning organization.* This shift would allow the ALC to proactively seek opportunities to improve agricultural land preservation and utilization, encourage farming, and focus on emerging and strategic issues.
7. *An ALC that has up-to-date technology.* To use technology to integrate mapping (spatial) information with the ALC's database for research, planning, ALR boundary assessments and business reporting. To seek partnerships with other provincial ministries and agencies to share data to further enhance the ALC's technical capacity for research, planning, ALR boundary assessments and business reporting.

My report candidly states that in order to achieve many of these objectives (particularly items 1, 5 and 7 above), sufficient funding and resources are necessary. In this regard, a very positive development was the November 2011 legislative amendments that created the possibility of a fee schedule to establish a "user pay" funding model to generate revenue to augment the ALC's base budget appropriation. The ALC awaits advice from Government regarding further developments with regard to this reform.

The ALC is committed to proceeding with our strategic vision, even if this means having to engage in a triage process where lower priority matters give way to allow higher priority matters to be properly addressed.



Part of the reason for this message is to explain to certain stakeholders – particularly those involved in the “application” side of our mandate – why their applications may in future be processed differently. On the positive side, we believe this realigning of priorities to be more consistent with our overall mandate and responsibilities, and will lead to a revitalized and proactive ALC.

### **III. RE-ESTABLISHING THE ALC’S PRIORITIES**

A disproportionate amount of the ALC’s resources are consumed in dealing, on a reactive basis, with the numerous applications made by individuals each year to exclude, subdivide or authorize non-farm uses on ALR land. Dealing with the sheer volume of these applications – 500 to 700 new applications annually – consumes an enormous amount of ALC time and resources. Of these new applications we anticipate that approximately 25% will be the subject of a request for reconsideration (a follow up review of a denied application) which will consume even more ALC time and resources. Requests for reconsideration result in the annual application workload of the ALC increasing to 625 – 875 applications.

It is also a fact that a significant number of applications are nothing more than an attempt to gain a financial benefit from non-agricultural uses, or from removing land from the ALR. As stated in my report regarding land in the ALR “land speculation remains high after nearly 40 years”.

The time has come for the ALC to take control of our agenda and workload. To avoid remaining a largely reactive organization whose priorities are dictated by the volume of applications received, the ALC has had to seriously re-think the resource allocation given to applications relative to other functions.

The ALC has determined that we can no longer afford to be an organization that spends 80% of its time dealing with applications to the detriment of other important areas of our mandate. Within the scope of resources that can be devoted to applications, we need to look beyond a simplistic “first in time, first in line” approach to doing our work and examine other process models based on priority and triage. Finally, we need to do everything we can to ensure that when dealing with applications, our decision-making remains principled, professional, consistent and timely.



The ALC will in good faith continue to perform our duty to consider each application on its merits as appropriate, but it makes no apologies for undertaking and prioritizing work based on a considered assessment of resources and priorities.

#### IV. RE-ALLOCATING THE ALC'S RESOURCES

##### A. Planning

The *ALCA* states that a local government's bylaws (including a regional growth strategy, official community plan or zoning bylaw), and a first nations government's laws, must be consistent with the *ALCA*, the regulations and the orders of the ALC. If those laws or bylaws are inconsistent with the *ALCA*, the regulations and the ALC's orders, they are "to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect": s. 46. The ALC has an important role to play in consulting with local governments to ensure that their bylaws are valid and do not contravene s. 46.

In addition, section 882(3) of the *Local Government Act* requires local governments to refer official community plan bylaws to the ALC for comment if the plan applies to land in the ALR. Section 879 of the *Local Government Act* also allows local government to consult with the ALC more generally regarding official community plans. All these powers are directly related to the ALC's mandate to encourage farming and to encourage local governments and first nations to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land. As part of the planning process, the ALC needs to encourage communities to adopt compact and efficient development patterns that minimize pressure on ALR boundaries.

The ALC has in the past devoted insufficient resources to these critical planning functions resulting in adverse downstream effects on many of the ALC's objectives, including promoting the use of ALR land for agriculture, preventing unnecessary urban/rural conflicts, discouraging speculative applications, and minimizing enforcement issues. The ALC has also faced significant challenges participating in provincial land use planning, resource management and major infrastructure development.

Proactive ALC participation with local governments and provincial ministries, agencies and Crown Corporations provides considerable help to these valued stakeholders who may not be well briefed on agricultural issues. Such proactive planning requires early and regular ALC communication with local government planners, provincial government representatives and



elected officials. This reflects the ALC's larger responsibility to communicate with and educate local communities and provincial ministries, agencies and Crown Corporations regarding the *ALCA* in particular and agriculture generally.

In the ALC's view, the time has come for our planning mandate to have greater prominence, with the following elements:

- Ensuring earlier and more extensive involvement in local government planning processes;
- Ensuring earlier and more extensive involvement with provincial ministries and agencies, and Crown Corporations in land use planning, resource management and major infrastructure planning and development;
- Encouraging local governments to develop and adopt more detailed, agriculturally-focused implementation plans and strategies, such as Agriculture Area Plans and Agricultural Strategies;
- Encouraging local governments to establish Agricultural Advisory Committees;
- Updating “off the shelf” services for local governments, including the ALC's *Planning for Agriculture* document;
- Identifying priority areas for ALR boundary reviews; and
- Expanding joint Ministry of Agriculture and ALC efforts regarding “strengthening farming” legislation: *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*.

## **B. Policy**

The ALC's policy role is closely related to its planning mandate. At the present time, the ALC has policies that outline principles, guidelines, strategies, rules or positions on various interpretative, operational, and fill and soil removal issues. These policies seek to provide clarification of regulations and courses of action consistently taken or adopted, formally or informally. While policies do not have the same status as laws, they are nonetheless extremely important to assist the ALC in developing plans and encouraging farming.

ALC commissioners and staff have a wealth of knowledge and experience to bring to policy development, but that resource is not currently being harnessed owing to the reactive demands on the ALC. Proper policy work cannot be undertaken off the “side of the desk”, and it is not



assisted by having to be developed on an ad hoc basis in response to a pressing need. To be of greatest value, policies that encourage farming need to result from active engagement with stakeholders and the collection of proper data and research, including analysis. The time has come to devote more of the ALC's resources to our policy role.

### **C. ALR Boundary Reviews**

Responsibility for revising the ALR's boundaries rests with the ALC. This role, which the ALC may exercise proactively by way of boundary reviews, is linked directly to the ALC's responsibility to preserve agricultural land.

The ALC initiated a number of boundary reviews throughout the 1980s, but the resources to undertake that work was eliminated by 1990. The ALC today recognizes that the most realistic approach to boundary reviews is to take a more modest and targeted approach based on the areas in greatest need of review.

Any boundary review process requires great care. A boundary review is a superior method for "fine-tuning" ALR boundaries than adjudicating hundreds of disparate applications. The ALR will have greater integrity, and fewer applications will be generated, where boundaries are proactively reviewed to assess whether land is, or is not, appropriately designated as ALR land. At the same time, the purpose of a boundary review must be clear. A boundary review process cannot be allowed to turn into a debate about whether there is a "higher or better use" for agricultural land, or about whether a particular farm is economically viable. As the Courts have recognized, the ALC's duty to preserve agricultural land requires us to take a longer term view, and to recognize that land not suitable for one agricultural purpose today may well be suitable for another agricultural purpose tomorrow.

ALR boundary reviews can generate a great deal of interest, and controversy. It is imperative that such reviews be conducted in an open and transparent manner by engaging local governments, agricultural organizations, other stakeholder groups and the general public. It goes without saying that even a modest boundary review will require the allocation of considerable resources.



#### **D. Compliance and Enforcement**

The ALR will retain its integrity only if individuals comply with the prohibition against using ALR land for non-farm uses.

The threat of prosecution is not enough to dissuade some people from breaching the *ALCA*. For that reason, in 2002 the ALC was given additional powers to ensure compliance, including the power to inspect land, to issue “stop work” and remediation orders, and to levy administrative penalties.

While the ALC has already established a partnership with the Ministry of Forest, Lands and Resource Operations and there are opportunities to partner with local governments and other provincial ministries, the ALC recognizes that we must have the ability to act when outside help is unavailable.

The ALC has determined that resource allocation to compliance and enforcement activities must be given higher priority than some types of applications. The ALC’s re-allocation of priorities will reflect this reality.

#### **E. Applications**

The *ALCA* currently allows several different types of applications to be made to the ALC. These include an application to authorize a non-farm use, and applications to subdivide or exclude land from the ALR.

The ALC application process has remained essentially unchanged since 1975, during which time we have considered almost 40,000 applications. As noted earlier, the ALC currently receives between 500 – 700 new applications per year plus requests for reconsideration.

As discussed earlier, the reality is that the ALC will no longer allow the purely reactive role of dealing with applications to drive our allocation of priorities. This means three things.

Firstly, applications as a class will in future receive a lower relative share of the ALC’s overall resources. Instead of application work accounting for 80% of the ALC’s budget, the ALC is initially targeting to have that work account for 30% of our budget.



Second, applications will not be addressed according to a simple “first in time” rule, but rather according to the priority of the application, after a screening process that takes into account the nature and purpose of the application and the application’s potential to encourage farming and the larger purposes of the *ALCA*.

Finally, within the targeted 30% budget allocated to application work, the ALC must find creative ways to increase our efficiency by streamlining the processing of applications.

To achieve the streamlining objective, several initiatives are being given active consideration; some are underway. One involves creating an application process – in due course, a fully electronic one - that places the onus to provide all relevant information on the person making the application. The days of the ALC helping to “perfect” an application cannot continue. As with all other federal and provincial regulatory processes in which persons seek an approval or a benefit, the onus must be on the person applying to provide all required information. If an application is materially incomplete it will not be processed until the required information is provided by the applicant. While it may in the past have been seen as a helpful public service for ALC staff members to “shore up” deficient applications made by landowners, this is no longer economically feasible.

Other initiatives will also be taken. One will involve an effort to educate local governments regarding applications that are and are not properly prepared. Others will involve changes within the ALC process, including eliminating the ALC staff report to the extent that it merely duplicates information in the file, improving the ALC’s information management systems (as funds are available), applying the ALC’s reconsideration power according to the language and intent of the reconsideration power in the *ALCA*, and improving the decision-making process through ongoing training of commissioners and organization of panels. The ALC believes that these changes, together with the new power to refuse repeat applications for non-farm use, subdivision or exclusion made within 5 years of a previous application (s. 30.1), will go a long way towards allowing us to make the best use of the resources that can be allocated to applications.



## V. TRANSITIONAL PROJECTS SUPPORTING THE ALC'S RE-ESTABLISHED PRIORITIES

In support of re-establishing the ALC's priorities we have embarked on a number of significant projects using the transitional funding provided by Government which is available to the ALC until March 31, 2013. The ALC has the following transitional projects underway:

- Updating ALR boundary review procedural manual to provide clear and concise guidance regarding the methodology to be employed for reviews and to ensure boundary reviews are conducted in an open and transparent manner;
- Upgrading information technology and information management capabilities of the ALC's Online Application Tracking System (OATS);
- Designing and building a web-based application portal and client self-help kiosk to provide enhanced web services to clients and greater access to information. Establishing the ability to file applications electronically will further reduce the amount of ALC resources devoted to processing applications as the person(s) wishing to file an application will not be able to do so until all information is completed in the form and content acceptable to the ALC. The onus of completing a thorough and well documented application will be placed on the person(s) making the application;
- Populating the ALC database with information from approximately 25,000 applications to provide the ALC and its clients with greater access to information;
- Scanning historical documents from the 25,000 applications to provide the ALC and its clients with greater access to information;
- Digitizing and quality assurance review of historical mapping of the 25,000 applications;
- Digitizing agricultural capability mapping to provide the ALC and its clients with greater access to information. This mapping will also form the technical foundation for ALR boundary reviews; and
- Preparing a compliance and enforcement procedural handbook.



## **VI. CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

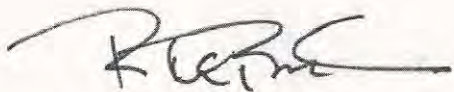
It is admittedly unusual for an administrative tribunal to provide this kind of public statement to explain the reasons for changing the way it does business. However, the ALC recognizes that we are an important regulatory institution within British Columbia, and that if the changes we have set in motion are to be understood, they must be explained.

This message seeks to reflect our respect for the Auditor General's constructive recommendations, for the stakeholders whose views contributed to my November 2010 report (and whose views continue to assist the ALC), for the Minister and Government which considered my report and passed the November 2011 amendments to the *ALCA*, and for the public that the ALC ultimately serves.

We will, as part of our ongoing annual reporting, continue to report on our progress in carrying out the changes announced in this message and the status of the transitional projects, the details of which will be announced as and when appropriate.

As well, when the ALC is provided more certainty from Government regarding the funding model to augment provincial funding, more changes and additional projects will be undertaken to sustain the momentum now underway to enhance the ALC's ability to preserve British Columbia's agricultural land and encourage farming.

Finally, the changes and transitional projects form part of a new and exciting chapter in the history of the ALC; they are just the beginning.



---

**Richard Bullock, Chair**  
**Provincial Agricultural Land Commission**



## Firth, Janet MEM:EX

---

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 27, 2013 11:21 AM  
**To:** MEM Correspondence MEM:EX  
**Subject:** FW: Ag. Land Commission Review  
**Attachments:** polak letter.docx

File

---

From: Bennett.MLA, Bill [<mailto:Bill.Bennett.MLA@leg.bc.ca>]  
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2013 8:35 AM  
To: Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
Subject: FW: Ag. Land Commission Review

**From** s.22  
**Sent:** August 23, 2013 11:42 AM  
**To:** Bennett.MLA, Bill  
**Subject:** Ag. Land Commission Review

Dear Mr. Bennett

I was very pleased and thankful to see you come along . I am attaching a letter i authored , to Mary Polak my MLA , the letter is a prelude to requested meetings with her and Rich Coleman MLA

s.22

s.22

Thanks for your interest and concern , from a great many people hopelessly trapped.

s.22

To Mary Polak

MLA For Langley

This letter is to reinforce the statements made by Mr. Bennett in the Vancouver Sun. I must congratulate him on bringing forward a horrendous problem for a great many land owners trapped in the ALR. The whole process is completely idiotic. To get a hearing you must first have the approval of your Township Council to forward your application. This is forwarded with one of three options. 1. Township supports the App. 2. Township does not support the App. 3. Township makes no recommendation. Council also has the option to deny you from even putting your case before the Commission.

This is all well and good unless the Township uses their input to this process, as a planning tool. If your land is in south Langley for example, the politician's had a definite bias towards development anywhere in the municipality except here. This lasted from 1991 until 2012, when we finally got a council that is willing to listen.

The actual ALR hearing is a well-orchestrated meeting where all the commission members sit there and smile and not one question is asked. In our case we had a professional soils agrologist (Bsc. Ag. Mba. Pag. 30 yrs. Experience) at the end of his presentation he stated in no uncertain terms, this is not viable agricultural land and should be excluded from the ALR. We left the meeting thinking our Government agency would be dealing with the facts in a logical manner, and with integrity, GUESS WHAT, THEY IGNORED EVERYTHING WE INTRODUCED AND I WOULD SAY, THEY INSULTED THE INTEGRITY OF A PROFESSIONAL IN THE FIELD WITH NO FACTS TO BACK THEIR POSITION.

Their decision which contained one fact and THAT IS AN OUT AND OUT LIE, with the balance of five pages being the same rosy hued bunk they stated in our 1991 attempt. EXCLUSION DENIED. I am sure the identical garbage is written in every decision Mr. Bennett is talking about.

Trying to sleep at night when faced with this situation is impossible, which way do you turn when a group of people who haven't earned a dime for this province, managed to get the legislation passed to remove the arbitration process.

IF WE THINK OF THIS AS LIBERAL'S WHERE ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE LOCATED THAT ARE TRAPPED ON LAND IN THE ALR . THEY ARE ALL OUT IN LIBERAL COUNTRY. WHO IS CALLING THE SHOTS ON SHAFING THEM, THE NDP . THEY HAVE BEEN SHUFFLING THE COMMISSIONERS AND THE CHAIRMAN BACK AND FORTH SINCE 1973 . (their bios posted on ALC web are frightening)

This problem is not as small as the city folks think, going in and cleaning up the mess has the potential to raise \$300,000,000 for economic development, and I know that is a very low estimate, the beauty is, the

land is of no agricultural value now, so change will not affect the provinces legitimate, viable, agricultural land base.

Following is a list of shortcomings with current ALR legislation and its interpretation. (AND EASY TO FIX)

This is the AGRICULTURE LAND RESERVE LEGISLATION guess what, there is no definition of what is agricultural land. This sounds dumb which it is, but it is perfect for the commission as you cannot take them to task. I located one of the NDP'S authors of the legislation and he informed me they could not settle the argument at the time on what is ALR land. As a Liberal one must remember a gravel pit is ALR land to the NDP, as two words are not in their vocabulary, viable and profitable. The NDP author and the current regime at the commission are firm in their belief they can call it any way they wish with impunity. (FORTUNATELY THE FIX IS EASY)

The commission has no creditability in the agriculture community as they have no sound defence for the decisions they make, they are not based on factual data. In most cases they are based on Idealistic dreams. They don't look at the carnage they cause for the citizens they are supposed to be serving.

The commission is the most arrogant public entity I have ever dealt with, the women mean well. I feel they are trying to cover for the men who have an attitude of entitlement, and why wouldn't they since the applicants have no recourse. (IT'S UNFORTUNATE FOR THEM THE FIX IS EASY)

In talking to the professional I hired to assist with my last ill-fated application, he informs me that being named to be a commissioner is impossible, seems it's a closed shop. He claims he knows a retired Liberal MLA who resides in the Maple Ridge area, this man thought he would like to sit on the commission as he has a farming background. He was refused a seat and realized he wasn't even going to be considered.

The only criterion that should apply on an application to be excluded from the ALR should be land capability, the existing regime uses everything but. There has been a steady stream of Ag Ministers from all right wing parties who in my opinion were not cabinet heavy hitters. The civil service is predominately NDP so I feel complaints were never brought forward, or if they were the minister never had the clout, to get the rest of cabinet to react. This way the same breed of commissioners and same mentality has prevailed, so after 40 years of neglect as to supervision, it's not hard to see how this mess came to be. (THIS IS PARAMOUNT TO THE EASY FIX)

THE THING TO REMEMBER IS THE LEGISLATION IS NOT THE MAIN PROBLEM. IT'S THE FACT THE NDP IS NOT FOCUSED ON THE ONLY PARAMETER THAT SHOULD BE IN PLAY, LAND VIABILITY.

Enclosed as page 3 is an outline for a simple fix.

Thank you

CC Honourable Pat Pimm Minister of Agriculture.

Honourable Bill Bennett Minister Responsible For Core Review

Honourable Steve Thomson Minister of Forest , Lands Nat. Res. Ops.

s.22

Priority list of problems to solve:

1. Get control of the board of the commission.( Quietly I know after 40 yrs they will scream a little)

There is 9 commissioners and the chairman two per month can be replaced by sound tactful right wing thinkers, they can start right away adding input to new files coming forward. Once three months has gone by they will be able to control all decisions. Two months later the last 3 come on the board and decisions would be unanimous.

2. The new board of the commission should then move a motion to enact a well thought out plan to review archived exclusion and legitimate farm subdivision files, on a fair and equitable schedule as to recent and long term . Staff should be able to provide a list for last 25 years.
3. Staff I assume is empowered to do day to day admin and report to the board, outside of a wakeup call that should not be a problem.

Legislation that is required Early 2016 ( Folks need to get used to the new broom)

1. Define viable Agricultural land.
2. Resurrect the legislation re: arbitration of a Commission Decision.
3. Rescind the right for Local Council to block access to the ALC.

MY TV CLIP : THE AGRICULTURE LAND RESERVE IS AN EXCELLENT PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE, BUT WE MUST BE PRESERVING VIABLE AGRICULTURAL LAND. IF THE LAND IS SUB STANDARD AND WILL NOT PAY ITS WAY, WE HAVE SET UP A COMMUNIST STYLE STATE WHERE THE LAND OWNER IS FORCED TO BEND TO THE UNJUST WILL OF THE STATE.

s.22

From: s.22  
 To:  
 Sent: Sunday, September 01, 2013 11:45 AM  
 Subject: Re: Land Release

s.22

MLA: Hon. Bill Bennett  
 P.O. Box 9041 Stn. Prov. Govt.  
 Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1



Dear Minister Bennett:

I am writing you because it has been brought to my attention that you are looking into releasing some of the land in B.C. that has no agricultural potential that could be used for further and better uses that would benefit the province of B.C. and the people that live here.

I happen to own such property and have been trying to develop it into storage buildings for RV's which there is a huge shortage of in this area. The regional district has done everything within their power to stop this from happening. For the last ten years, they have used the Agricultural Land Commission as a tool to prevent any expansion of my service to the people living in this area who need storage for their RV's, boats, etc. Half the people presently storing their toys live outside of this area...Germany, Switzerland, Africa, Alberta. Presently, s.22 out of town people use my building for storage and bring a lot of money to this area which is a big benefit to everyone who lives here in one form or another.

I am in the process right now of applying to have my property removed from Agricultural Land Reserve. I am hoping that you could in some way help me in this process to remove my land from the A.L.R. I am also including a copy of a letter sent to Regional District from John Stevenson, P. Ag, Regional Agrologist. The 20% arable land mentioned in the letter has in the high water of 2007 been washed down the river. Regional District finally realizes that my property is just gravel river bottom which also floods in years of high water.

The time has come that the Agricultural Land Reserve has way too much power when it comes to controlling this kind of land. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

s.22

*Standard  
 Core Review  
 Response*

MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINES	
REFERRAL NUMBER	_____
REFER TO	_____
DRAFT REPLY <input type="checkbox"/>	INFO/FILE <input type="checkbox"/> REPLY DIRECT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RECEIVED	SEP 09 2013
REMARKS:	_____
	_____
	_____

9/1/2013





File: s.22

Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine

s.22

August 29, 2013

RE: Assigned s.22 proposed exclusion

Dear s.22

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide the RDKS Planning Section with comment on this proposed ALR exclusion application from s.22 dated August 7, 2013.

I have not been able to visit the subject lot in person, however, after reviewing David Yole's (P.Ag) report (2003) you kindly provided to me, from an agricultural perspective, I can provide you with the following advice:

- As a whole, the subject parcel contains approximately 20% arable land (David Yole), therefore I agree with his assessment that the land has very limited agricultural capability due to the high water table from s.22 and its impact to soil capability.
- More intensive agriculture use of the parcel may be possible for example with horticulture crops and raised beds utilizing the small portion of highly fertile / arable soils, but this may not be realistic because of random flooding events as well as costs incurred to develop such a site-specific operation.
- In its current form, agriculture activities on the subject parcel would generally be limited to livestock grazing and pasture. The applicant has utilized a portion of the parcel for livestock grazing and has successfully obtained farm status on the subject parcel, so agriculture use is possible but one may want to consider the sustainability of such agricultural activities.
- David Yole's report mentions a presence of meadow buttercup, which is an indicator species of wet soils and is difficult to control over large areas if herbicide treatment is not an option (in this case close proximity to river), and timely mechanical tillage is not practical (due to sensitive alluvial soils and significant year-round precipitation combined with high water table).

I believe that maintaining high-quality livestock forage will be challenging over the subject parcel and is largely dependent on natural limiting factors mentioned but also the level of intensity of good agricultural practices. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this ALR Exclusion proposal further with me, please do not hesitate to call me at (250) 847 6379 or email: [John.J.Stevenson@gov.bc.ca](mailto:John.J.Stevenson@gov.bc.ca).

Kind Regards,

  
John Stevenson, P.Ag  
Regional Agrologist – Central Interior Hwy 16 West

Ministry of Agriculture

Mailing Address: Bag 6000  
3333 Tatlow Road, Smithers BC  
V0J 2N0 ph: (250) 847 6389

Web Address: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/>

## Ferguson, Susan M MEM:EX

---

**From:** Linda Geggie s.22  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 12, 2013 2:26 PM  
**To:** Minister, AGRI AGRI:EX; Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Cc:** Fleming, Sharon AGRI:EX; s.22 Minister,  
SDSI SDSI:EX; Thomson.MLA, Steve LASS:EX; bcac@bcac.bc.ca; members@bcfsn.org  
**Subject:** Attention Honourable Minister Pimm and Honourable Minister Bill Bennett re: ALR from BC  
Food Systems Network  
**Attachments:** BCFSN\_Pimm-Bennett\_sept13.pdf  
**Categories:** Forwarded to s.22

September 12, 2013

Hello,

Please find the letter attached from the BC Food Systems Network for the Honourable Minister Patt Pimm, and Honourable Minister Bill Bennett

This letter has also been Cc'd to:

Honourable Minister Bill Bennett

Honourable Minister Steve Thomson

Honourable Minister Don McRae

Richard Bullock, Chair Agriculture Land Commission

Rhonda Driediger, Chair, BC Agriculture Council

Susan Snow and Rebecca Kneen, Co Chairs, Certified Organic Associations of BC

BC Food Systems Members

We look forward to your reply,

Brent Mansfield

Chair, BC Food Systems Network

s.22

Linda Geggie

Chair Food Policy Working Group

s.22





## BC Food Systems Network

P.O. Box 684  
Nelson, BC  
Canada V1L 5R4

[www.fooddemocracy.org](http://www.fooddemocracy.org)  
[info@fooddemocracy.org](mailto:info@fooddemocracy.org)

Honourable Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines and Minister Responsible for Core Review  
Honourable Pat Pimm, Minister of Agriculture  
*Delivered via email*

September 12, 2013

Dear Sirs,

### **RE: Agricultural Land Reserve**

The BC Food Systems Network was formed in 1999. Its mission is to eliminate hunger and create food security for all residents of British Columbia. Our membership is a broad base of farmers, health practitioners, educators, and community organizations across British Columbia. You can read more about us at [www.fooddemocracy.org](http://www.fooddemocracy.org).

### **We are writing you on behalf of the BCFSN in regards to our concerns regarding the public consultation process for the Core Review of the ALR and ALC.**

After our July 2013 annual conference – this year's theme was Food from the Water, Food From the Land – the new Board identified a number of policy priorities, including a focus on the Agricultural Land Reserve. We are aware that it is 40 years old this year, and we are concerned about its future.

We were encouraged by the language of the Minister of Agriculture's June 10 mandate letter that referred to a desire for the ALR to work for British Columbians, protect valuable farmland, and encourage the stability of farm families and the farming industry in the province. We note the request to ensure the Agricultural Land Commission is delivering on the improvements promised and supported by the 2013 budget.

The BC Agrifoods Strategy, part of the Jobs Plan, drafted when Honourable Don McRae was Minister of Agriculture, makes a number of key references to BC's agrifoods sector, noting its diversity which "provides an important competitive advantage with a wide range of opportunities for growth and innovation." It capably outlines contextual issues and a range of market opportunities for BC's farm and food businesses.

The BC Food Systems Network has always taken, and promotes, a *systems* view of the agri-food sector that includes social and environmental as well as economic factors and impacts. We believe that sustainability for the future requires a multi-functional approach to food that would engage government across a number of departments.

We know that farm and food businesses cannot be sustainable without an adequate business case. The economics of food production is a significant challenge, whether producers are micro, small or large. We are engaging in this challenge in various ways. For example, at a national meeting in May of this year, we learned of a range of social finance options for supporting farms and securing farmland that we are eager to discuss with you and with Minister McRae.

However, there are other, even more basic, prerequisites for farm and food success. Sunlight. Water. Land. The Agrifoods Strategy rightly points out that a very small percentage of BC is arable, that "BC's highly fertile food producing lands need protection," and that existing farmland should be kept in production, and held as food producing resources for future generations.

The move, forty years ago, to pre-emptively protect farmland from losses (about 6,000 hectares were being lost per year) by creating the Agricultural Land Reserve was a sound one. BC has been an inspiration to many other jurisdictions for making farmland protection a priority. This is not to say that the ALR was designed, or has worked, perfectly. It needs to be updated in light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century context for BC, which includes the effects of globalization, climate change and stronger Pacific Rim connections.<sup>1</sup>

So to our reason for writing. On reading Vaughn Palmer's article in the *Sun* August 3, we were surprised and disturbed to see the Minister Responsible for Core Review announce that a close look at the ALR and the ALC was a top priority, expressing generalized frustration with the ALR on behalf of landowners who want to develop lands they consider should never have been in the ALR in the first place. Then, on review of recent ALC decisions, we note some interactions between the ALC and members of the Provincial and local governments that give us pause. It looks as if battle lines are being drawn. We are concerned that the ALR and its governing body could be drastically harmed if developers' frustrations carry the day with policymakers. Economic Development must consider a full spectrum of the needs of British Columbians, and changes to support economic development that impact our food security today and into the future must be publicly debated.

In some respects this could be a replay of positions and arguments from 40 years ago. We propose that a public debate needs to be re-engaged with a view to BC's 21<sup>st</sup> century needs for a strong economy, with agriculture and food as a strong contributor to it. Although our food future should not be optional any jurisdiction without the ability to grow its own food is at the mercy of the one that can), it should be fully and publicly discussed before changes are made to the regulatory framework around our critically important farmland. As the Auditor General stated so succinctly in his 2010 report on the ALC, "agricultural land is an indispensable, natural resource". As BC considers the current opportunities in the energy sector, resource development must be balanced with the long-term food production capacity of the province so crucial to our food security.

Attitudes to food among producers, processors, public and government have changed a lot in the last 40 years. We have some new challenges, new demands, new markets, and new opportunities before us. At the BC Food Systems Network we see far more consumer food

---

<sup>1</sup> In this regard we note recommendations in the paper *Strengthening BC's Agriculture Sector in the Face of Climate change* from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, May 2013

literacy, local demand, and financing opportunities than we had 30 years ago – and a nationwide food movement that we have helped to build.

We believe there are untapped opportunities for policy instruments and programs to support agriculture, including measures such as incentives and tax shifts; scaling of regulatory requirements to allow more business opportunities; opportunities for synergy between land- and water-based production; and room for expansion in the Environmental Farm Plan mandate. We also know that innovation often comes from the margins and that, when facing an uncertain future, policymakers do well to manage adaptively and support a variety of approaches to see which can become successful.

We trust that you agree and that the founding principles of BC's farmland protection can be carried forward for the next 40 years in an equally far-sighted way.

**We would appreciate your response to the following questions:**

**What is the public engagement process for the Core Review of the ALR and ALC? Will input be possible to the Core Review Team's proposals to government? How can the BC Food Systems Network and other concerned stakeholders contribute, and be heard?**

**We would also appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above. We have taken the liberty of copying Cabinet colleagues who are former Ministers of Agriculture; their experience will be helpful in consideration of these matters.**

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours



Brent Mansfield and Abra Brynne  
Co-Chairs, BC Food Systems Network

Network Contacts: Brent Mansfield p [REDACTED] s.22  
Linda Geggie, Policy Working Group Chair, ph: [REDACTED] s.22

CC

- Honourable Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- Honourable Don McRae, Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation
- Richard Bullock, Chair, Agricultural Land Commission
- Rhonda Driediger, Chair, BC Agriculture Council
- Susan Snow & Rebecca Kneen, Co-Chairs, Certified Organic Associations of BC
- BC Food Systems Network members

## Ferguson, Susan M MEM:EX

---

**From:** s.22 on behalf of Abra Brynne s.22  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 2, 2013 12:37 PM  
**To:** OfficeofthePremier, Office PREM:EX  
**Cc:** Minister, AGRI AGRI:EX; Minister, MEM MEM:EX; ALC Burnaby ALC:EX; bcac@bcac.bc.ca; bccattle@cattlemen.bc.ca; s.22 Rebecca Kneen; Brent Mansfield  
**Subject:** Core Review public input regarding the ALR and ALC  
**Attachments:** BCFSN\_PremierClark\_2Oct13.pdf  
**Categories:** FYI/File

Please find attached our letter on this matter.  
respectfully,  
Abra Brynne  
Co-Chair, BC Food Systems Network

--  
Abra Brynne

s.22



## BC Food Systems Network

P.O. Box 684  
Nelson, BC  
Canada V1L 5R4

[www.fooddemocracy.org](http://www.fooddemocracy.org)  
[info@fooddemocracy.org](mailto:info@fooddemocracy.org)

2 October 2013

Honourable Christy Clark  
Premier of British Columbia  
Delivered by email: [premier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:premier@gov.bc.ca)

Dear Premier,

### **RE: CORE REVIEW PUBLIC INPUT REGARDING THE ALR AND ALC**

We are writing to you today to share our concern and request your support for full and timely public consultation in the matters under discussion by the Core Review, in particular the Agricultural Land Reserve and Agricultural Land Commission.

We represent a network of thousands of citizens and over 20 food-focused regional and local groups in BC concerned about community food security. The BC Food Systems Network, formed in 1999 to provide input to the development of an Agri-Food Policy for BC, has always had a strong interest and focus on public policy. To us, protection of the land and water needed for food production remains a priority.

We are just some of the 95% of British Columbians mentioned in a 2008 Ipsos Reid poll who said they support the ALR and the policy of preserving farmland. This support for the ALR had grown by four percentage points between 2004 and 2008.

This summer we were naturally concerned when we heard the Honourable Bill Bennett announce that he intended the Core Review process to take "a close look" at the Agricultural Land Reserve and Agricultural Land Commission. This in spite of the fact that the system and organization have recently undergone two reviews, one by the Auditor General in 2010 and another by the Chair the same year that was confirmed by your Government in 2011 with direction and budget support for this fiscal.

Our concerns turned to alarm on review of an ALC decision published in August 2013 which described in detail the amount of pressure being brought to bear on the Commission by members of your government and the Commission's unusually strong language in response. We wrote to the Honourable Bill Bennett and Honourable Pat Pimm on September 12 asking them to tell us what the public engagement process would be regarding the Core Review and the ALR and ALC and how we could participate. To date we have not received a response.

On September 24th, the Core Review's terms of reference were published. They state that the opportunity for public comment on the Core Review is through the fall hearings of the Finance and Government Services Committee. Those hearings had been under way for some time by

the time of the Core Review announcement! We sent two people to present to the Victoria meeting on September 26. We were courteously received but discovered that the Committee members did not know they had been nominated as the government body to receive input on the Core Review.

On a matter of such importance to so many British Columbians, and with such implications for our future, we are sure you will agree that this attempt at public engagement is inadequate.

We know you have a strong commitment to public engagement. We would like the Core Review process to be much more transparent and to refer its proposed directions to a bipartisan House committee for public comment as they are made. We would also expect that the government body responsible, in this case the Agricultural Land Commission, would also be invited to respond to the Core Review's recommendations.

Thank you for attending to this matter. We look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Abra Brynne Brent Mansfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Abra Brynne and Brent Mansfield,  
Co-Chairs, BC Food Systems Network

CC

Honourable Pat Pimm, Minister of Agriculture

Honourable Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines and Minister Responsible for Core Review

Richard Bullock, Chair, Agricultural Land Commission

Rhonda Driediger, Chair, BC Agriculture Council

David Haywood-Farmer, President, BC Cattlemen's Association

Susan Snow and Rebecca Kneen, Co-Chairs, Certified Organic Associations of BC



## Ferguson, Susan M MEM:EX

---

**From:** Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
**Sent:** Monday, October 7, 2013 12:31 PM  
**To:** MEM Correspondence MEM:EX  
**Subject:** FW: core review

Standard core review response.

-----Original Message-----

From: Bennett.MLA, Bill [<mailto:Bill.Bennett.MLA@leg.bc.ca>]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2013 12:50 PM  
To: Minister, MEM MEM:EX  
Subject: FW: core review

-----Original Message-----

From: s.22  
Sent: October 1, 2013 3:13 PM  
To: Bennett.MLA, Bill  
Cc: s.22  
Subject: core review

Dear Mr. Bennett, I am writing to you due to my long time interest in the field of agriculture. By way of background I farmed for 25 years in s.22 I was involved with the Farmers Institute locally and although s.22

s.22  
I have been reading the the government is undertaking a core review which is also going to look at the Agriculture Land Reserve and the Agriculture Land Commission. I want to emphasize strongly my support for both these groups. I can think of nothing that has survived intact as it should for the 40 years it has been in place. You know there is less that 5% of B.C.s' which is arable. It must be protected! The mandate to preserve agricultural land and to encourage farming is as significant today as it was 40 years ago. Perhaps it could be argued it is more important now due to population increases and the implications of climate change. I have often thought even class four , five and six soils are important to protect for use as greenhouse operations as they certainly don't need to be on class one or two soils. Please in your review do nothing to change the wonderful success of the Agriculture Land Reserve of the Agriculture Land Commission..

Yours truly,

s.22





## DISTRICT OF NORTH SAANICH

**COPY**

1620 Mills Road, North Saanich, B.C. V8L 5S9

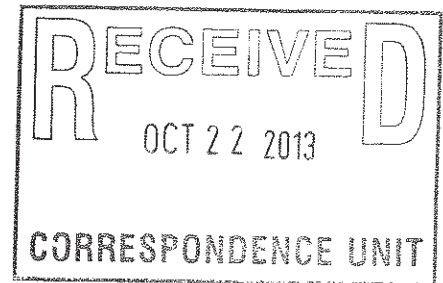
Phone: 250-656-0781 | Fax: 250-656-3155

e-mail: admin@northsaanich.ca | www.northsaanich.ca

MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINES		
REFERRAL NUMBER	core 55	
REFER TO:	Agriculture	
DRAFT REPLY <input type="checkbox"/>	INFO/FILE <input type="checkbox"/>	REPLY DIRECT <input type="checkbox"/>
RECEIVED	OCT 17 2013	
REMARKS:	original sent to AG	

October 8, 2013

Honorable Bill Bennett  
Minister Responsible for Core Review  
PO BOX 9069  
STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2



Dear Minister Bennett:

**Re: Agricultural Land Reserve**

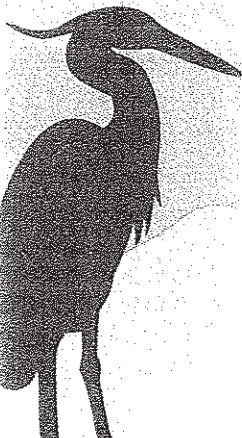
I am writing on behalf of the Mayor and Council of the District of North Saanich. At the meeting held October 7, 2013, North Saanich Council received the enclosed correspondence from the Peninsula Agricultural Commission and resolved to seek clarification from the Province on a core review of the Agricultural Land Commission.

On behalf of the Mayor and Council of the District of North Saanich, thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Curt Kingsley  
Manager of Corporate Services

cc: Hon. Pat Primm, Minister of Agriculture





# Peninsula Agricultural Commission

c/o Saanich Municipal Hall  
770 Vernon Avenue, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2W7  
Telephone: (250) 475-1775 Facsimile: (250) 475-5440  
Secretary: Isobel Hoffmann, Extension 3502 ([hoffmani@saanich.ca](mailto:hoffmani@saanich.ca))  
Chair: Flora Wood

September 12, 2013

To: Mayor and Councillors of the Member Municipalities:  
Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, and Metchosin

RE: Agricultural Land Reserve

The Peninsula Agricultural Commission is in receipt of the attached letter from the BC Food Systems Network with respect to the process for a core review of the Agricultural Land Commission and the Agricultural Land Reserve.

PAC briefly discussed the issue at its meeting on September 13, 2013. The Council liaisons at the meeting were not aware of the review or the significant changes which are being proposed. The Commission has concerns that this core policy review will be undertaken without a public engagement process or input from stakeholders. We would respectfully ask the municipal councils to seek clarification on this matter from the Ministers Bennett and Pimm.

The future of the ALR, which was introduced in the 1970s, is vital to our food security in the province. People need to understand the impact significant changes would have on ALR lands and the future of BC.

Respectfully,

Flora Wood, Chair,  
Peninsula Agricultural Commission

cc: Hon. Bill Bennett, Minister Responsible for Core Review  
Hon. Pat Pimm, Minister of Agriculture  
BC Food Systems Network  
Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture

<b>CIRCULATION</b>
Mayor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CAO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Corporate Officer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>ACTION</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Agenda
<input type="checkbox"/> Info Pk
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading File
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Recommendation
<i>That Council seek clarification from the Province</i>

Member Municipalities:  
Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, Metchosin



## BC Food Systems Network

P.O. Box 684  
Nelson, BC  
Canada V1L 5R4  
[www.fooddemocracy.org](http://www.fooddemocracy.org)  
[info@fooddemocracy.org](mailto:info@fooddemocracy.org)

Honourable Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines and Minister Responsible for Core Review  
Honourable Pat Pimm, Minister of Agriculture  
*Delivered via email*

September 12, 2013

Dear Sirs,

### **RE: Agricultural Land Reserve**

The BC Food Systems Network was formed in 1999. Its mission is to eliminate hunger and create food security for all residents of British Columbia. Our membership is a broad base of farmers, health practitioners, educators, and community organizations across British Columbia. You can read more about us at [www.fooddemocracy.org](http://www.fooddemocracy.org).

**We are writing you on behalf of the BCFSN in regards to our concerns regarding the public consultation process for the Core Review of the ALR and ALC.**

After our July 2013 annual conference – this year's theme was Food from the Water, Food From the Land – the new Board identified a number of policy priorities, including a focus on the Agricultural Land Reserve. We are aware that it is 40 years old this year, and we are concerned about its future.

We were encouraged by the language of the Minister of Agriculture's June 10 mandate letter that referred to a desire for the ALR to work for British Columbians, protect valuable farmland, and encourage the stability of farm families and the farming industry in the province. We note the request to ensure the Agricultural Land Commission is delivering on the improvements promised and supported by the 2013 budget.

The BC Agrifoods Strategy, part of the Jobs Plan, drafted when Honourable Don McRae was Minister of Agriculture, makes a number of key references to BC's agrifoods sector, noting its diversity which "provides an important competitive advantage with a wide range of opportunities for growth and innovation." It capably outlines contextual issues and a range of market opportunities for BC's farm and food businesses.

The BC Food Systems Network has always taken, and promotes, a *systems* view of the agri-food sector that includes social and environmental as well as economic factors and impacts. We believe that sustainability for the future requires a multi-functional approach to food that would engage government across a number of departments.

We know that farm and food businesses cannot be sustainable without an adequate business case. The economics of food production is a significant challenge, whether producers are micro, small or large. We are engaging in this challenge in various ways. For example, at a national meeting in May of this year, we learned of a range of social finance options for supporting farms and securing farmland that we are eager to discuss with you and with Minister McRae.

However, there are other, even more basic, prerequisites for farm and food success. Sunlight. Water. Land. The Agrifoods Strategy rightly points out that a very small percentage of BC is arable, that "BC's highly fertile food producing lands need protection," and that existing farmland should be kept in production, and held as food producing resources for future generations.

The move, forty years ago, to pre-emptively protect farmland from losses (about 6,000 hectares were being lost per year) by creating the Agricultural Land Reserve was a sound one. BC has been an inspiration to many other jurisdictions for making farmland protection a priority. This is not to say that the ALR was designed, or has worked, perfectly. It needs to be updated in light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century context for BC, which includes the effects of globalization, climate change and stronger Pacific Rim connections.<sup>1</sup>

So to our reason for writing. On reading Vaughn Palmer's article in the *Sun* August 3, we were surprised and disturbed to see the Minister Responsible for Core Review announce that a close look at the ALR and the ALC was a top priority, expressing generalized frustration with the ALR on behalf of landowners who want to develop lands they consider should never have been in the ALR in the first place. Then, on review of recent ALC decisions, we note some interactions between the ALC and members of the Provincial and local governments that give us pause. It looks as if battle lines are being drawn. We are concerned that the ALR and its governing body could be drastically harmed if developers' frustrations carry the day with policymakers. Economic Development must consider a full spectrum of the needs of British Columbians, and changes to support economic development that impact our food security today and into the future must be publicly debated.

In some respects this could be a replay of positions and arguments from 40 years ago. We propose that a public debate needs to be re-engaged with a view to BC's 21<sup>st</sup> century needs for a strong economy, with agriculture and food as a strong contributor to it. Although our food future should not be optional any jurisdiction without the ability to grow its own food is at the mercy of the one that can), it should be fully and publicly discussed before changes are made to the regulatory framework around our critically important farmland. As the Auditor General stated so succinctly in his 2010 report on the ALC, "agricultural land is an indispensable, natural resource". As BC considers the current opportunities in the energy sector, resource development must be balanced with the long-term food production capacity of the province so crucial to our food security.

Attitudes to food among producers, processors, public and government have changed a lot in the last 40 years. We have some new challenges, new demands, new markets, and new opportunities before us. At the BC Food Systems Network we see far more consumer food

---

<sup>1</sup> In this regard we note recommendations in the paper *Strengthening BC's Agriculture Sector in the Face of Climate change* from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, May 2013

literacy, local demand, and financing opportunities than we had 30 years ago – and a nationwide food movement that we have helped to build.

We believe there are untapped opportunities for policy instruments and programs to support agriculture, including measures such as incentives and tax shifts; scaling of regulatory requirements to allow more business opportunities; opportunities for synergy between land- and water-based production; and room for expansion in the Environmental Farm Plan mandate. We also know that innovation often comes from the margins and that, when facing an uncertain future, policymakers do well to manage adaptively and support a variety of approaches to see which can become successful.

We trust that you agree and that the founding principles of BC's farmland protection can be carried forward for the next 40 years in an equally far-sighted way.

**We would appreciate your response to the following questions:**

**What is the public engagement process for the Core Review of the ALR and ALC? Will input be possible to the Core Review Team's proposals to government? How can the BC Food Systems Network and other concerned stakeholders contribute, and be heard?**

**We would also appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above. We have taken the liberty of copying Cabinet colleagues who are former Ministers of Agriculture; their experience will be helpful in consideration of these matters.**

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours



Brent Mansfield and Abra Brynne  
Co-Chairs, BC Food Systems Network

Network Contacts: Brent Mansfield ph [REDACTED]  
Linda Geggie, Policy Working Group Chair, ph [REDACTED]

s.22

s.22

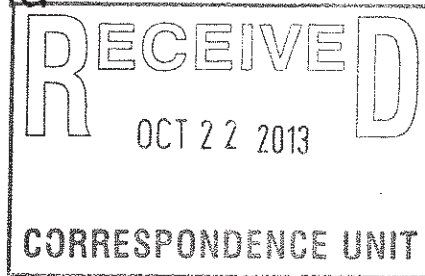
CC

- Honourable Steve Thomson, Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- Honourable Don McRae, Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation
- Richard Bullock, Chair, Agricultural Land Commission
- Rhonda Driediger, Chair, BC Agriculture Council
- Susan Snow & Rebecca Kneen, Co-Chairs, Certified Organic Associations of BC
- BC Food Systems Network members





City of  
Richmond



**COPY**

Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor

6911 No. 3 Road,  
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1  
Telephone: 604-276-4123  
Fax No: 604-276-4332

October 9, 2013

The Honourable Christy Clark  
Premier of British Columbia  
Office of the Premier  
PO BOX 9041 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

www.richmond.ca

MINISTER OF ENERGY AND MINES

REFERRAL NUMBER Core 56

REFER TO: Min of Agriculture

DRAFT REPLY ☐ INFO/FILE ☐ REPLY DIRECT ☐

RECEIVED OCT 16 2013

REMARKS: original sent to  
agriculture

Dear Premier Clark:

**Re: Provincial Core Review of the Agricultural Land Commission and Reserve**

This is to advise that at its Special Council meeting held on Monday, October 7, 2013, Richmond City Council adopted the following resolution:

- (1) *That as the Provincial Government is conducting a Core Review of its programs and services including the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and Reserve (ALR), and as opportunities for Council and public consultation during the Review are unclear, Council write the Premier and Minister of Agriculture requesting that the Core Review:*
- (a) *protect, enhance, adequately fund, and enforce the Agricultural Land Reserve, Agricultural Land Commission, and its policies; and*
  - (b) *enable consultation opportunities for City Council, the Richmond Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) and public; and*
- (2) *That copies of the letter be sent to all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the Metro Vancouver Board and local governments, the Port Metro Vancouver Board, and the Core Review Panel.*

If you require further information, please feel free to contact Terry Crowe, Manager, Policy Planning at 604-276-4139.

Yours truly,

Malcolm D. Brodie  
Mayor

pc: The Honourable Bill Bennett, Minister of Energy and Mines and Minister Responsible for Core Review  
Members of the Legislative Assembly  
Metro Vancouver Board  
Port Metro Vancouver Board