



July 11, 2019

File: 0280-30

Ref: 190495

Arjun Singh, President  
Union of BC Municipalities  
Email: bsihota@ubcm.ca

Dear Arjun Singh:

Thank you for your letter of May 27, 2019, regarding Bill 15 and amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. I appreciate hearing the concerns expressed by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) on behalf of local governments.

As you may know, when I was appointed Minister of Agriculture in July 2017, one of my first tasks was to revitalize the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). To aid in this process, an independent Advisory Committee (the Committee) was formed to provide the Province with strategic advice and policy guidance. In early 2018, the Committee held consultation meetings in nine communities across B.C., with local governments and other agriculture stakeholders providing verbal and written reports and submissions. As you have noted, the Committee engaged with UBCM as part of this consultation.

The amendments in Bill 15 are consistent with both the interim report recommendations and final report of the Committee. Because of this, the Ministry of Agriculture (Ministry) did not undertake additional consultation with stakeholders before introducing the legislation. I recognize that some of the changes from Bill 15 require local governments to be more involved in applications to exclude land from the ALR. I also agree with you that collaboration is the best means to develop policy solutions that address these concerns.

I have noted your concerns regarding property owners' ability to directly apply to the ALC for exclusions of land from the ALR. It is important to stress that these kinds of applications have always required local government approval before they are considered by the ALC. I would also like to note that this change is only being made for applications to permanently exclude land from the ALR, not for any other applications such as for sub-divisions or non-farm use. This change in process is important because we want to see exclusion applications coming forward as part of community and regional planning processes by local governments and First Nation governments.

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We also see dialogue between these governments and the ALC on community and regional interests in the ALR as of critical importance.

Noting these concerns, we would like to work in a renewed way with local government and other agriculture stakeholders on the regulatory agenda to support revitalization of the ALR. In particular, although Bill 15 has received Royal Assent, the B.C. Government has not yet brought the law into force. This will allow the Ministry and UBCM to jointly explore how to best support local governments and landowners when the changes take effect. I have therefore instructed Ministry staff to work together with representatives of UBCM on this file.

Thank you again for raising these concerns on behalf of B.C. local governments.

Sincerely,



Lana Popham  
Minister

cc: Jennifer Dyson  
Chair, Agricultural Land Commission

Tara Faganello  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing