



# BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

*Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia*

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May 25, 2009

## **POSITION STATEMENT: THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE**

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The BC Cattlemen's Association believes the protection of agricultural lands is dependent upon the ability of ranch businesses to be profitable. The BC Cattlemen's Association supports the concept of an Agricultural Land Reserve only when the burden is cost-shared with society.

The Association lends its support to the Agricultural Land Reserve on the condition:

- That our recommendations to encourage ranch viability are implemented;
- That our recommendations to improve governance of the Land Reserve are implemented; and
- That our recommendations regarding community development and land use planning are implemented.

The BC Cattlemen's Association looks forward to working co-operatively with the Province, the Agricultural Land Commission and Local Governments to implement our attached recommendations.

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Recommendations



## **RECOMMENDATIONS: To IMPROVE THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE**

### **1. ENCOURAGE RANCH VIABILITY**

*Protection of agricultural lands is directly dependent upon the ability of ranch businesses to be profitable. The Association urges the Province to implement policies and regulations that support the viability of ranch businesses and immediately work to repeal those which impede the industry's prosperity.*

**THE BC CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS** the following actions to encourage viable ranching operations as a way to preserve agricultural land:

#### **Support Programs (The Pillars)**

The Provincial Government should work to:

1. Reinstate a Cost of Production Insurance Program.
2. Revitalize the Agricultural Credit Act and update to today's needs for loan guarantees and securing credit for ranch businesses.
3. Upgrade Agricultural Land Development Act to allow other agricultural development activities (such as ecological restoration, efficient irrigation systems, water storage, etc.) in addition to previous uses for land clearing, and well drilling.
4. Reinstate the Farm Product Industry Act in order to support local/regional slaughter facilities, value added processing, and increasing industry infrastructure.

#### **Implementation of Ecological Goods & Services Payments**

5. The Agricultural Land Commission should allow for the purchase of development credits and conservation covenants.
6. The Provincial government should fund an Ecological Good & Services program which financially rewards agricultural producers for their ecological contributions.
7. The Provincial government should establish a provincial Carbon Credit System that compensates BC ranchers for existing and future sequestration.

#### **Alternate Land Use**

8. That Local Governments and the Agricultural Land Commission provide flexibility to carry out activities that do not conflict or impede agricultural interests in order to provide additional farm income.

#### **Multiple Homesites**

9. The Agricultural Land Commission should only allow additional residences when legitimate farm need for ranch labour and/or succession exists.
10. That new homesite applications made to Local Governments be referred to the Agricultural Land Commission for review and approval.

**Taxation**

11. The Province and BC Assessment should eliminate split tax assessments on raw land portions of actively farmed agricultural units.
12. The Minister of Finance should exempt all purchases for ranch activities from the Provincial Sales Tax.

**2. IMPROVE THE GOVERNANCE OF THE LAND RESERVE**

*The BC Cattlemen's Association urges the Agricultural Land Commission to adhere to its mandate "To preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout British Columbia" and review existing procedures that may be impeding rather than enabling farm businesses.*

**THE BC CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS** the following actions regarding the Agricultural Land Commission and governance of the Land Reserve:

**Mandate**

13. The Agricultural Land Commission should adhere to their mandate to preserve agricultural land, and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout BC.

**Governance**

The Agricultural Land Commission should:

14. Annually review existing Delegation of Authority agreements with Regional Districts to better protect agricultural land and land owner's rights.
15. Periodically review the Delegation of Authority agreement between the Agricultural Land Commission and the Oil & Gas Commission. This review must involve an open discussion with all interested agricultural land owners be fully transparent and meaningful.
16. Improve their governance by ensuring all Agricultural Land Commission Regional Panel members have significant agricultural expertise and knowledge.
17. Ensure the Regional Panels uniformly apply the Agricultural Land Commission's guidelines for decision making.
18. Ensure the Chair of the Agricultural Land Commission has significant agricultural experience.

**Appeal Process**

19. The Agricultural Land Commission must improve its transparency by establishing an open and effective appeal process that is supported by the agricultural community.

### 3. IMPROVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & LAND USE PLANNING

*The BC Cattlemen's Association believes that improvements are needed to minimize the impact on the ranching community from urban and rural development. We feel the effects of sprawl can be mitigated with better community development and coordinated land use planning.*

**THE BC CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS** the following actions regarding Community Development & Land Use Planning:

#### **Density Levels**

20. The Agricultural Land Commission should ensure that density level plans are in place and met before considering an application to expand the municipal boundary onto Agricultural Land Reserve lands.

#### **Water Needs**

21. All levels of government and the Agricultural Land Commission must consider the present and future water needs for agriculture and ensure these needs are given priority over:
  - Subdivisions or community expansion,
  - Oil & Gas development, and
  - Other industrial uses.
22. The practice by the Oil & Gas Industry of deep injection of water that is suitable for agricultural purposes should be stopped.

#### **Tenure Security**

23. All levels of government must recognize the importance of Crown range tenures to the viability of ranching operations.

#### **Planning**

24. Local Governments should have an Official Community Plan (OCP) which sets density levels.
25. Local Governments should develop Agriculture Area Plans to complement their OCP as a way to strengthen their recognition of farming, ranching and cattle grazing interests.
26. All Regional Districts should establish Agricultural Advisory Committees.
27. Local Governments and the Agricultural Land Commission should harmonize their list of permitted uses on ALR lands.
28. Local Governments and the Agricultural Land Commission should work to streamline the application process for landowners.



## **CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

*about the* **AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE**

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The BC Cattlemen's Association agrees with the principle of the Agricultural Land Reserve and feels the full potential of these lands can only be achieved when agricultural operations are financially viable.

The Association is pleased to lend our full support for the Agricultural Land Reserve only when agriculture, including ranching, is financially viable.

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