



Consultation Meeting re: Bill 24

On April 23, 2014, the Hon. Norm Letnick, Minister of Agriculture, BC Ag Ministry staff, Richard Bullock (Chair of the ALC) and staff, representatives from BCAC, and other stakeholders met in Abbotsford to review the draft Bill 24 (Agricultural Land Commission Amendment Act, 2014). The discussion was open, honest and constructive from all sides, with clarifications by all parties as to the original reason for the changes and to address stakeholder concerns.

From the BCAC point of view, there continues to be two areas of concern with respect to the proposed legislation:

1) Six Regional Panels:

The decision-making powers given to the panels as outlined in the changes may result in moral hazard and local bias with the ultimate fracturing of the ALR. The BCAC must be confident that the Chair's ability to manage the implementation of the Act is not diluted, and that the system does not effectively create six different commissions managing six different Agricultural Land Reserves. BCAC requests that all ALR applications be vetted by the provincial ALC prior to decision at the regional level.

2) Proposed Zone 1 and Zone 2:

BCAC does not support breaking the ALR into two zones. BCAC supports one ALR that observes a provincially consistent set of criteria that thoughtfully considers regional diversity.

There are some very good changes proposed that BCAC does agree with including the timely replacement of vacant commission seats, communication with local governments early on in the planning process before the plans are finalized, and the requirement for operational measurement and reporting.

Of course, the effectiveness of the ALC will be contingent on not only a well-crafted Act, but also an adequately funded budget.

BCAC will wait to see what the result of the Minister's decision is with respect to what he moves forward with. We encourage all members to share their views as soon as possible with Minister Letnick. His email address is agr.minister@gov.bc.ca.

Sincerely,

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