

BC Agriculture Council Reacts To Controversial Bill 24 Amendments

ABBOTSFORD – May 7, 2014

Agriculture Minister Norm Letnick revealed the results of his intensive, albeit brief, province-wide Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) consultation by announcing formal amendments to Bill 24 late Tuesday afternoon.

British Columbia Agriculture Council (BCAC) Chair, Stan Vander Waal has reacted to the proposed amendments, calling them “a step forward reflective of the new Minister’s recent efforts on behalf of agriculture.”

BCAC Directors and membership played a key role in the consultation process that led to yesterday’s announcement. “The BCAC ALR Steering Committee was directly involved in the amendments made to Bill 24” said Vander Waal. “Unfortunately, we didn’t get everything we asked for. Although Government is moving forward with amendments to the proposed Bill, BCAC remains firmly opposed to two zones. BCAC supports a one zone system that provides reasonable opportunities for regional representatives to consider community need”.

In addition to securing amendments to Bill 24, the Council representing approximately 14 000 BC Farmers and Ranchers negotiated two significant commitments from government. “Minister Letnick has committed to directly engage BCAC in the development of regulations and practices for Bill 24. He has also committed to formally engage a working group of BC Farmers and Ranchers to explore the feasibility and implications of adopting an overall net benefit to agriculture policy for decisions relating to the ALR” said Mr. Vander Waal.

“BCAC has always been committed to preserving agriculture land, but we are also committed to preserving farmers. If enjoying locally grown and raised goods is truly important to British Columbians, we need to find ways to support economically sustainable farming and attract youth into agriculture” said Vander Waal.

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The BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) is the province’s umbrella farm organization. We are a council of commodity groups and, through our members, represent approximately 14,000 of the 20,000 B.C. farm families who, in turn, generate 96 percent of the farm gate receipts in British Columbia. Agriculture is the third largest resource sector in the province, playing a significant and important role in the provincial economy both in terms of GDP and job creation.

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