

PROVINCIAL LAND USE POLICY:  
A STUDY OF AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA 1949-1983

by

Richard Wesley Brundrige

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

Department of City Planning  
Faculty of Architecture  
University of Manitoba  
February 1985

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## ABSTRACT

Strong provincial government involvement in land use planning began in British Columbia. As the first province to invoke a legislative response, the B.C. Land Commission Act (1973) acknowledged the fact that local land use controls for resource conservation were inadequate. The primary thrust of legislation was toward agricultural land preservation, due to the prevalence of urban sprawl.

In this thesis, I examined the factors leading up to the Land Commission, the method of implementation of the two legislative responses, and an analysis of the outcomes. I have broken down the study of agricultural land preservation into three separate, yet interwoven epochs. The first stage was the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, which I classify as the identification response; the second stage was the B.C. Land Commission, which I call the zoning control response; the final, ongoing stage of my analysis was the response of the Agricultural Land Commission, a response I refer to as discretionary control.

I point out that provincial government intervention has political entanglements. Interpretation of policy by the Social Credit party was different from that of the NDP. Nevertheless, provincial control of land use is possible and practical. Some suggestions for improvement consist of more independence of the Commission, increased budget, and completion of Agricultural Land Reserve boundaries.

## Acknowledgments

The subject areas of this thesis has been near and dear to me. With this attitude, it was not too difficult or onerous for me to research this topic. However, there are many people to whom I am indebted, who shared their knowledge, convictions, or experiences with me. These people primarily represent my 'academic' support. In particular, Professor Kent Gerecke, my advisor, to whom I submitted several thesis drafts, and the rest of my committee-- Professors Rotoff and McLachlan. Support was also gained through the staff of the Agricultural Land Commission, Burnaby B.C., as well as the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Victoria, B.C. I was also fortunate to converse with Ms. Mary Rawson, Mr. Bill Lane, and Prof. James Wilson; three individuals having personal interest and knowledge of the land loss/conservation responses in B.C.

There is also another group of people who physically, emotionally, and spiritually supported me. Again, Professor Gerecke must be mentioned. Much growth came from me as a result of this project, but the uplifting thoughts from close friends formed a fellowship which fostered this growth. My parents and friends in B.C., especially Mr. Don Robb, together with my long-lasting friends in Winnipeg are the people of whom I speak.

Finally, I thank the people who served me in an editorial capacity by reviewing drafts. I also thank Mrs. Liliane Pilotte for her professional typing of this final manuscript.

Rick Brundrige  
February 1985



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## Preface

From the title, the reader may expect this thesis to examine provincial government measures to control the utilization of resource sensitive areas. Partially, this is true, but specifically, this thesis centres around the British Columbia provincial government stewardship of agriculturally suited lands. Attempts to caution the development on resource sensitive lands began in B.C. as early as 1949, with the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board. The B.C. Land Commission Act (1973) had four mandates, one of which was agricultural land preservation. An amendment to this Act resulted in the Agricultural Land Commission Act (1977). The prime focus of this ongoing response was, as the title suggests, agricultural land preservation. British Columbia was the first province in Canada to invoke provincial control, with the agricultural component of policy having been under legislation for more than a decade. Subsequent policy by other provinces, such as Manitoba's Provincial Land Use policies (1980) encompasses more than agriculture land. Ontario has recently proposed Provincial policy for the sensitive Niagara Fruit Belt. These two latter provincial directions, I believe, were born out of B.C.'s experience.

The conservation ethic awakened mankind to the respecting of land as a valuable resource, rather than as a commodity. Municipal or local government attempts to counter the loss of resource lands have been wrought with difficulty. It is thought that the public interest is better served by provincial government involvement.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"They paved paradise and put up a parking lot.... They took all the trees and put them in a tree museum and they charged all the people a dollar and a half just to see 'em."

song, "Big Yellow Taxi",

Joni Mitchell, 1970.

The above statement may have been typical among many people's thoughts in the 1970's. The growth of world population necessitated an increasing quantity of liveable space. Coupled with this, man's increasing affluence spurred on the spread of the city into the suburbs. In response, growth of the conservation ethic, respecting the stewardship of non-renewable resources, was raised by society. The upshot of Mitchell's cynicism, as well as the conservation ethic, was to consider the long range implication of human development on the environment.

The spreading influence did not go unheeded in the province of British Columbia; action was taken regarding agriculture land via the conservation route. The nature of the problem in B.C. was the encroachment of urbanization onto farmland, in a province poorly endowed with this resource. In order to halt non-agriculture use of agriculture land, the provincial government in 1973 'froze' any such development, choosing in turn to have an ample supply of food producing land for future generations.

Essentially, this thesis examines the government policy implemented to preserve agriculture land and an evaluation of its effectiveness. To serve as an introduction, my personal observations as a provincial resident, the nature of the problem from the provincial perspective, a cursory review of relevant research and finally, a statement of my objectives and methodology form the focus of this chapter.

### 1.1 Personal Inquisitiveness

During my youth in my native British Columbia, I enjoyed visiting south-central Vancouver Island farms with my grandfather, who was employed in the agriculture sector. At this time, the city seemed distant and the rural landscape was shared by farms and forests. As the years passed and my visits became less frequent, I noticed that the once large farm parcels had become much reduced in size or had become non-existent. With the further passage of time I had come to live in a rural area of Victoria where my perception of the threats to farmland loss had become much larger. Cities had begun to encompass what was once the rural landscape.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's when many areas of southern British Columbia were exposed to severe development pressure, I had become aware of the dilemma that local politicians had to face: either to preserve the rural nature of traditional farming activities and large lots, or

succumb to the development pressure. If the latter alternative was chosen, often land which was in agricultural use would best serve to provide new housing. This is part of the rural-urban fringe complexity.

Although the provincial government in 1973 had introduced legislation to restrict or control farmland loss, a conscience of acceptance of the need for controls was required by local government. Frequently, I read in the newspaper where the agricultural land reserves were referred to in any rezoning application, and the District of North Saanich, where I lived, had done a commendable job of directing new development to the highlands. However, with high development pressure, sacrifices of farmland had to be made. I feel that the conscience level of the public must be raised in order to restrict the land conversion process. A large recreation centre was built on good farmland; land adjoining the federal government Agricultural Research Station. My concern is: was there no other land available which would not pre-empt agricultural activities or research? The preservation legislation in B.C. allowed exclusions from the reserves if the use would benefit the public. However, I think a concerted effort should be made to use the scarce agricultural lands only as a last resort. It became evident to me that planners, politicians and the general public in many cases, felt that agricultural land was a new frontier for development given that mankind in general had taken to living in suburbia.

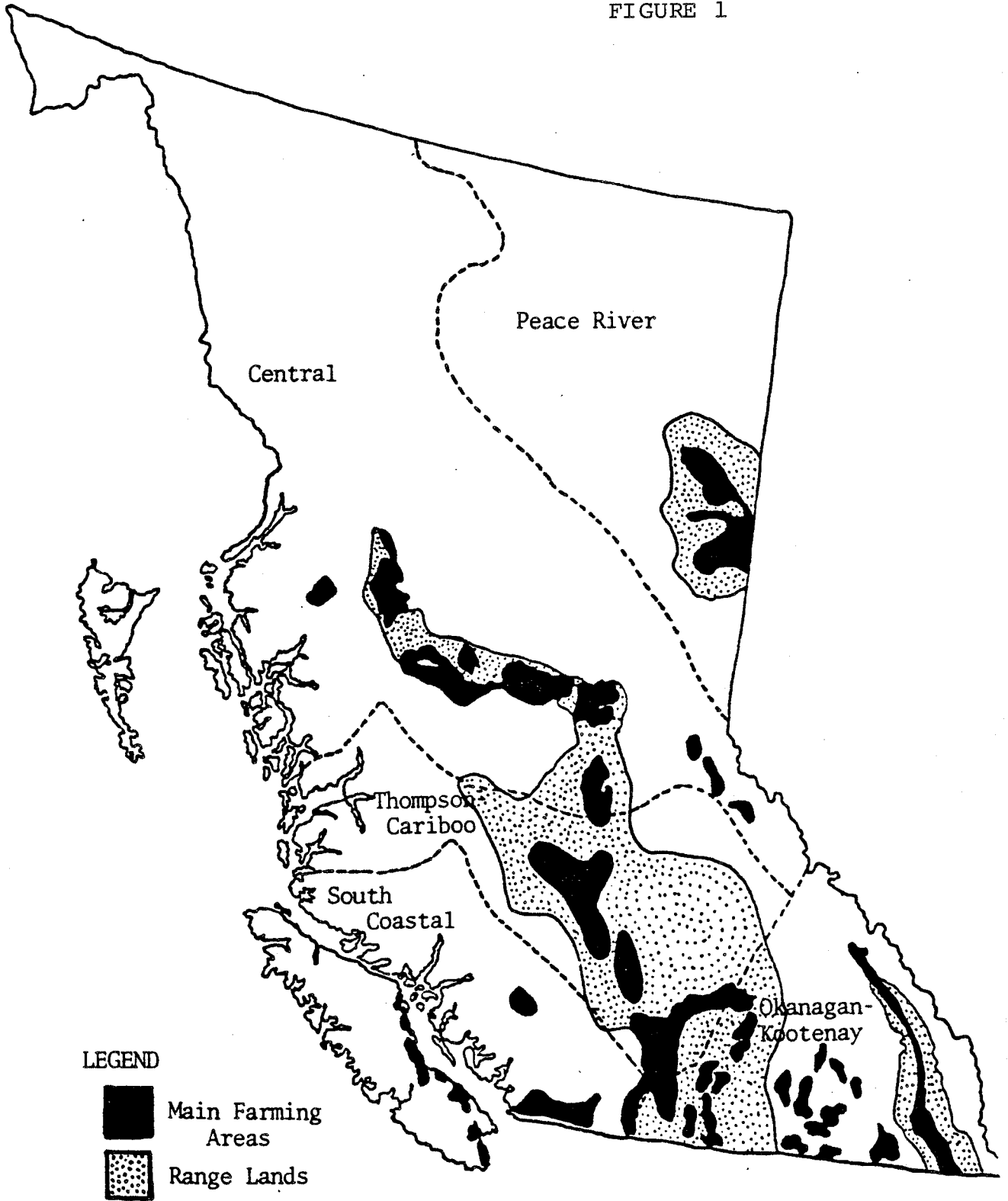
Given that the B.C. government had introduced legislation to offset agricultural land loss, the purpose of this thesis is an inquiry into the effectiveness of this legislation. From my observation I would hypothesize that the controls have indeed reduced farmland conversion, but that some aspects of the legislation or administration of it are weak. I intend to identify the problem areas leading to agricultural land loss and historically evaluate the response to this issue. The outcome of this study will leave the reader with a hopefully clear understanding of the positive and negative aspects of these responses. Regarding the factors which may harm the Commission, suggestions will be made to facilitate improvement.

## 1.2 The Specific Problem in British Columbia

The topography of British Columbia is unlike many parts of urbanized Canada. Much of the landscape is characterized by mountain masses slit by narrow, steep-walled valleys. Only about 10 percent of the province is of topography suitable for agricultural use. The land mass that is arable and suitable for tillage and crop production is only 4.1 percent. Of this small area, only ".5 percent of the total land mass is class 1 (prime) soil and only 1/100th of 1 percent of British Columbia's land area is suitable for the production of tree fruits",<sup>1</sup> a major provincial industry. Clearly, B.C. can be regarded as a 'have not' province, in terms of its supply of agricultural land. The main farming areas are illustrated in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1



The small area of agricultural land, usually flood-plains in the narrow valleys, suffer from conflicting uses which undermine the effectiveness of farming activities in these already restricted areas. Conflicting uses take the form of settlements, roads, railways, power and gas lines and hydro-electric reservoirs. These uses are best located on land which is also conducive to agriculture -- level and relatively rock free. The conflict between agricultural users and other uses is intensified because the latter can pay more for land than the former.

The factor of climate plays an important role in the land resource as well. The temperate climate and suitable soil conditions of the Lower Mainland and the Okanagan Valley permit viable farming activities. A mild climate with an abundant amount of frost-free days gives this area one of the longest growing seasons in the country. The soil/climate combination also is the reason why specialty crops can be grown here; crops which can only be grown here or else in the Niagara Fruit Belt of Ontario. An example is tender fruits and vinifera or hybrid grapes.<sup>2</sup> Climatic conditions also act as a draw to people from other regions of Canada. Southern B.C. is characterized by mild winters and warm summers. There is no need for block heaters, air conditioners and only seldom, snow tires. A continuing influx of population has posed a concern over the amount of land needed to satisfy this population demand. Hard hit were the fertile suburban communities surrounding Vancouver

and the Okanagan Valley. Prior to 1972, urban sprawl was consuming 15,000 acres per year, mostly in these two regions of the province.

It would come as no surprise to learn that B.C. is dependent upon imported foods. The increasing population density has reduced the amount of arable land leading to a growing dependence upon imported foods. "In 1946, food consumption in the province required a net import of 3 percent, by 1955 this deficit has risen to 29 percent."<sup>3</sup> Calculations in 1977 suggest that:

the average Canadian required 5.0 acres under cultivation and pasture to meet his current demands for food. In 1977, land in the province which was devoted to the production of food was approximately 2.4 acres per capita. The resulting shortfall of 2.6 acres per capita can be viewed as a crude indicator of the province's dependence upon external agricultural land.<sup>4</sup>

Robert Malthus in 1798 wrote that:

the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce sustenance for man....Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Sustenance increases only in an arithmetic ratio.<sup>5</sup>

This statement aptly applies to the situation in B.C. and explains our growing reliance upon imported foods. Being dependent, we are subject to price and market fluctuations of our supplier. Much produce comes from California, a state which is experiencing a loss of productivity from land conversion. It was imminent that this increasing

exponential dependence upon imported food had to be reduced. How it was to stop is the purpose of this thesis.

In the early 1970's the government of British Columbia introduced legislation to halt the conversion of farmland to other uses, in addition to strengthening farm units. It was necessary to preserve any land suitable for agriculture use that was not irreversibly developed, but also to reduce some of the external pressures faced by farmers. Reducing the pressure of urban encroachment, for example, will 'save the farmer' which in essence will also 'save the farm'. The B.C. Land Commission Act was the first attempt of any province to control the agricultural land resource, acknowledging the fact that local governments were an insufficient safeguard for this land. The legislation, establishing Agricultural Land Reserves (ALR's), can be described as a super zoning bylaw in which privately and Crown owned land form the reserves. The further description and implementation of this technique will be described beginning in Chapter III. Before describing what the explicit purpose of this thesis is, a brief review of relevant literature is in order.

### 1.3 Research On This Problem

The Agricultural Land Commission and agricultural land preservation in general has been the focus of many theses as well as an interest to academics. In this section, I will chronologically discuss literature on this topic.

The majority of the research has originated from the University of British Columbia (UBC) School of Community and Regional Planning.

Smith, B.E., The British Columbia Agricultural Land Commission Act--1973. M.A. thesis, UBC, 1975.

This comprehensive thesis was directed at the rationale for the Land Commission Act, as well as the implementation and administration of the legislation. It is of value to the individual desiring to understand how and why the legislation came about. It was limited in the analysis of the effect of the legislation because the commission had only been enacted one year prior to the completion of the research.

Manning, E.W. and Eddy, S.S., The Agricultural Land Reserves of British Columbia: An Impact Analysis. Environment Canada, Land Use in Canada Series, Number 13, Ottawa, 1978.

This federally supported report was directed at determining whether the legislation had achieved its stated aim: the reservation of agricultural land for future agriculture use. In order to carry out the analysis a random sample of 800 landowners were selected from 12 study areas in B.C. The limitations of this report is that the period of analysis is from 1972 to 1977 therefore the effects of the amended Act (Agricultural Land Commission Act) are not noted.

Gillis, M.H., An Analysis of Landowner's Attitudes towards the B.C. Agriculture Land Reserves. M.A. thesis, UBC, 1980.

Gillis in his thesis obtained a printout of the raw data used by Manning and Eddy (above reference). His analysis was more in-depth than these two authors because he subjectively examined the effect of the Agricultural Land Commission Act. Perhaps if landowners were interviewed subsequent to the passage of the Agriculture Land Commission Act, the results would be more meaningful.

Roy, D.A. An Analysis of Techniques to Preserve Agriculture Land. M.A. thesis, UBC, 1980.

The approach taken by Roy was directed at methods of preserving agriculture land through various approaches. Some of these being: regulatory, such as agriculture districting, or compensatory such as taxation methods, transfer of development rights or the purchase of land through a land trust. In the analysis section, he compared the effectiveness of the compensatory system of California with the regulatory system of British Columbia. This thesis would be of interest to the reader wanting knowledge of land preservation in the general sense and as such could be called a thesis on administrative theory.

Higginbottom, G. Agriculture Land Preservation and its implications for housing construction costs in Greater Victoria, British Columbia. M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1980.

Critics of the land freeze suggested land costs would rise substantially if farmland could not be converted to urban use. The premise being that construction and servicing costs are greater on hilly terrain than on flat land. Higginbottom, in his analysis concluded that with present technology, the costs of developing non-ALR land was 55 percent more expensive than to develop ALR land. In spite of this cost difference, development is taking place on non-ALR lands today. Perhaps the cost difference is almost insignificant when the total house price is considered.

Graesser, A.P. Regulating Urban Encroachment on Agriculture Land: A Study of the relationship between small communities and the B.C. Agriculture Land Commission.  
M.A. thesis, UBC, 1981.

The effect of farmland legislation was to remove agriculturally capable land from the exclusive control of local governments. In her thesis, Graesser investigates "the operation of the ALR system as it affects small municipalities through the exclusion application process, and how community plans have dealt with the reserves as a fact of life." Like Higginbottom, this was a specific case study of one aspect of the legislation.

The most recent study of the Commission has been done by two professors of the Department of Geography, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. John Pierce and James Wilson have an expressed interest in the farmland preservation issue and have both written papers on the subject.

Pierce had written an article for Plan Canada (21:2, June 1981) entitled 'The B.C. Agricultural Land Commission: a Review and Evaluation.' Both authors have collaborated on an article published in Environments (14 (3), 1982) simply entitled 'The Agricultural Land Commission of British Columbia.' Many of the aforementioned researchers are referenced throughout this thesis.

Having gone through the relevant literature, it is now time to articulate my specific topic. No one has undertaken an up to date (end of 1983) comprehensive evaluation of the total response. From the brief literature review, you could see that most have involved only one of the Acts, or have dealt with some aspect of legislation or the effects of it. I submit that a response began to be formulated with the work of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board and was officially enacted with the N.D.P. victory at the polls in 1972. A further evolutionary stage occurred with the Social Credit victory in 1975 and the beginnings of a revamping of the whole Act. These facts form the basis of the uniqueness of my research. I have formulated three reasons for my approach: (1) a more updated analysis; (2) evaluating the evolutionary responses of the legislation; and (3), how the evolutionary nature of the legislation has formed a progression and acceptance of the response. The story of the response in B.C. to agriculture land loss, being governmental, is of necessity, political. The object of this thesis is not to ridicule the government, for without



the government concern there would be no legislation in the first place. Nevertheless, there could be improvements. The purpose of the thesis is to outline and analyze the responses to the identified problem of agricultural land loss.

It should be noted that the thesis is not directed at administrative theory but rather the ethical nature of the problem.<sup>6</sup> Obviously any technique by a government to control land must be administrative, but my intention is to focus from the planning perspective on the necessity to concern ourselves with the careful stewardship of the land resource, and the success or failure of the B.C. government to do so. The following is the methodology and organization I will use.

#### 1.4 Methodology and Organization

As stated earlier, the purpose of this thesis is to briefly describe the agricultural land loss problem in B.C., the methodology used to deal with the problem and an analysis of the merits and deficiencies of the responses. I submit that we as planners, as well as other members of society, have not fully appreciated the long-term need to preserve land for future generations; we tend to look at short term goals. The lessons learned from the experience in B.C. could serve as a model to be used by other jurisdictions.

To carry out the stated aim of the thesis, I have broken into 5 chapters the organization of the subject. Chapter I

forms the introduction. In this chapter the reasons for my undertaking the topic I have chosen, the major literature on the topic and the specific problem in B.C. form the theme. Chapter II can be called a societal backdrop to the problem. Here, I examine the conservation ethic, the economic model (competition), the benefactors of natural resource exploitation as well as the generic factors regarding farmland loss from the national perspective. Chapter III addresses the responses to the farmland loss in B.C. The focus is on the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, the B.C. Land Commission and the Agricultural Land Commission. Chapter IV is the analysis stage. The analysis is twofold, firstly, examining the three responses individually in terms of assets and liabilities and secondly, how the evolutionary technique in B.C. addressed the identified problems of land loss from a national perspective. Chapter V serves as a review and conclusion, summarizing the outcome of the research as well as the possible future planning direction of the legislation.

This research project has taken place over the course of approximately one year. Besides using many of the sources mentioned in this chapter, I was able to receive cooperation of the Province of British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as well as from the staff of the Agricultural Land Commission. Much of the statistical information was derived from annual reports of the Commission. As well, the government through its ministries of Agriculture and Environment

have published much information through the 10 plus year history of the Commission. Finally, information which was lacking was solicited from four significant individuals who have intimate knowledge of the workings of the Commission.

Two points pertaining to terms of reference should be made before proceeding. Firstly, all quantities of land referred to in statistics are all in acres. Secondly, the terms 'farmland' and 'agriculture land' are used synonymously throughout the text.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>David Baxter, The British Columbia Land Commission Act - A Review (Vancouver: Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, 1974), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>John N. Jackson, "The Niagara Fruit Belt: The Ontario Municipal Board Decision of 1981," in The Canadian Geographer, (XXVI,2,1982), p. 173.

<sup>3</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>H. Craig Davis and William E. Rees, Agriculture and Uncertainty: keeping the Options Open (Vancouver: School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1977), p.3.

<sup>5</sup>John D. Chapman, "Interactions between Man and His Resources", in Resources and Man (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1969), p.39.

<sup>6</sup>If the reader wishes to pursue administrative theory, two sources are:

Owen J. Furuseth and J.T. Pierce, "A Comparative Analysis of Farmland Preservation Programmes in North America", The Canadian Geographer (XXVI,3,1982), pp. 191-206.

Denis A. Roy, An Analysis of Techniques to Preserve Agriculture Land, (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1980).

CHAPTER II: SOCIETAL BACKDROP TO THE PROBLEM

2.1 General Context - Conservation Ethic

This chapter is directed at the relationship or interaction between man and his environment. Many volumes could be written on this topic, but for my purpose, mention of the 'conservation ethic' stressing spiritual and practical regard for the land resource; ownership of property, regarding who should benefit, as well as several pages dedicated to the economic model of competition for land use, forms the theme. The outcome of this chapter will form the theory behind this research and the rationale for my undertaking the subject I have chosen.

Man is a complicated creature, perhaps the most advanced inhabitant of the earth. Probably since time immemorial man has studied his position in regards to the natural world. It was thought in the 1500's that the world was created for man, not man for the world.<sup>1</sup> Man has enjoyed a physical intimacy with the world and was to reap whatever benefits the Creator was to sow. However, a conflicting thought emerged in the 1700's. The Linnaean school suggested that "the earth cannot exist solely for man, but it is the common property of all species."<sup>2</sup>

A wise God has endured each organism with the 'cloathing', seeds, roots or migratory instincts it will need to best perform its role. Every creature has its 'assigned place', which is both its location in space and its function or work in the general economy.<sup>3</sup>

God's will was to establish a peaceful co-existence among species (including man).

With the passage of time and further study, the prominent work of Charles Darwin was presented to the world. His book On the Origin of Species (1859) spoke of survival of the fittest. Survival of the fittest was interpreted to mean that in a competitive nature, only the strongest of species will survive. It was assumed that man was the fittest of all creatures and hence was the survivor.

By 1866, a name had been given to the study of the science of communities--ecology. With the coining of this science, further study of man's interaction with the environment became in vogue. It was discovered that although man thought he survived by conquering nature, he may in fact be contributing to his own annihilation. For instance, it was noted that:

plants are the mediating force between the habitat and its animal population: they are the most immediate and direct translation of climate into food, as well as an essential buffer against environmental extremes.<sup>4</sup>

The great dust storms in the late 1800's across the U.S. gave further evidence of man's influence on the earth environment. Man's destruction of the grassland was blamed for causing these dust storms.

Dirt was set free to blow through such ill-advised practises as plowing long straight furrows (often parallel to the wind), leaving large fields bare of all vegetation, replacing a more diverse plant life with a single cash crop, and most importantly--destroying a native sod that was an indispensable buffer against wind and drought.<sup>5</sup>

A glimpse of a response directed at the haphazard use of natural resources came from the United States. "The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Crusade awakened the people of the United States to the threat to productivity in their primary industries from exploitation practises which had not provided for future needs." The Roosevelt Conferences in 1908 "resulted in the establishment of Conservation Commissions and gave rise to the Canadian Commission on Conservation." The Canadian Commission in its lifetime (1909-1921) "made a large-scale study of resource use in Canada," including urban and regional planning. "It initiated national consideration of public health and town planning problems" and "published papers and longer studies dealing with various resource problems. Establishment of a national health department and a national planning association" grew out of the work of the Commission. The Commission was "abolished by an Act of Parliament in 1921,"<sup>6</sup> the reason given was that other government departments were doing work similar to the Commission. Nevertheless, the 'conservation ethic' could be said to have started with the Commission on Conservation.

In the 1920's and 1930's, little was done with resource conservation. On a small scale, problems of forest, water, soil and wildlife resources became topics of discussion at conferences. A document submitted to President Roosevelt in 1936 was perhaps the birth of the 'conservation ethic' in the United States. This submission entitled "The Future of The Great Plains" spoke of the "...inherent characteristic of pioneering settlement [was] to assume that Nature is something of which to take advantage of and to exploit: that Nature can be shaped to man's convenience."<sup>7</sup>

Post war prosperity created an environment of plenty. People had money to spend on new housing; developers had money to gain; above all, governments had money to spend on suburban servicing. During this time, cities began to grow and flourish. It was only a matter of time, after this new prosperity, that citizens became aware that:

...changes in land use can have profound effects on the environment and that these effects are not limited to the parcel of private property whose use has changed. As the tributary areas of creeks and rivers become paved over for urban development, for example, the slow seepage of storm runoff through the soil becomes replaced by the rush of water off asphalt, carrying with it oil, lead, animal wastes and other pollutants.... As prime agriculture land is converted to urban use, farmers begin to move to less fertile lands, where larger amounts of fertilizers and pesticides are needed to produce the same amount of food.<sup>8</sup>

The sudden growth of cities in the past two decades have destroyed amenities which pioneers used to think of as natural. The trend to country estates in the suburbs have



needlessly expanded city limits and replaced stands of forest and farmers' fields with drive-in theatres and auto-part yards. Rarely, has any land parcel been overlooked:

Rows of high-rise condominiums have sprung up along the beaches and recreational developments dot the mountainsides. Wildlife had retreated from the advance of man and his noisy artifacts. Even the deserts and the swamps have not been spared, as they sprout the little red flags of the subdividers.<sup>9</sup>

Fortunately, the widespread destruction of man on his environment is beginning to be noticed.

The conservation ethic taught us:

...we cannot look at land merely as another commodity producing a return on investment. Instead we must look at land in terms of its potential social value for agriculture and its growth capacity as space for industry, community facilities, housing and as precious open spaces for recreation.<sup>10</sup>

One response in Canada to this new ethic was the Canada Land Inventory (CLI). The CLI classified lands for physical use into several categories, some being: Soil Capacity for Agriculture, Soil Capacity for Forestry, Land Suitability for Recreation and Land, Suitability for Wildlife. These guidelines suggested by the government were perhaps the first attempt to identify valuable lands needed to be carefully managed for future generations.

People's awareness of preservation of renewable and non-renewable resources is becoming a contemporary issue

nowadays. Writers like Rachel Carson in 1962, pointed out that:

sprays, dusts and aerosols applied almost universally to farms, gardens, forests and homes--nonselective chemicals that have the power to kill every insect, the 'good' and the 'bad', to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger in our soil--all this though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects.<sup>11</sup>

Science is now discovering that chemicals also have serious effects on humans. Chemicals such as DDT, which we thought to have been harmless are now proving to be destructive to every living matter.

One particular issue which has attracted public attention over the past several decades has been the loss of farmland; chiefly due to urban pressures. It is not surprising that this has happened as historically, major cities were located in areas where foodstuffs were available nearby. With city growth, valuable farmland began to be converted to urban uses. As early as 1956 in British Columbia, the effects of urban sprawl on land surrounding Vancouver was being noted. A document by the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board noted that:

Sprawl...promises country living and low costs, but destroys the country and hides the costs. It is unfair to both the farmer and the urbanite. It destroys lands and sows innumerable problems for the future. It offers nothing of lasting value that intelligent development cannot offer in infinitely greater measure.<sup>12</sup>

It was many years later that these words were taken to heed. Public acknowledgement of the importance of food-land preservation necessitated action by the political system.

## 2.2 Specific Context

At this point, it is desirable to speak philosophically on agricultural land preservation, as this is the focus of this thesis. Many components of society have chosen to look at land use preservation on a short term basis rather than on the long term. A common belief is that land must be developed to be of use for society; agriculture use and open space is seen as a temporary use to be utilized for future urban, industrial or highway expansion. Lands left dormant for agriculture use of 'amenity conservation' are not as easily economically quantified as are an industrial park or a residential subdivision. A question may be posed: do decision-makers believe that an increased tax base for today is more important than food for tomorrow? The short term benefits can be called an increased tax base, the long term benefits, food for tomorrow. In the words of William Ophuls, (we have the responsibility for)...

the preservation of a healthy biosphere, the careful husbanding of our resources, self-imposed limitations on conservation, long term goals to guide short term choices, and a general attitude toward future generations.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the direct effects of farmland being lost through conversion, four other factors such as the direct loss of

land due to trespass and nuisance, farm fragmentation, high land prices and taxes on agriculture land, and an atmosphere of anticipation or uncertainty being created in advance of urban development<sup>14</sup> all contribute to the complexity of the problem.

It is all well to identify the impact of man's activity on the earth, but difficult to implement a solution. Property rights pose a further problem in that it is necessary to appeal to individual property owners for restriction of land use activities that are detrimental to preservation and resource husbandry. Although the majority of lands in Canada are publicly owned, the 10 percent privately owned has much impact on man's activities, for this is where the majority of Canadians live. The utilization of private land is a major source of grievance among mankind.

Private ownership of land has been so generally accepted as normal in North America that it is difficult for us to understand the important results of this policy. From the early days of settlement, the idea of land ownership became linked with the frontier ethic of liberty, and the pioneers believed that a man's property was his to use as he saw fit.<sup>15</sup>

Today, we know that poor land management and use can lead to serious conflicts with the interests of society as a whole.

To ensure that land use allocation will serve the 'highest and best use', the Parliament of Canada imposed limited controls. Sections of the British North America Act delegate certain authority to the Provincial and Federal

governments. The Provincial government may in turn release some of its control to the municipal government. Opponents of the public (government) control of private land believe a violation of his property rights is taking place.

The private 'owner' of a parcel of land in fee simple is functionally more akin to a long term tenant than an owner in the general sense of the word. The 'landlord' (the Crown) may evict the tenant (the owner) even if the owner has done no wrong (through expropriation), or if the tenant has not paid the 'rent' (taxes) the property may be recovered. Further, the 'owner' can only put the land to approved uses and must develop it in accordance with the Crown's preferences (as expressed in land use and planning controls).<sup>16</sup>

Any form of regulation is bound to cause dissention. But in matters affecting the public good, such as resource preservation, should not a control mechanism be necessary? Property is often used as a means of generating income, thus serving a personal good rather than a public good. Farmland is sold for housing, forests are cut down for expressways, and rivers are dammed to provide hydro-electricity. The greatest pressure for development is on farmland on the periphery of the city, as this land is cheap to buy and to service.

Canada's changing urbanization pattern led to development pressure on the periphery of the cities. Traditionally, Canada's cities were attractions to population and rural areas were inhabited by farming populations. The 1961 census indicated that the rural non-farm population had

superceded the farm population. At this time, the rural population was made up of 62.6 percent non-farmers, by 1981 this figure increased to 82.4 percent. The shift of urbanization from the city to the country has played havoc with the viability of farming, the principal land use on the fringe and suburbs. This disparity led to the chief problem of conversion of farmland to primarily, residential use.

The periphery of the city, known as the urban fringe and urban shadow has been an area of prominent agriculture use. Urban sprawl and land speculation has changed land values and caused much competition and conflict over land use. The accessibility to roads and highways, particularly paved highways is a new factor in the growth process and has caused a re-orientation of the spatial arrangement of urban functions.<sup>17</sup> Functions which were once thought of as part of the cityscape were now not unknown in the country. As the urban fringe and urban shadow can comprise a radius of up to 50 miles from the downtown edge of a large city, this area is very important. "Conceptually, the rural-urban fringe is the growing edge of the city, rather than the transition zone between the city and the country."<sup>18</sup> It became evident that the fringe area was a complex area as it had attractions to urban folk and uses, yet was originally thought to be a rural area, providing food for the nearby city.

In the United States, land speculation and inefficient use on the fringe was much more rampant, and preceded Canada's experience by at least one decade. In the early 1940's, Walter Firey became concerned with inefficient economic and social use of suburban land surrounding Detroit and Flint, Michigan. His concept of 'social utility' related to qualitative social aspects for the community; the community was responsible to provide an adequate municipal tax base, was responsible for reasonable fire insurance rates as well as providing civic participation, and adequate health and sanitation to its residents.<sup>19</sup> In Firey's words:

Up to a certain point the progressive subdividing of vacant lots around a city will entail both increased economic rent and social utility. Beyond that point a continuation of the subdividing process will entail diminished social utility to the community, while the land's economic rent increases.<sup>20</sup>

Decreasing social utility hurts the whole community for the "farmers cannot stand the taxes which must be levied if essential sewage and water facilities are to be provided for urban residences, so they give up and their land reverts to the county."<sup>21</sup> Firey believed that commercial and residential uses of the fringe were 'marginal uses'--an inefficient use of the land resource because the costs were much greater than the benefits. Diseconomies were noted in the loss of food production but also increasing taxes, increasing fire insurance rates, increasing health costs--long term costs to be borne by the community at large. There was therefore, much less than optional functioning of community.

The essay written by Firey in 1946 mentioned "three land use characteristics which are common to all 'marginal' areas, and two unique to the fringe."<sup>22</sup> In the former category, disunity consisted of a capriciousness and diseconomy in private development plans, the variability and instability in the spatial patterns of land use, and a tendency for residences to gravitate to the lowest use in terms of class status. In fringe areas, the latter category, an irrelevance of settlement patterns to soil capability and the removal of the land from agricultural productivity were seen as inefficient land uses. The present concerns expressed over farmland in Canada, that is the land conversion process and the four sub-problems, identified earlier, were closely allied with Dr. Firey's model of disunity mentioned over 25 years earlier.

The five types of disunity are listed below:

1. a capriciousness and diseconomy in private development plans;
2. variability and instability in the spatial patterns of land use;
3. a tendency for residences to gravitate to the lowest use in terms of class status;
4. an irrelevance of settlement patterns to soil capability;
5. the removal of the land from agricultural productivity.<sup>23</sup>



Respecting capriciousness and diseconomy in private development plans, Firey believed the urban fringe was:

a 'dead' centre between conflicting ecological bases, residential and agricultural. The diseconomies are that land is being removed from agriculture use, but often fails to be put into residential use either, because the subdividing rate has usually surpassed the rate of population growth.<sup>24</sup>

These pieces left over enhance the speculative value of the area, for in areas clearly superior for residential use or in an area clearly defined for agriculture use, no speculative value appears. Together with this, the loss of land due to farm fragmentation does not result in efficient use for farming, because small parcels of land cannot realize economies of scale. As well, research has shown that high priced farmland is usually leased out by speculators awaiting the advance of urban development, and the quantities of produce are much reduced over a farmer-owned operation. In all these circumstances, farming is non-economical and coupled with the fertilizer odours and noise associated with farm activities probably receive a poor reception from the residential community.

Firey's second type of disunity referred to the variability and instability in the spatial pattern of land use. He believed that in marginal areas, "no one land use type clearly yields greater utility than another and hence, none is able to preempt the land for itself."<sup>25</sup> The correlation with variability and instability, because of the above arguments, is strong. Farm fragmentation, loss due to

trespass, high land prices and imminent encroachment cause farmers to succumb to development pressures. However, farm insurance programs and subsidies to full-time farmers guarantee this individual a reasonable standard of living, even if his yields are restricted. Again, conflicts over uses do not enhance the lives of the farmer or the resident, and the general consumer foots the bill for this incongruity.

At the time of Firey's study, urban areas contained estates as well as 'tar paper shacks'. He believed in the absence of deed restrictions, the rich would move away and land values would plummet.<sup>26</sup> The land value would thus have gravitated to its lowest use, his third conclusion. This is probably not common today, but conceivably without zoning controls, an industrial park could adjoin a residential development. Assuming that residential values would fall with increased noise and traffic, residential use would become the lowest use.

The last two conclusions of Firey's study, being unique to the urban fringe, will be discussed together. In this area, the whole farmland conversion process fits. Settlement patterns show irrelevance to soil capability, his fourth conclusion. The key word in settlement patterns is 'accessibility'--accessibility to some central transportation point.<sup>27</sup> Paved roads and highways have severely disrupted farming activity. These roads have reduced the commuting time to the city, where many of these residents work. The

result of this was the demand for country estates and hobby farms and the beginning of the agriculture land conversion process, with the attendant sub-problems. If agriculture could be carried out on the best soils, irrespective of development pressure, high taxes, fragmentation and loss due to trespass, maybe it would become a more equitable competitor with residential use, but planning of transportation routes with disregard for soil types has completely negated this. Firey's last point, that land has been removed from agricultural production, is the nature of a North American concern. This again is a direct result of the competition of land uses, where agriculture often loses out to non-agricultural use. The four sub-problems in the conversion process, such as the direct loss of land due to trespass, farm fragmentation, high land prices and resultant high taxes, and the uncertainty as to the worthiness of farming with advancing urban encroachment.

Perhaps no economic model for land use is available for the fringe area. The demand for suburban land determines the conversion rate, and disrupts the unity of the farmscape. The higher the demand for other uses, the higher the bid rent. The model suggested for urban land (Figure 2) does not hold true in the fringe area, because suburban land, especially farmland holds its value up to the edge of the urban shadow. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

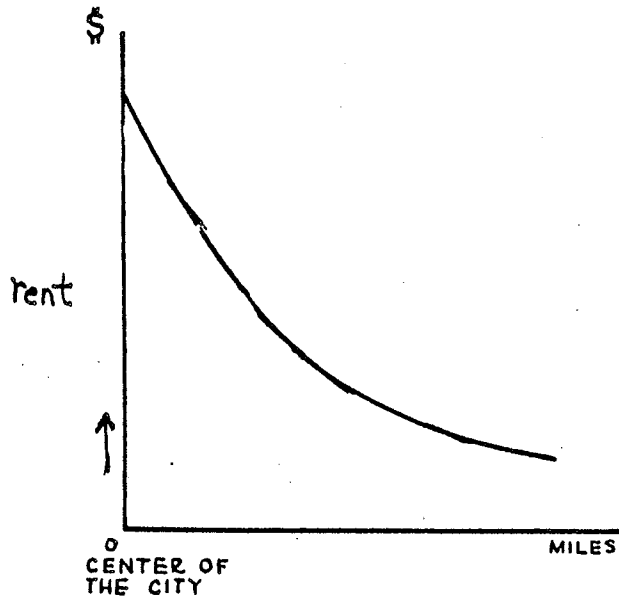
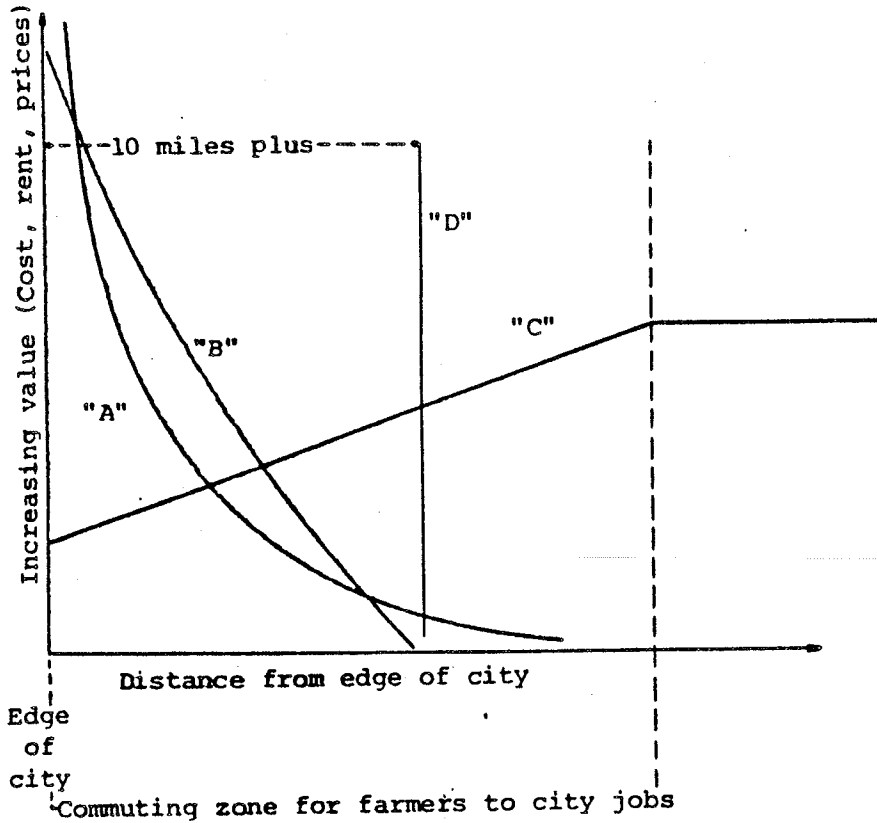


FIGURE 2: Urban Land Market

Figure 3 as a model and a theory explains much of the pressure generated on agriculture land conversion, the area of the most public concern in the rural-urban fringe. Being that all literature has compared agriculture land loss with increasing pressure from other uses, the same must be done here. It would seem from Figure 3 that farmland within the 10 mile plus range of the edge of the city would be under high pressure for development because of the value of the land for other uses. Troughton suggested that in this area, "the price of agriculture land is higher than agriculture land warrants."<sup>30</sup>

FIGURE 3: Model Land-Use Relationships in the Rural-Urban Fringe<sup>29</sup>

(After Found (1971) and Russworm (1978))



- "A" Function relating residential value of rural land to distance from city
- "B" Function relating speculative value of land to distance from city
- "C" Function relating agricultural land-use intensity to distance from city
- "D" Minimum distance zone of urban fringe for cities over 100,000

This might possibly be explained by the fact that agriculture land rents are considerably lower in the fringe and shadow areas than in the completely rural countryside. In Ontario, "non-farm landholders qualify both for lower farm assessment of their property if it is farmed, and for a 50 percent rebate in their taxes if they are resident in Ontario and the farm produces a gross value of at least \$4,000 per year."<sup>31</sup> In British Columbia, to qualify for farm status and concomitant lower tax assessments, a yearly sale of produce of a minimum of \$1,600 is all that is required.<sup>32</sup> These tax dodges have resulted in low productivity of these farmland parcels, as many of the owners have occupations in the city; farming is a minor source of income. In Ontario, a study noted corn yields were 5½ bushels per acre less in an area within the confines of the fringe, than in an area outside the shadow, given similar climatic and soil conditions.<sup>33</sup> It appears that agriculture land use within the fringe is no longer a valid use.

To determine if agriculture land use in the urban fringe is economically viable is difficult to measure. Opportunity costs of using agriculture land for non-agriculture use is generally unavailable. The economic and social benefits are difficult to quantify, for example, "land dedicated to food production provides a sense of security even though it may not be used directly by consumers."<sup>34</sup> An 'option demand' model has been proposed to determine whether land should be preserved or developed, using cost-benefit analysis.

In the trial case study, variables pertaining to agriculture use such as soil capability, commuting distance, size of land parcel, costs of development and the economic benefit from food production could determine which of 2 parcels should be developed and which should be preserved. The authors of this study purport that a model similar to this could "be used to calculate the preservation value of recreational lands, wildlife areas, and areas of historical significance... development options, whether industrial, commercial or a transmission line can be calculated also."<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps our methodology in determining land use outside of urban areas is faulty. Resource economists face a major challenge in trying to analyze land use issues in economic terms and in attempting to influence land use policy. "In Canada, land use analysis and policy analysis has been in the hands of social scientists and geographers".<sup>36</sup> The lack of a rural model may not result in the highest and best use. Maybe resource economists can serve an important role.

It can be said that the nature of land conflict and competition for use has made the rural-urban fringe an area with affinity to the city and to the country. Traditional land rents, which decrease in cost as distance increased from the city were once probably applicable to the fringe area. The advent of improved transportation arteries, especially paved highways and lower land prices, coupled with the 'back to the land' pioneer demographic trend, made

a traditional agriculture area subject to competition from other uses. It seems that these other uses conflict with farming activity causing disunity, and high land values and increased taxes prohibit farmers from expanding their landholdings, realizing economies of scale. Agriculturists blame the under-utilization of land in the urban area contributed to the spread of the city and uncontrolled land use. It is their hope that land market forces do not adversely affect the urban shadow. Maybe if we utilize the services of resource economists in quasi-use rural areas, policy will incorporate physical and economic cost-benefit analysis.

### 2.3 Summary

In this chapter, the effect of man's activities upon the environment has been discussed. More specifically, we have seen that from early times man believed that he was created for the world. Through the ecological and conservation movements we have seen that this is not the case; the influence of man's activities upon the environment has been quite substantial. The messages to society from the conservationists have largely gone unheeded, with man's quest for betterment of lifestyle a more predominant thought. Our quest for material well-being through lack of careful planning has caused man to harm principally himself. Conversion of farmland into housing has made us dependent upon costly imported foods; poor forestry management has



resulted in loss of soil through erosion, the list goes on. Not only have the conservationists stressed the careful stewardship of natural resources, but economists and sociologists like the pioneer, Walter Firey have attempted to warn us of the consequences of careless planning as well as the competitive market forces which dominate the urban fringe. We now see that competition for land has resulted in the direct loss of agricultural land through conversion, trespass and nuisance, farm fragmentation, high land prices and taxes on agricultural land and an atmosphere of apprehension by farmers of advancing urban development. Agriculture use, therefore, now faces rivals from other landscapes.

One author has stated that he believes the world is evolving (devolving) into a state of entropy.

Entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, states that matter and energy can only be changed on one direction, that is, from usable to unusable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered. In essence, the second law says that everything in the entire universe began with structure and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos and waste.<sup>37</sup>

This statement may be debatable, but offers the reader with a concept which parallels what has been presented thus far. Obviously this cannot continue unchecked, a remedy must be in order.

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Donald Worster, Nature's Economy (New York: Anchor Books), p. 30.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 50.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 35.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 215.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 226.
- <sup>6</sup> R. Krueger, ed., Regional and Resource Planning in Canada (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 1.
- <sup>7</sup> Worster, op. cit., p. 230.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert G. Healy, Land Use and the States (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Canadian Council on Social Development, Towards a Strategy for Land Reform in Canada, no publisher given, 1978. p. 5.
- <sup>11</sup> Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1962), p. 18.
- <sup>12</sup> Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, Urban Sprawl (New Westminster, 1956), p. 15.
- <sup>13</sup> William Ophuls, Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1977), p. 13.
- <sup>14</sup> C.R. Bryant, "Agriculture in an Urbanizing Environment: A case study from the Paris Region, 1968-1976", The Canadian Geographer (XXV, 1981), p. 27.
- <sup>15</sup> Ian Reid, Land in Demand: The Niagara Escarpment (Toronto: The Book Society of Canada, 1977), p. 36.
- <sup>16</sup> Stanley W. Hamilton, Regulation and other forms of Government Intervention regarding Real Property (Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, Technical Report #13, 1981) p. 18.

<sup>17</sup>J. Everitt and C. Staedel, "Changes in the Urban Fringe of Brandon, Manitoba: A test of a model of Urban Dissonance", in The Rural Urban Fringe: Canadian Perspectives (York: Geographical Monographs, No. 10, 1981), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup>T. Simmons, "The Challenge of Rural Perspectives on the Rural-Urban Fringe," in The Rural Urban Fringe, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>19</sup>Walter Firey, "Ecological Consideration for planning for Rurban Fringes," American Sociological Review (XI:4, 1946), p. 411.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

<sup>28</sup>W. Alonso, "A Theory of the Urban Land Market," in Readings in Economic Geography (Chicago: Rund McNally and Co., 1969), p. 279.

<sup>29</sup>M.J. Troughton, "The Rural-Urban Fringe: A Challenge to Resource Management," op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>31</sup>W. vanVuuren, "Effects of Urban Influence on Agriculture Land Use" (Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Agricultural Institute of Canada, Vancouver, B.C., 1982), p. 47.

<sup>32</sup>Ian Carne, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food, interview, June 7, 1983.

<sup>33</sup>W. vanVuuren, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>34</sup>E.O. Prevost and D.F. Kraft, "The Option Demand Model: A Planning Technique for solving the conflict between Rural Residential and Agricultural Land" (Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Agricultural Institute of Canada, Vancouver, B.C., 1982), p. 20.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>36</sup>T.S. Veeman, "Discussion: Economics of Land Use Issues," (Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Agricultural Institute of Canada, Vancouver, B.C., 1982), p. 64.

<sup>37</sup>Jeremy Rifkin, Entropy: A New World View (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), p. 6.

CHAPTER III: THE RESPONSE IN B.C.

Having discussed the nature of farmland loss together with the acute potential food shortage in B.C., it is now time to shift into a response to these problems. More specifically, the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (L.M.R.P.B.), the B.C. Land Commission and the Agricultural Land Commission centre the discussion. The reader should be aware that a response in 1973 may have been derived from reports done during the era of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board. The L.M.R.P.B. was established in 1949 and existed until 1969. The B.C. Land Commission followed in 1973. During the interim years between these two responses, the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet was struck. The third response was the Agricultural Land Commission, an amendment to the Land Commission, in 1977. The responses, therefore have evolved over a period of 35 years, much more than the 10 plus years since the formation of the Land Commission. The purpose of this chapter is to outline objectively, in chronological order, the approach taken and significance of each of these responses.

3.1 The Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board

Several events had taken place in the late 1940's which prompted a wise allocation and situation of land uses. In 1948, the Fraser River which winds through the Fraser Valley and enters the Pacific Ocean near Vancouver "flooded about one-quarter of the Valley's cultivated land, damaged 2,000

homes, forced the evacuation of 14,000 people and caused \$17 million worth of compensated loss."<sup>1</sup> Being that this flood-plain was inhabited primarily by suburban dwellers, the costs for future flood damage claims would certainly be less if occupied by farm use. Besides, this subject land was fertile and would naturally lend itself toward agricultural use. This was the upshot of the L.M.R.P.B. investigation. Another problem B.C. was facing was the post-war growth which had shown little regard for careful planning; land was seen as being merely contingent to growth. This latter phenomena was mentioned in Chapter II as an 'environment of plenty', a euphoric thought following World War II. Indicators suggested that B.C. would continue to grow at possibly unprecedented rates, and given that physical barriers such as the coast line, the U.S. - Canada border and mountain ranges limited a real expansion, how and where were all the new residents to be situated? The Lower Mainland in the 1950's had "52 percent of the provincial population, while it occupied less than 0.5 percent of the total provincial area."<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1940's there was no such thing as formalized land planning, the first city planning department in B.C. didn't emerge until 1952.<sup>3</sup> The L.M.R.P.B. was therefore the first concerted planning effort in the province, essentially a lay regional council composed of representatives from the 26 municipalities forming the Lower Mainland.

The role of the L.M.R.P.B. was to study the physical, economic and social structure of this region. During the 20 year existence of the Board, approximately 40 regional research reports and an Official Community Plan were produced. To achieve its purpose, the L.M.R.P.B. prioritized land uses. First priority went to industrial land, since industrial growth would be the base for further development of the region. Second priority went to land with recreational potential. Third priority went to land for agricultural purposes.<sup>4</sup> The theme of many of the reports was directed at one of these priorities.

Of interest to this thesis is the agricultural land priority, which may have had some influence on subsequent government land use control, rationale and strategy. To assess the impact of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board contribution to the importance of the agricultural land resource, a brief examination of some of the reports is warranted.

The L.M.R.P.B.'s Memorandum on Municipal Control of Land Subdivision, published 1950:

discusses the administration problems of land subdivision of that day. A case is made for the complete public control of land subdivision by competent municipal authority. More importantly, the Memorandum disagrees with the long established practice of allowing an 'owner' to do as he pleases with his land, irrespective of the effect upon the community.<sup>5</sup>

Public control of private property, we will see, comes into play eventually as a response.

Land for Farming was the L.M.R.P.B.'s only major report on agriculture. This was a comprehensive report, released in March 1962, dealing with the importance of the food resource. By using statistics gathered, two scenarios were portrayed:

Firstly, if a policy of 'no control' over urban expansion was adopted, all the farmland in the Lower Mainland would be lost by 1980. Secondly, if 'no areal expansion of our metropolitan communities' was allowed, there would be enough land zoned for urban use in Richmond, Delta and Surrey to accommodate one million people.<sup>6</sup>

These two statements could summarize the report, but also issue an imminent warning.

The statements use material in the report to express the urgency of the future foodstuffs versus development options. The report stated that gross farm acreages were at their peak about 1941 and had been losing ground ever since. The "rate of loss between 1951 and 1956 was about 2,000 acres per year....Clearing and development has been going on at a rate of about 2,400 acres/year in the same time frame."<sup>7</sup> On the surface it appeared the land resource was growing, however "the cost of clearing land, up to \$600 per acre is more than the land is worth in many cases."<sup>8</sup> "A soil science study done in 1951 suggested that 40% of the land base was 'good' for agriculture purposes, 34% 'medium' and 26% 'fair to poor.' No first class land was found in the region."<sup>9</sup> The report went on to say that metropolitan development that had taken place at time of



writing, did so on the low fertility soils. Nevertheless, "where there is no effective control over urban development every 1,000 people added to the population has resulted in the loss of about 380 acres of farmland on metropolitan fringes."<sup>10</sup> This last statement suggests complete loss of all agricultural land by 1980.

A bleak message was contained in the report regarding the increasing dependence on imported food. To quote the report:

owing to dwindling land resources, we will produce less of our own food in the future, even allowing for improvements in farm technology. 20 years from now (1962), we will be importing most of our dairy products, producing at best, only fluid milk needs, along with poultry, eggs and some vegetables and small fruits. Even this will be possible only if we husband our farm resources wisely and bring more upland and peat soil into production....Our dependence on other regions means that we are subject to their trends and problems. This means that we have to control either the availability or the cost of their products.<sup>11</sup>

The message of gloom is interrupted by offering several suggestions useful to preserving agricultural lands. Specifically mentioned were special property tax for farms, reduction of urban sprawl, use of flood plains, and finally an agricultural zoning method. Each of these factors, as a means of encouraging the saving of the agriculture industry, needs to be examined to see their pertinence in light of future responses.

Respecting farmland taxes, the solution is "to encourage agricultural zones as separate taxation districts and strike a mill rate for them which will cover their own municipal servicing costs."<sup>12</sup> Traditionally, an inequality has existed in the taxation rate between the farmer and the urban fringe dweller, with the farmer paying the most, yet receiving the least. It is suggested that "the real liability to the municipality is sprawl development."<sup>13</sup> Having a taxation rate for bona fide farmers who do not receive all the benefits from sprawl such as paved roads, sewers, piped water, yet contribute disproportionately with other residents, would appease the farmer.

To preserve farmland, "urban development should be directed, by zoning, on to low fertility soil areas."<sup>14</sup> This implies keeping the best soils for agriculture use. This serves a dual purpose on the Lower Mainland, because much of the high quality land is on floodplain or lowlands. The lesson learned from history regarding the devastating Fraser River flood of 1948, has already been mentioned. Besides the risk of flooding, servicing lowland areas is expensive, therefore it makes good sense to direct urban development to the poorer quality upland soils.

Another solution to increasing the viability of farming was through use of an agricultural zoning method. Here again, the effects of conflict with the land resource of the fringe was mentioned. In a poignant statement, the

effects of sprawl were strongly illustrated. "Sprawl is the municipal locust, the great devourer of both money and land, and producer only of grief--even more for the future than for the present."<sup>15</sup> An agricultural zoning method would stop the uncertainty facing agriculture.

In the report's concluding remarks it is maintained that, "the region's interest in conserving agriculture must be sought mainly by trying to keep farming both economic and profitable."<sup>16</sup> Due to numerous factors, the feeling in 1962 was that "in the Valley especially at the metro end, there is a widespread feeling that agriculture, if not 'finished', has only a few more years to live."<sup>17</sup>

A final report of the L.M.R.P.B. was Chance and Challenge, 1963. This widely discussed document was essentially a regional plan for the Lower Mainland, "welding the previous reports into a functionally efficient, livable and economical"<sup>18</sup> use of the land. This plan had difficulty in achieving acceptability, consequently it was not officially adopted until 1966. During the interim between publication and adoption, the provincial government established regional districts (1965). Twenty-eight regional districts formed the whole of the province, encompassing developing areas and unorganized territories. Each regional district was required under the Municipal Act to pass a zoning by-law based upon a long-term regional plan. Once this by-law was passed, "neither the regional board nor the municipalities

were permitted to carry out any action which would impede the plan's objective."<sup>19</sup> The regional plan for the Lower Mainland, Chance and Challenge had one page directed at farmland. It was conceptualized at this time that:

belts of farmland coincided with flood-plains and fertile soils, while the infertile upland soils were reserved for the Valley cities. In many areas, as portrayed by the proposed plan, cities were not surrounded by farmland; rather, pockets of farmland were surrounded by cities.<sup>20</sup>

The allocation of land uses in the proposed plan was not by zoning, but by classification. Land uses were categorized under five headings: Urban, Industrial, Rural, Restricted, and Park. Criticism was directed at the flexibility and looseness of this system which allowed re-classification. Smith, in his thesis, remarked that many hectares of flood plain land in Richmond, Delta, Surrey, Pitt Meadows and Chilliwack could be redesignated to an urban area.<sup>21</sup>

In 1969, the L.M.R.P.B. was phased out of existence, to be replaced by four regional districts (Greater Vancouver, Dewdney-Alouette, Central Fraser Valley and Fraser-Cheam). The dissolution of the L.M.R.P.B. was a government act, instigated by the criticism of the L.M.R.P.B. regarding the construction of the Roberts Bank Superport near Vancouver. The government in 1967, expropriated 4,000 acres of land zoned for long range agriculture use from the fertile Fraser River delta, to serve as back-up

land for the superport. This was a serious major revision to the Official Plan as well as a possible infraction of the Municipal Act. The upshot of this controversial matter was an increase in the public conscience of how the government valued agriculture land and possibly, planning in general.

This was not the end of lack of appreciation of a regional plan, for other municipalities were prompted to treat it with little respect following the example set by the province. One municipality in the Fraser Valley "amended the regional plan more than 26 times, usually to re-zone agriculture land to industrial use."<sup>22</sup> Actions such as "provincial expropriation, therefore, were seen as a precipitator of a change in land tenure patterns which both reduced the viability of farming in the area and put foretold tremendous pressure on the regional plan."<sup>23</sup> As a result of these actions, regional planners found it difficult to justify a regional plan intent on preserving agriculture land.

The L.M.R.P.B. attempted to preserve agriculture land through identification of the importance of this resource, and suggestions on implementation of a preservation strategy. The weak link in the L.M.R.P.B. response was the lack of a strong enforcement tool. However, the Board never did have a chance to get a full test of their plan before it was terminated. What is noteworthy is that the Official Regional

Plan adopted in 1966 had seen no major revisions from data of inception to late 1983. Chance and Challenge, by way of production of a regional plan, was probably the first attempt in the province to control land use planning for present and future generations. The lack of government support certainly did bring the issue of careful stewardship of the land resource, especially agriculture land, into the public eye. I submit that the work done by the L.M.R.P.B. was responsible for the government bringing in legislation to halt farmland conversion years later.

By 1971, the government of British Columbia had began action on these land-use iniquities. The Environment and Land Use Act of 1971 authorized the establishment of the Environment and Land Use Commission (ELUC), which was a recognition by the government of the importance of the environment. The ELUC was empowered to deal with several tasks, two being important to this thesis:

- (a) establish and recommend programs designed to foster increased public concern and awareness of the environment, and
- (b) ensure that all the aspects of preservation and maintenance of the natural environment are fully considered in the administration of land use and resource development commensurate with the maximum beneficial land use, and minimize and prevent waste of such resources, and despoliation of the environment occasioned thereby.<sup>24</sup>

The government had delegated much weight to this Committee for it consisted of the ministers responsible for the nine

departments which deal with the utilization of the land resource.

This marks the end of the first response. We have seen the work of the L.M.R.P.B.; how the government had failed to appreciate the preservation of farmland, and its own laws, and finally how the government did realize, after the fact, that there was indeed some grave land use questions that required expert advice. Perhaps some of the administrative tools from this response will come into play again.

### 3.2 The Second Response

The year 1972 saw a provincial election in British Columbia. The time was ripe for the political parties to have a platform regarding agricultural land, and planning in general, in view of what happened in B.C. in the late 1960's. The public could expect positive action and stringent policies from the new government.

Three of the political parties had policies directly related to the preservation of farmland; the fourth party, the incumbent Social Credit Party, campaigned primarily on the basis of a continuation of its past performance. Specifically, the Liberal Party proposed the establishment of an 'Agricultural Lands Trust' which would purchase the development rights for farmland to 'preserve farmlands from ill considered land speculation and development'. The proposal for the Progressive Conservative Party centred on the use of 'long range and systematic planning...so that the best agricultural land is in fact used for agriculture, and is not wasted on other purposes through lack of planning.' The

New Democratic Party proposed a 'land-zoning programme to set aside areas for agricultural production and to prevent such land being subdivided for industrial and residential purposes...(and) establish a land bank to purchase existing and re-zoned agricultural land for lease to farmers on a long term basis.<sup>25</sup>

The NDP further, wanted to "recognize individually-operated farm units, rather than large corporate farms, as the basis of B.C. agricultural production and to legislate to preserve open space for cattle grazing and to improve range land in cooperation with wildlife authorities."<sup>26</sup>

On August 31, it was announced that the NDP would form the new government as the result of winning the majority of seats in the election. It was not known whether their agricultural policy was instrumental in their victory. What was known, however, was that B.C. had been Social Credit for many years. As promised in the election campaign, the Minister of Agriculture of the new government, Dave Stupich, announced that he would soon introduce legislation to prevent the re-zoning of farmland to urban uses. He did not want to repeat the policy of the past government which allowed re-zoning a simple process of applying to the regional district or local municipality, neither of whom had a steadfast policy of preventing land conversion. The NDP were fortunate to be able to use the enabling legislation of the Environment and Land Use Act (ELUC) to facilitate a change.



Smith, in his thesis, delved into NDP political philosophy. He remarked that the NDP is:

'the party of the working man.' It is rather consistent then that the NDP government in B.C. would direct a large degree of its legislative thrust including the Land Commission Act towards assuring the viability of farming--a work role which often demands a dawn-to-dusk, seven day work week.<sup>26</sup> The socialist NDP is determined that no one shall enjoy an undue and unearned advantage in the use of resources; private individuals must be stripped of the powers that control the lives and economic welfare of others.

It is consistent then that the socialists are particularly sensitive to the use of a rather quantitatively static resource such as land by speculators for the purpose of profiteering to maximize personal gain rather than the well-being of society.... It is of great significance when irreplaceable farmland is being unnecessarily destroyed, when that part of the economy based on the primary agriculture enterprise is being harmed, and quite possibly such efforts are involved in the inflation of the price of urban housing.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, the NDP in British Columbia, philosophically, had a high regard for resource land. They decided that:

assuring the future of a food source, and saving an economic activity and the family farm as a way of life had social purpose. Conversely the destruction (primarily through land speculation and unnecessary urban development of farmlands) of these same elements was an unsocial use of land ownership.<sup>28</sup>

The promise of a strong agricultural preservation policy was unique to B.C., and thus was a focus of attention.

Concern by the large membership of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture (B.C.F.A.) regarding public control of private land, and the controversy behind such a radical land use control also captured the attention of the news media. The NDP perhaps, did not exercise good judgment and a careful sense of timing when announcing their policy, for the headlines of the Vancouver Sun, November 30, 1972 stated, "NDP government halts re-zoning farms." Unfortunately, this statement was made before any such legislation had been passed. A great many applications to re-zone land were submitted after this date. In order to stop this process, the government was forced to take an 'emergency and interim' action.

On December 21, 1972, Cabinet passed Order-in-Council 4483/72, the farmland freeze. This order:

prohibited any subdivision of farmland from that date until further orders or provision to the contrary. Farmland was land designated as agricultural for real property taxation as well as all land deemed to be suitable for the cultivation of agricultural crops.<sup>29</sup>

Once again, adverse reaction came from many farmers including the B.C.F.A. This land preservation policy, being unique to Canada, and severely affecting property rights was bound to cause much debate.

It did appear that farmers were not in favour of a policy which would preserve farmland unless certain concessions were made. The B.C.F.A. demanded that:

the Provincial Government "must" lift the freeze and let the farmers sell land "unless the land is to be converted to non-farm use". . . . If farmland is to be sold for development, the federation wants the province to promise to either buy it 'at fair market value,' or let the sale proceed. The B.C.F.A. took this strong position because farmers, and many others 'predicted that the value of farmland would fall, or already had fallen, to as much as one-third of its pre-freeze value.' It was also predicted that people holding small farm parcels would see the value of their land climb as supply of these highly desirable country estates was greatly limited by the freeze. A further concern was over the lack of explicit definition of 'land deemed suitable for the cultivation of crops' and what minimum parcel size would be included in the designation. The lack of provision for appeals to the freeze was also criticized.<sup>30</sup>

"Apart from these negative features, some positive features were also noted. A positive contribution would be the enforced need for better planning of urban development, the halting of urban development on flood-plains, and the non-pecuniary benefits of preserving farm lands and greenbelts."<sup>31</sup>

Following the debate on the farmland freeze, another Order-in-Council (157/73) was approved on January 18, 1973. The purpose of this action was classification on the application of the freeze.

Farmland was re-defined as any two acres or greater parcel of land which was designated as: a) agricultural for purposes of real property taxation, or b) class 1, 2, 3, or 4 soil capability (for agriculture) in the Canada Land Inventory. It was not necessary that the land be used for agriculture, only that it fall into one or both of the above categories. No non-agricultural

developments, including site development, changes in land use, and/or construction was to be carried out on such land. Similarly, no subdivision plans, building permits, zoning by-laws or land use contracts were to be approved if farmland was involved. These prohibitions explicitly did not pertain when the development or approval was required for farm operations, the construction of a residence of persons engaged in farming, or for the creation of new farm units. The order was not to apply in cases of certified substantial commencement on a development or re-zoning application prior to December 21, 1972. Finally, provision was made for those persons having interests in farmland who were aggrieved by any action taken under the appeal to the Provincial Environment and Land Use Committee who would hear the appeal, and vary amend, rescind or approve the action.<sup>32</sup>

On February 22, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced Bill 42 for first reading in the Legislature. This bill was legislation to establish a Provincial Land Commission whose objectives would include the preservation of agricultural land.

Once again, criticism and controversy were prevalent. Ten out of the 22 sections were debated.

Criticisms were directed at what were deemed as omissions in the Bill, the most significant of these being the lack of any requirement for public, municipal or regional district involvement in the establishment of 'reserves'. Also, because of the breadth and generality of the types of land which the Commission would designate as reserves, it was feared that all land suitable for urban development would be under provincial rather than local control. As local and regional plans are intended to represent at least some of the objectives and priorities

of the local communities, concern was expressed over local areas having no participation in long range planning for their development.<sup>33</sup>

In defense of Bill 42 the Department of Agriculture listed the following accomplishments that would be achieved if Bill 42 was passed:

1. Greatly curtail further loss of prime farmland throughout British Columbia.
2. Stabilize the agricultural land base so that improvement programs designed to improve farm income are not frittered away to housing and other non-agricultural uses. These include irrigation systems, farm development loans, dyking and drainage systems to mention but a few.
3. Guarantee the people of British Columbia that we will not be helplessly dependent on others for our food supply. The cheapest source of food capable of production in British Columbia, will usually be derived from local sources.
4. Reinforce the efforts of those citizens serving on Municipal Councils, Regional Boards, Planning Committees who share our serious concern for the preservation of farmland in this province.
5. Improve opportunities for young people to enter farming. This will occur through being able to lease Crown owner farms and in some situations, depending on experience, able to carry through with the purchase of a farm.
6. Protect the quality of the environment by creation of greenbelt reserves - some will be comprised of farmlands.
7. Park land reserve and Land Bank reserve are included and are self-explanatory.<sup>34</sup>

"Farmers in areas well removed from urban expansion generally supported the Bill, while those in urbanizing regions were its most vocal opponents."<sup>35</sup> Land speculators also opposed the Bill. Nevertheless, "on April 16, 1973, Bill 42 was

passed by a vote of 34 to 17, with all the members of the opposition voting against the Bill."<sup>36</sup>

With further revision, Bill 42 evolved into the British Columbia Land Commission Act, proclaimed in force May 18, 1973. The Act provided for the selection of 5 members to the independent body, appointed by Cabinet, and reporting to the Legislature through the Minister of Environment. The original membership consisted of a municipal solicitor as chairman; the other four members were a building contractor and former president of the B.C. Wildlife Federation; a Professor of Plant Science; an orchardist and former president of the B.C. Fruit Growers Association; and a consulting town planner and land economist. This combination of experts were thought to keep the best interests of the Commission in mind, because of their personal and professional experience.

The Act had four mandates: the preservation of agricultural land for farm use; preservation of greenbelt lands in and around urban areas; preservation of certain land bank lands having desirable qualities for urban or industrial development; and the preservation of parklands. The Commission is an agent of the Crown and is given broad powers to purchase (but not expropriate) agricultural land and to hold, mortgage, lease or sell the purchased land. Only in the case of agricultural land is the Commission given any zoning or regulatory powers. Greenbelt, land bank and

parklands become part of a reserve only after the Land Commission has acquired the property. Regarding funding:

the initial appropriation respecting 'the establishment of an agricultural reserve' was twenty-five million dollars. For the 'establishment of greenbelt land reserves, or parkland reserves', funds were to be appropriated under the Greenbelt Protection Fund Act (primarily). The amount available to the Land Commission under the latter Act is, in aggregate, five million dollars.<sup>37</sup>

Implementation of the Act's main objective is primarily through the designation of protective zones, referred to as Agricultural Land Reserves (ALR) throughout the province. "An ALR is a form of zoning that protects the land from the encroachment of non-agricultural developments and limits the use of land in the reserve to agriculture and other uses that do not diminish the capability of the land to produce crops."<sup>38</sup> Figure 4 illustrates the extent of the ALR's, accompanied by the raw data in Table 1.

The designation of the ALR was based on the following method:

- 1) all class 1 to 4 Canada Land Inventory land that was not irreversibly developed, regardless of ownership or tenure, was included in the Agricultural Land Reserves.
- 2) sufficient land was excluded from the Agricultural Land Reserves to allow for roughly five years growth of urban areas if non-agricultural land was not immediately available for urban expansion. This land was, wherever possible, consistent with current community or regional plans and servicing programs.
- 3) land of lower agricultural capability (classes 5 and 6) was included in the Agricultural Land Reserves where historical land use patterns indicated that such land could be effectively used for agriculture.

in conjunction with the class 1 to 4 lands. Generally, this involved forage lands and spring and fall ranges associated with ranching areas of the province.

- 4) small pockets of non-agricultural lands (class 7) were included in the Agricultural Land Reserves wherever the exclusion of such land might allow undesirable intrusion of incompatible uses in an area of predominantly agricultural use.<sup>39</sup>

(An explanation of the CLI classification of agriculture land in B.C. is contained in Appendix A).

Boundaries were generally identified by existing legal property boundaries for land registry purposes. Using this method, it would be possible for one ALR to consist of prime land and perhaps some lesser quality land by using property boundaries instead of CLI boundaries.

A criticism of Bill 42 related to the lack of Regional District or local government involvement in the agricultural planning scheme. Under the Land Commission Act, all 28 Regional Districts were required to prepare land reserve plans for their region based upon plans suggested by the Department of Agriculture. By 1975, all reserve plans had been carried out. Following the preparation of these plans:

the Land Commission reviewed and amended reserve plans of each regional district to ensure that the intent of the Land Commission Act was being carried out and to maintain continuity throughout the province. Subsequent to their reviews and discussions with each regional district, the various provincial government resource agencies and the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet reviewed the ALR plans. Further amendments, as required, were then made. After this step, each regional district plan was given approval by Cabinet and subsequently "designated" as an Agricultural Land Reserve by the Land Commission.<sup>40</sup>



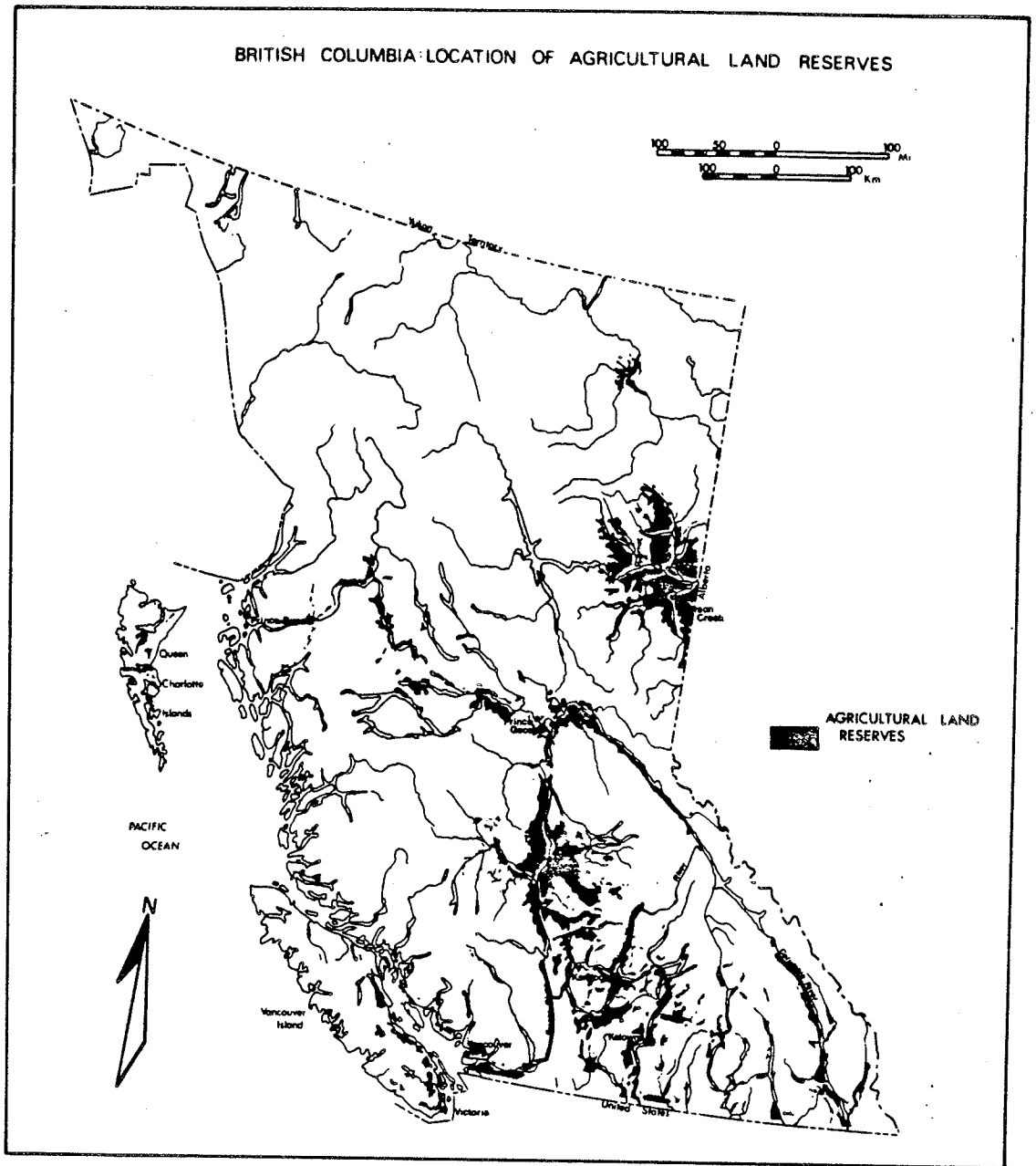


FIGURE 4: The ALR in B.C.

TABLE 1

Amount of Land in Designated Agricultural Land Reserves, By Regional District

	<u>At Date of Designation</u>	
	<u>Approximate Area in ALRs</u>	<u>% of Regional District in ALRs</u>
	(acres)	
Alberni-Clayoquot	19,600	1.1
Bulkley-Nechako	735,120	3.8
Capital	48,400	8.1
Cariboo	2,286,000	11.2 (1)
Central Coast	11,000	0.2
Central Fraser Valley	136,700	75.6
Central Kootenay	176,700	3.0
Central Okanagan	81,700	11.1 (1)
Columbia-Shuswap	166,500	2.2
Comox-Strathcona	108,000	2.1
Cowichan Valley	54,300	6.2
Dewdney-Alouette	58,700	8.2
East Kootenay	63,100	0.9
Fraser-Cheam	90,800	3.3
Fraser-Fort George	863,600	6.7
Greater Vancouver	80,400	12.5
Kitimat-Stikine	158,500	0.6
Kootenay Boundary	136,000	6.6 (1)
Mount Waddington	4,300	0.1
Nanaimo	52,000	10.2
North Okanagan	173,600	8.9
Okanagan-Similkameen	213,600	7.8
Peace River-Liard	3,702,500	7.2
Powell River	34,860	2.6
Skeena-Queen Charlotte	108,400	2.7
Squamish-Lillooet	67,000	1.6
Sunshine Coast	15,500	1.6
Thompson-Nicola	<u>1,404,700</u>	<u>12.4 (1)</u>
TOTAL	11,661,600	4.9

(1) Includes substantial areas of CLI classes 5 and 6.

Source: BC Land Commission

Local input was part of the designation process as information meetings and public hearings were held in each regional district to help define the boundaries for their area.

The statutory authority given the Land Commission Act echoed the high priority of this cause. This Act has precedence over all but two other provincial acts (Environment and Land Use Act and the Pollution Control Act, 1967) and orders-in-council. The effect of this was:

some of the traditional 'heavies' among provincial departments and agencies (the Department of Highways and B.C. Hydro, for example) were made subservient to the Commission in relation to agricultural reserves and to the regulations applied to all Crown and agency lands within the ALR boundaries, whoever held them.<sup>41</sup>

At the local level:

the Land Commission's plans and regulations within an ALR take precedence over unless municipal and regional district by-laws are stricter. Zoning, building and subdivision by-laws have to be amended to meet at least the minimum requirements of the reserves to avoid serious administrative and public confusion. To a lesser degree official municipal and regional plans may require amendment or partial repeat...It is important to note that land not included in designated reserves remain subject to existing local and regional by-laws and may be limited to agricultural and other low-density uses as appropriate.<sup>42</sup>

It can be said therefore that there were "three major public bodies administering land use controls in most

areas of the province--municipalities, regional districts, and the land commission."<sup>43</sup>

As part of the legislation, an appeal mechanism was established for exclusion of land from the reserves. Much of section 9 and part of section 11 consisted of the procedure for exclusion. Section 9 (1) gives the Cabinet the power to exclude, of its own initiative, any land whether Crown land or private, from the ALR. "Thus the Cabinet has the right to withdraw land from the reserve notwithstanding the policy of the Commission or the concern of local government. The Cabinet may act in response to general public pressure or at the insistence of a private individual."<sup>44</sup> Section 9 (2) applies for applications from an individual to the Land Commission for exclusion.

Under this section, an individual landowner may apply to the Land Commission for exclusion of his property from the Agricultural Land Reserve. Preliminary processing of such applications is done by the appropriate regional district, followed by a hearing by the Land Commission. The decision on such an application is made by the Commission. However, there is an appeal procedure under sections 9 (7) and 9 (8).<sup>45</sup>

Section 9 (7) and 9 (8) are appeals by an individual to the Environment and Land Use Committee on Land Commission decisions.

Under these sections, a person who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Commission under section 9 (2) of the Act may, if leave to appeal is granted by the Commission or the Minister of Environment, file a notice of appeal to

the Environment and Land Use Committee. A formal hearing is held and the final decision is made by the Environment and Land Use Committee.<sup>46</sup>

A final section is 11 (4) applications. This is an application for exemption for use of subdivision in Agricultural Land Reserves.<sup>47</sup>

Under this section, a person or agency may apply to the Land Commission for permission to subdivide land or use a parcel of land within an Agricultural Land Reserve for purposes other than those allowed outright by the Reserve for purposes other than those allowed outright by the Act or regulations. The land remains in the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Commission may impose whatever terms and conditions it considers advisable. A decision by the Commission is final.<sup>48</sup>

To protect the integrity of the farmland conservation ethic, it would seem that if a process for exclusion of land was part of the legislation, a process of inclusion should also be incorporated. The inclusion legislation did not emerge initially in the legislation, it came out in an amendment after 1973. Inclusion legislation is contained in sections 8 (12) and 8 (14).

Under these sections of the Act, a municipality, a regional district, an individual owner, or the Commission may apply to have land included in the Agricultural Land Reserve. For municipalities, regional districts or the commission, a public hearing must be held with respect to the applications and notice must be given to the property owners. Decisions are then taken by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council. Individual landowners may apply without

public hearing and the Land Commission may designate the land as an Agricultural Land reserve, after approval from the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council.<sup>49</sup>

The Land Commission Act constituted a considerable constraint on the freedom of ALR landowners to use their land as they see fit. To this end, the British Columbia government passed three other Bills in October 1973, and an amendment which, by encouraging and assisting farmers, may be supportive of the Land Commission's objectives.

The Agricultural Credit Act provides for both direct loans and guarantees on loans made by institutional lenders, to farmers for purposes related to purchases (of land, buildings, equipment and supplies) connected with the improvement or expansion of farm operations. The Farm Income Assurance Act provides for financial assistance to, and direct government participation of the government in, agriculture industries and enterprises...Prior to April 18, 1973, the Assessment Equalization Act limited the annual increase in assessment for any one type of property to 5%, and to 10% for any one property. An amendment passed on April 18 removes this constraint from all but residential and farm properties. This differential mill rate (effectively) provides a shelter for these two land uses, shifting the burden of assessment increases to other property types.<sup>50</sup>

Of further assistance to the maintenance of viable farmland in some areas, has been the purchase of farmland by the British Columbia government. Under the provisions of the Land Commission Act, the land commission can purchase or acquire land and dispose of it, subject to such terms and conditions as the Commission might determine.

Under the provisions of this part of the Act, a small number of tracts of land have been acquired by the commission and made available under a lease arrangement to prospective farmers through a program known as Career Farm Leasing. After four years, purchase of the land by lessees can be arranged, thus assisting in the establishment of new farming enterprises.

In summary, the second response was an action stage. The NDP stuck to their election promise and brought out legislation to halt farmland conversion. The legislation had to fight strong opposition because of a perceived infringement of individual property rights, with the most vocal opponents being those who held land for speculative purposes. After debate on orders-in-council, a Bill, and eventually the Land Commission Act was the outcome. Although the NDP were criticized for announcing a 'freeze' before legislation was in place, they were able to use existing tools such as the Environment and Land Use Act and regional districts to develop a preservation package. This practice enabled an expedient response, at minimal costs to the taxpayer. Through the evolution of the Act, it had become apparent that to save the farm, it was necessary to save the farmer. Income assurance and taxation programs helped to achieve this. The significance of the Land Commission Act was the fourfold mandate that essentially could be labelled 'amenity conservation'. Parks, open space, farmland, as well as an inventory of land for any

purpose would be preserved for future generations, removed from the competitive land market.

The NDP were defeated at the polls in 1975, to be replaced by the Social Credit government. The Social Credit party campaign was based on two main propositions: "that the NDP government had been incompetent and spendthrift; that a second term of office would mean an irrevocable descent into the malestrom of state socialism".<sup>51</sup> Although the legislation invoked by the NDP did not change much, the application of it did. This will be discussed later.

### 3.3 The Third Response

The Land Commission Act of 1973 was amended under Bill 88 in September 1977, to become the Agricultural Land Commission Act. The amended Act "identifies as the Land Commission's sole responsibility, the preservation of agricultural land and the maintenance of farms."<sup>52</sup> The other three original mandates of land banking for urban and industrial purposes, greenbelt and preservation of parkland, were deleted in the amended Act. No official reason was given for the deletion of these three responsibilities, but "the preservation of agriculture land has always received first priority, and, in practice, has occupied almost all of the Land Commission's time since its formation in 1973."<sup>53</sup> In what follows in the balance of this section, the changes (additions/deletions) from the Land Commission Act (LCA) to the Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA) will be the focus.



A new group of commissioners were selected in October 1976, all five of whom were directly affiliated with some form of agriculture business. The selection of these five individuals may have pointed to the focus of the ALCA, as the original commissioner's, you will remember, were from various backgrounds. As was the case with the LCA, the ALCA was responsible to the Minister of Environment.

The ALCA had a number of changes regarding exclusions, appeals and enforcement of the Act. The exclusion process regarding government to government applications (an example would be a municipality or regional district application to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council) was further expanded. In addition to exclusion applications, as was the case in the LCA under section 9 (1), the Commission, a local government, regional district or a municipality may make application to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council for subdivision and/or non-farm use of private or Crown lands within an ALR. No change was made in the policy of individual applications to the Commission for exclusion. Regarding appeals, two methods of individual appeal were incorporated in the new Act. Under the LCA, only one source of appeal was permitted. This was to the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet. This avenue is retained in the ALCA, but where leave to appeal is not granted to ELUC, an additional method of appeal was directly to the Minister of Environment, who may permit a hearing by ELUC. The policy regarding exemption for use or subdivision remained the

same in the ALCA. Similarly, no changes were made in the inclusion process. Additional legislation in the ALCA regarded legal enforcement of the Land Commission's policies. A weakness of the original Act (LCA) was that no legal recourse for infractions was included. This was remedied in the ALCA. A court case in 1979 upheld the Commission's right to determine the types of land uses permitted in an ALR; the defendant was given 6 months to terminate the non-farm use. Legal enforcement had given more strength to the legislation. By upholding the Commission's policy, any doubt as to the legal acceptability of the legislation was removed.

Apart from these administrative and legislative changes with the adoption of the Agricultural Land Commission Act, the balance of the changes came with the assistance of various provincial government departments at large, with actions supportive of maintaining the viability of farming. The Soil Conservation Act of 1974 was amended in 1977 to clarify the definition of topsoil and legislate removal and replacement of fill on ALR lands. Like the ALCA, an enforcement tool was part of the legislation. The regulations within the Soil Conservation Act require that the Commission give "approval for such activities as gravel pit development over two acres, peat extraction, turf farming and sanitary land fills."<sup>54</sup> Although the regulation of the Soil Conservation Act is under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, the important role of the

Land Commission is said to involve considerable time. The annual report of year ending March 31, 1979 remarked that "over half (the applications) require an onsite inspection by a qualified soil specialist."<sup>55</sup> It is not unusual to have over 100 applications in any given year, thus involving considerable time or expense. This role by the Commission suggests the enormity of their task in preserving good agricultural land.

Regarding property taxation, in April 1976, the Commission presented a brief to the Commission of Enquiry on Property Assessment and Taxation, which stressed the need for a tax system that conveyed the same message as the ALR zoning method. This report, known as the McMath Report, had a response by 1979. An amendment to the "Public School Act reduced by 50 percent the assessment for school and hospital purposes"<sup>56</sup> on lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Further aid was supplied by the Minister of Agriculture in January 1977 with the formation of the Green Zone Committee. This group consisted of 5 agricultural specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture and one staff member from the Land Commission.<sup>57</sup> The purpose of this committee was to develop a by-law to establish minimum separation distances between odour-intensive agriculture uses such as poultry or swine operations and neighbouring residential developments. By 1983, several by-laws had been written, awaiting further testing and Cabinet approval. It is not

surprising that by November 1979 the responsibility of the Agricultural Land Commission was transferred from the Minister of Environment to the Minister of Agriculture. The Agricultural Land Commission saw this as "a positive and appropriate move that hopefully will encourage closer liaison with the Minister of Agriculture and his staff."<sup>58</sup>

A continuing occupation with the Agricultural Land Commission is reviewing development plans. The amendment to the Municipal Act in the late 1970's has enabled the availability of grant money to municipal councils and regional districts for the preparation of Official Community Plans and Settlement Plans. The Commission has a special project team reviewing early stages of development plans to encourage growth options outside the ALR. A publication, "A Guide to the Relationship between Agriculture Land Reserves and Local Government Plans and By-Laws" published jointly by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Agriculture Land Commission in 1982 was expressly directed at this cause.

Another ongoing project is the "Enhanced Fine Tuning Program" which gained government approval in the fall of 1979, and commenced in the spring of 1980. This program is a tri-patriate project between the Land Commission, the Terrestrial Studies Branch of the Ministry of Environment and the Soils Branch of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.<sup>59</sup> The purpose of this program is to ascertain the

soil suitability for agriculture on a small scale, to assist in the exclusion and inclusion process. Many complaints of the large scale Canada Land Inventory maps used in the original designation of the reserves were alleviated or reduced by the fine-tuning program. This program illustrates the cooperation which exists between various government departments by using a composite of various specialists in the land resource field. Perhaps because of this close cooperation, the Land Commission is able to function on an annual budget of less than \$1 million.

The Career Farms program introduced in the initial years of the Land Commission Act has continued under the Agricultural Land Commission Act. Although no properties had been acquired since 1977, leasing of farmland purchased earlier had continued. The objectives to leasing land were:

- (1) to assist young persons, who otherwise could not afford to buy a farm at today's high prices, in establishing family-run farm operations;
- (2) to assist bona fide farmers to increase farm unit size so as to create viable rational units;
- (3) to promote integrated and multiple land use aims;
- (4) to encourage optimum agricultural production.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1982-83 reporting year, "the Commission was leasing 131 properties, generating an income of \$455,454."<sup>61</sup>

The sole mandate of the Agricultural Land Commission-- preservation of agricultural land and maintenance of farms is being achieved today with the close cooperation of other government bodies. This was not so much the case

with the original Act, not from lack of respect, but rather from the evolution of time and acceptance by the various levels of government. The success and longevity of the Commission may be due to participation in the planning process. The original Commission was criticized for planning where agriculture should be located, but not planning where urban growth should be directed, a one-sided role. Greater acceptability of this land preservation tool would be the outcome, if this locational issue was rectified. An amendment to the Municipal Act during the reign of the Agricultural Land Commission made this possible. The Agricultural Land Commission legislation was still in effect as of 31 December 1983. Perhaps its presence will be further enhanced with continuing liaison and communication with B.C.'s communities.

In this chapter, we have covered approximately 35 years of evolution of the responses to B.C.'s pressing agricultural land loss problem. As we have seen, the responses have been varied, but all attempting to achieve the same end. Continuing refinement and/or expansion of policy will likely continue in the future as it must be flexible to the needs of a growing province. Public and private acceptance of the legislation is fostered by reasonable regulations and ancillary programs designed to enhance the viability of farming. No attempt was made in this chapter to analyze the relative success of each response. This is the purpose of the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, Chance and Challenge (New Westminster, December 1963), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>A.D. Crerar, "Planning in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia," in Canadian Geographer (vol. 4, 1954), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>5</sup>B.E. Smith, "The B.C. Land Commission Act--1973" unpublished M.A. thesis, University of B.C., 1975, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, Land for Farming (New Westminster, March 1962), p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>David Baxter, The British Columbia Land Commission Act--A Review, (Vancouver: Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of B.C., 1974), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Province of British Columbia, Environment and Land Use Act, 1971, section 3.

<sup>25</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>29</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>34</sup>Smith, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

<sup>35</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>38</sup>Ira M. Robinson, "Trends in Provincial Land Planning, Control and Management," in Plan Canada, (17:3,4), September - December 1977, p. 171.



<sup>39</sup> E. Manning and S. Eddy, The Agricultural Land Reserves of British Columbia: An Impact Analysis. (Ottawa: Environment Canada, Land Use in Canada Series, number 13), 1978, pp. 13-14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> J. Wilson and J.T. Pierce, "The Agricultural Land Commission of British Columbia," in Environments 14 (3), 1982, p. 18.

<sup>42</sup> Baxter, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> J. Ince, Land Use Law: A Study of Legislation Governing Land Use in British Columbia, (Vancouver: Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia, Centre for Continuing Education, University of British Columbia, 1977), p. 179.

<sup>45</sup> Manning and Eddy, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Subdivision of land can consist of severance for homesite, or for provision of another dwelling such as a mobile home. This issue of subdivision prompted many questions soon after the legislation was passed, and was discussed in Annual Reports. A firm and clear-cut policy was implemented by June 1978. This footnote is the only reference to this section of the Act; it will not be discussed again in the thesis.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Baxter, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> J.T. Morley, N.J. Ruff, N.A. Swanson, R.J. Wilson, W.D. Young, The Reins of Power (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), p. 107.

<sup>52</sup> Province of B.C., Annual Report year ending March 31, 1978, Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>55</sup>Province of B.C., Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1974, Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup>Province of B.C., Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1980, Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, p. 12.

<sup>57</sup>Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1978, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>58</sup>Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1980, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>59</sup>Province of B.C., Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1981, Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, p. 14.

<sup>60</sup>Province of B.C., Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1983, Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, p. 13.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

Up to this point we have examined the specific problem of land loss in B.C. and objectively looked at three responses established to address this land loss problem. Chapter IV is an analysis or evaluation of these responses. More specifically, the analysis will consist of the achievements each response had and the areas where policy was weak. Each response will be discussed individually and in chronological order because of the inter-relationship of each response.

A further function of this chapter is to analyze from the national perspective, how the legislation in B.C. had addressed farmland loss problems common throughout rural-urban fringe communities. For this purpose, the four human factors identified in Chapter II (anticipated land loss through advancing urban expansion, trespass and nuisance, farm fragmentation, and the high land prices and taxes associated with farmland) form the basis for discussion. Municipal government interest in land also is included in the discussion. In this section of analysis, we are not concerned with any individual response, but rather, the total 'agricultural land ethic', which has continued to grow with evolution of the responses.

If the B.C. experience can be deemed a success, it must resolve many of the national farmland loss problems. Furthermore, remembering that B.C. was losing prior to

1972, 15,000 acres per year of farmland, any response can be evaluated against this figure. This chapter will begin with the chronological analysis of the individual responses in addressing land loss in B.C.

A. Assets and Liabilities of Each Response

4.1 First Response--Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board

The Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (L.M.R.P.B.) unlike the later responses, lacked the political power, enabled by a legislative act. This being the case, the primary significance of the L.M.R.P.B. was for purposes of identification: identification of the loss of farmland leading to the identification of the dependence upon imported foods; identification of the importance of agriculture to the economy of the province; identification of the soil resource; identification of the perils of urban sprawl; identification of the problems facing agriculture; and the identification of solutions to the agriculture land loss problem. This information came out of primarily one publication, Land for Farming, (out of the approximately forty publications and an Official Regional Plan in the short history (1949-1969) of the L.M.R.P.B.). Even though the response of the L.M.R.P.B. was strictly regional instead of the more far reaching consequences of future responses, it possibly served an important function of identity.

The L.M.R.P.B. was formed at a time when B.C. was concerned with wise use of the land resource. The devastating flood of 1948 was fresh in everyone's mind and the economic costs of poor land use had become rather revealing. It made good sense to preserve the flood-plain land for a use other than housing or industry, and this being fertile land, would naturally lend itself toward farming activity. In the event of another flood, it would be better to lose crops and soil, rather than to risk human life.

The culmination of land studies in the region resulted in the formulation of an Official Regional Plan in 1966. Consistent with the planning principles used by the L.M.R.P.B. "belts of farmland coincided with fertile soil and flood-plains, while the valley cities occupied infertile uplands."<sup>1</sup>

Areas designated for long term agriculture enclosed approximately 300,000 acres, more than 50 percent of the useable land in the valley. Other areas, ultimately intended to be used for urban use, were designated to remain rural or agricultural until the appropriate stage in regional growth was attained.<sup>2</sup>

It may have been thought to be good planning to use future urban land temporarily as agricultural until the demand for urban use is sufficient, but this instance is typical of the land conversion process today--as cities increase in size, what was farmland, becomes urban use. It could be seen that this move could be a precipitator of farmland conversion. If future urban land was so identified and

long term agriculture so identified each may have a better chance of being used for their expressed purposes.

One of the achievements of the L.M.R.P.B. was the production of this official plan. In order for this to happen it was necessary for the Board to come to a consensus of opinion based upon the studies which had been done. Being that the Board consisted of representatives of the 26 municipalities in the Lower Mainland, each of whom was entitled to one vote, this was a victory. When members of 26 municipalities, each concerned specifically with his own territory agree to a regional concept for the community at large, this has to be an almost unnatural event. The gravity of inadequate planning obviously had taken precedence over personal issues.

When the plan was approved by the provincial government in 1966, "each of the 28 local governments in the Valley had to pass a zoning by-law based on the plan".<sup>3</sup> In theory, with the passing of a by-law "neither the regional board nor the municipalities would be permitted to carry out any action which would impede the attainment of the plan's objectives."<sup>4</sup> However, "the municipality in fact is not required to enact a zoning by-law to implement the plan, but if it does, that by-law must be consistent with the plan."<sup>5</sup> While the Official Regional Plan was a good idea, the allowable uses on agricultural land even when adhered to by the municipality were perhaps too broad.

As suggested earlier, the prime outcome of the L.M.R.P.B. was that of identification. It can be speculated that "if the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board had taken a firmer stand to ensure the retention of all farmland in 1966, there would have been little need for the Land Commission Act in 1973."<sup>6</sup> By showing lack of support for the regional plan through lack of a zoning by-law or by applying for revisions, in the area of farmland preservation, the response of the L.M.R.P.B. was inadequate.

Lack of support of the regional plan was also illustrated by actions of the provincial government, the same body who approved the regional plan. Last chapter, reference was made to the Roberts Bank Superport incident. More than 4,000 acres of land, fertile flood-plain land was the issue. This land:

designated as long term agricultural use was expropriated by the province, to be used as industrial back-up for the port, as well as to facilitate railway construction. Both Board members, and staff of the L.M.R.P.B. were opposed to this first major alienation of designated farmlands--as well as to what was functionally, a major revision to the regional plan. In spite of this opposition, the province proceeded with its plans. In doing so, the government not only ignored the intention and objectives of the Official Regional Plan, but harmed its credibility and integrity, making it more difficult to administer, and increased the pressure for amendments to the plan to permit municipal rezoning.<sup>7</sup>

The L.M.R.P.B. was dissolved by the provincial Social Credit government in 1969. It may be speculated that the

concern by the L.M.R.P.B. for a serious revision to the Official Regional Plan was the reason for this. Although the L.M.R.P.B. did not do much to preserve farmland of their own volition, perhaps the public awareness of the provincial government's lack of concern for the plan, and farmland preservation in general, had set the stage for a further response four years later. Coupled with this was the voluntary adherence to any zoning regulation and the broad classification of land use under the agricultural designation. All these facts point to an inadequate response.

#### 4.2 Second Response - B.C. Land Commission

The B.C. Land Commission was the first attempt by any province of Canada to provincially control the agricultural land resource. As such, the role of the B.C. Land Commission can be said to be regulatory. It may seem ironic that the Land Commission was initiated through the enabling legislation of the Environment and Land Use Act (E.L.U.A.) of 1971, a legislative resource tool of the Social Credit government, the same government which allowed the major revision to the Official Regional Plan of the Lower Mainland. Perhaps the Social Credit government realized its lack of foresight in 1968 and wanted to encourage safeguards on resource lands. The section of E.L.U.A. which was probably of primary importance to the establishment of Agricultural Land Reserves was section 3 (b):



ensure that all aspects of preservation and maintenance of the natural environment are fully considered in the administration of land use and resource development.

This Act coupled with the creation of regional districts which had occurred in 1965, provided for the organizational units in the creation of the ALR's. The outcome of provincial control was diluting the municipal interest within the confines of their respective municipalities in favor of a provincial control, weighting the long term preservation of land against the short term interests which municipalities seemed to have.

The purpose of the Land Commission Act was fourfold: agricultural land, preservation of parkland, establishment of greenbelts and urban land banking. The primary purpose of the Act seemed to be (a) "preserving of agricultural land for farm use; and (b) encouraging the establishment and maintenance of family farms, and land in an Agricultural Land Reserve, and a use compatible with the preservation of family farms and the farm use of land".<sup>8</sup> This seemed to be the prime purpose because 85% of the Commission's time in the first year was directed at this component.<sup>9</sup> The large budget of \$25 million for land acquisition protected the agriculture land resources because the land surrounding the reserve could be purchased as greenbelt to safeguard against incompatible uses adjoining an agricultural reserve. In addition to this, existing farmland was able to be purchased for lease, encouraging young families to enter

farming without the cash outlay required for purchase. The outcome of this was the establishment and maintenance of family farms. Being that most of the Commission's time was involved with the agricultural component, and the purpose of this thesis is directed at provincial control of agricultural land, the balance of this section will concern itself solely in this area.

(a) Establishment of Reserves

The land reserves were established principally on the basis of Canada Land Inventory suitability for Agriculture maps. This is an existing evaluative study breaking down agriculture into 7 classifications regarding suitability for agriculture.

The original designation of the reserves was based primarily on all Class 1 to 4 land which was not irreversibly developed regardless of its present use or ownership. The remaining 48% of the ALR was composed of poorer quality (CLI Class 5 and 6) lands which were either traditionally part of the agricultural economy (e.g. grazing lands) or whose absence would disrupt the local agricultural production system.<sup>10</sup>

All areas of the province, even those much removed from population were included in the reserves to provide present and future foodstuffs. This move resulted in an evenness of designation of reserves, using land capability as the only criterion.

Criticism was directed at this methodology in establishing reserves based on CLI classification. Large scale maps

permitted interpretation on any given parcel. B.C. is a composite of soil types; several classifications can exist in any given parcel. Further criticism was directed at the CLI for not considering social and economic factors in the classification process, and that classifications are based substantially on crop range and not productivity. An example of this latter concern is cranberry production; the Lower Mainland produces 99 percent of North America's total crop--on class 6 soil.<sup>11</sup> By using class 1 to 4 soils as prime lands to be included in the reserves, a class 6 category such as this example could possibly be precluded from designation into the reserves. Nevertheless, CLI ratings were an available tool, enabling quick implementation of a preservation strategy.

The reserves were established using CLI classifications, but delineation of reserve boundaries was based on legal property lines. Obviously, soil types do not respect property lines, leading to the possibility of including poorer soil or not including superior soil types. It became necessary to 'fine-tune' the reserves to resolve potential or existing conflicts.

The minimum parcel size of the reserves was 2 acres. It was suggested by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in 1983 that 5 acres would be a more viable parcel. However, in many regions of the province one finds 'hobby farms'. Hobby farms do not contribute greatly to the farming

economy, but many exist of an approximate 2 acre size. Hobby farms can act as buffers between residential and other, more viable farm units. Also, having small farms within the ALR does permit consolidation to provide a more functional unit.

In order to not adversely affect the expansion of the rural and urban centres of the province, the provision was made for excluding enough land to allow for 5 years of population expansion. This seemed a fair move on behalf of the Commission, but was probably abused by several, if not many, towns and cities of the province. Municipal government has been more interested in expanding town limits rather than infilling vacant areas of the existing urban structure. The Commission wished to see infilling, but did not have the budget or the time to function as urban planners.

As mentioned earlier, regional districts served an important function in the establishment of the reserves. Under the Land Commission Act, all 28 regional districts were required under Section 8 (2), to prepare land reserve plans for their respective regions. Through the process of establishing ALR's, information meetings and public hearings were held in each regional district so that the public would have an active role in the drawing of reserve boundaries. Subsequent to the reserve plan being submitted to the Land Commission from the regional district, final

approval of each reserve was reviewed and amended if necessary, by Cabinet. After the final approval, the regional district was involved in the processing of applications from private individuals for exclusion and inclusion from the reserves. Each regional district had the opportunity to comment on each application, but it was not legally necessary to do so. The involvement of regional districts, being an active role, could help to enhance the intent of the Act depending on whether or not the district was a firm supporter of farm preservation. An educational role evolved through communication and understanding of the importance of maintaining an agricultural land base and the role of enhancing farming as a livelihood.

(b) Intent of the Land Commission Act

Positive Factors

Although the budget came from the Provincial Government, the Land Commission had a quasi-independence from this body because the Commissioners themselves made most of the inclusion/exclusion decisions. The Cabinet held ultimate supremacy, being able to exclude land themselves without the benefit of comment from the Commission. The selection of Commissioners from various backgrounds, provided a mix of individuals with the essential ingredients of education, experience and association, to carefully evaluate every application. The philosophy of the Commission was to allow encroachment onto the ALR's only when there are no alternatives.

This being the case the chairman remarked that:

the objects of the Act are to protect the agricultural resource in the long haul, hence, short term economic or technological consideration must be given relatively little weight in evaluating whether a given parcel should be included or excluded from the Agricultural Land Reserve.<sup>12</sup>

Cabinet had given a great deal of statutory power to the Land Commission with only the Pollution Control Act and the Environment and Land Use Act having greater power. This action demonstrated the importance the Provincial government had perceived the role of the Land Commission to be. Traditional powerful land-brokers such as B.C. Hydro and the Department of Highways, to name a few, had to respect the land reserves, legally if not morally. The success of the Commission can be partially attributed to the power given the Act and the removal of the implementation and administration from the bureaucracy of government departments.

Another factor contributing to the success of the Land Commission was the philosophy of the New Democratic Party. The NDP had a demonstrated sensitivity to the land resource, particularly resources which would be needed for future generations, like agricultural land. They saw the necessity of halting the land conversion process, especially where urban encroachment was rapidly depleting the agricultural land resource. The table below shows the amount of land included and excluded during the reign of the NDP.

TABLE 2                      Land Reserve Statistics    (all figures in acres)

		<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
Total Reserves at Designation	11,661,600	Nil	14981	1277	10621 inclusions
Source: Commission Publications		1463	7738	5824	46854 exclusions

It should be noted that the NDP were defeated in 1976, and although the Land Commission Act did not change until 1977, the interpretation of it did. This is quite evident by comparing the reserve statistics between 1976 and 1977. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the original Commission and their ideology, it is necessary to compare net land excluded with net land included for the period 1974 to 1976. Addition of inclusions realizes a figure of 16258 acres. Addition of exclusions realizes a figure of 15025 acres. Therefore, there were a net increase in the reserve of 1233 acres during this 3 year period. Averaged out per year, the figure is 441 acre increase. Considering that B.C. was loosing 15,000 acres per year of farmland prior to 1972, this response can be deemed a success.

It has been argued that the land reserves themselves are not sufficient to encourage farming activity. Being that the intent of the legislation was to save the farm as well as the farmer, the reserves accomplished only the former. To save the farmer, it was necessary to provide assistance programs such as income assurance and tax reduction programs. Wilson and Pierce suggested that the

increase in farming activity has been due:

not from the land preservation program, but of a program with two facets-- protection of farmland by zoning, against the indiscriminate profit-oriented forces of the general land market; and protection of farming by cooperative programs, government sanctioned and supported, against the vagaries of climate and swings of the market for farm products.<sup>13</sup>

Support from farm groups such as the B.C. Federation of Agriculture came about only with the invoking of assistance programs. It can be concluded, therefore, that the success of the Land Commission can be attributed not specifically with the agriculture zoning, but in conjunction with the cooperative programs.

(c) Negative Impacts of the Land Commission Act

The largest single-most factor which would harm the Land Commission is the exclusionary process. It was necessary to have an exclusion process because of the CLI mapping procedure. However, pressures to exclude land from the reserves could come from either an aggrieved private landowner, a municipality, or the provincial Cabinet. If the prime purpose of the Act was to preserve farmland, any exclusions would have to be carefully weighted.

Exclusions granted to private individuals from 1974 to 1976 was 41 percent of the total exclusions under the various sub-sections of the Act. The exclusions by Cabinet or through appeal to ELUC accounted for the balance, 59%.



Municipalities have wished to exclude land motivated by the need of land "to facilitate urban expansion, and the desire to enlarge the municipal tax base and earn supplementary income through the sale of lands".<sup>14</sup> In order to achieve this, it was necessary to apply to Cabinet for exclusion. Not only had private individuals and municipalities utilized the exclusion process to their utmost purpose, the province was no exception. The provincial government through its actions of acquiring land for the Tilbury Industrial Park in 1973 had harmed the intention of the Commission. This parcel of 726 acres was prime farmland in Delta, a rich agricultural area. Concern was expressed by civic officials and farmers over their lack of consultation in this matter and perhaps established a precedence for other non-farming uses. A government official acknowledged that there was "no shortage of serviced land in the region, although the purchase price was high".<sup>15</sup> This action demonstrated that the objective of at least one government department was to encourage economic growth at the risk of disrupting farm operations (economic gains rather than long-term food production). The lesson here is that the government on one hand tries to encourage the maintenance of a farm economy, while on the otherhand, removes a large tract of land from one of the richest agricultural areas of a 'have-not' arable land province.

The reason for exclusion is for other uses, uses which result in a usually higher economic value, and often do not

complement the farming activity. The strongest pressure for exclusion is for residential development. Areas of the province which have the strongest urban pressures receive the most applications for exclusions. Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and the Okanagan Valley are all rich agricultural areas; these locations also have an ideal climate with a food supply at hand. The offshoot of this is that the pressure for exclusion is high, with a large portion of the land mass consisting of prime agricultural land. Even if the quantity of exclusions is low, the net loss of quality land can be high. A loss of 10 acres of Class 2 land in Delta may equal a loss of 50 acres of Class 6 land in the Peace River. Urban pressures generate a problem with no simple, expedient solution.

#### 4.3 Third Response - Provincial Agricultural Land Commission Act

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Being that the majority of time of the Land Commission was related to farming activities, it appeared that the efforts of the Commission should be directed in this area. With the defeat of the New Democratic Party in December 1975 and the replacement of the original Commissioners in 1976, an amended Act by the Social Credit government could better reflect their ideology in achieving the stated goal of 'preserving agriculture land and encouraging the establishment and maintenance of family farms.' As we will see in this section, the administrative changes which occurred had both positive and negative impacts. Being that the

Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA) is still in effect at time of writing, the sequence of events taken place from time of inception of the Act to the end of 1983 will be the time frame subject to analysis.

(a) Legislated Changes

The changes of the Act were discussed briefly in the section of the thesis describing the ALCA. In way of summary, changes and additions occurred in exclusion, appeal and legal frameworks. Regarding exclusions, a change occurred in allowing for subdivision and/or non-farm use of private or Crown lands within an Agricultural Land Reserve (section 11.2). This section applied only to the Agricultural Land Commission, regional districts and municipalities. A significant change occurred in the appeal of Agricultural Land Commission decisions; under the original Act, the only source of appeal was to the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet. This is retained in the amended Act, as Section 13 (1), but where leave to appeal from 2 members of the Commission is not granted under 13 (1), section 13 (2) provides an additional avenue of appeal to the Minister of Environment, who may permit a hearing by ELUC. The decision by ELUC is final. Whereas the original Act had no legal tools of enforcement, a provision for this was included under section 22 and 23 of the ALCA. A further aid to the ALC was the administration of the amended Soil Conservation Act which provided penalties for the removal of topsoil from agricultural land.

Other changes occurred, outside the control of the Agricultural Land Commission, yet supportive of its mandate. These changes, subsequent to the passage of the Act, helped to communicate to other government departments the value of agricultural land, and indicated in general, how the government was supportive of this preservation. These areas of support, referenced in the chapter on the Commission were briefly: a reduction of school taxes, shifting responsibility of the Commission from the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Agriculture, and establishing separation distances between agriculture and residential uses. In regards to official plans, the Commission has a special team reviewing early stages of community development plans, made available by an amendment to the Municipal Act. To support official plans, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs made grant money available to said municipalities and regional districts.

(b) Intent of the Agricultural Land Commission Act

Positive Factors

Being that the Social Credit Party had a much different political ideology than the NDP government, it was admirable that the Act was not amended out of existence. It can be deduced that the preservation of land may be foreign to the philosophy of the Social Credit Party who believe in free enterprise (a party of businessmen, supporting private ownership). On the otherhand, the NDP

philosophy advocates public ownership; that all benefits should accrue to the public. Given that the Act was retained, although in an apparent diminished capacity, the chief significance of the ALCA was in the increase of other government department involvement in the agricultural land conservation ethic.

There of course, would be an intrinsic association between the Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture. In fact, the shift of responsibility of the Commission from the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Agriculture could be seen as a positive, natural step. The aid of the Ministry of Environment in the enhanced fine-tuning of the reserves helped to utilize the resources of this branch, avoiding unnecessary duplication of work. Property tax abatement through an amendment to the Public School Act again demonstrated the commitment of the province in supporting the preservation of farm units. Lastly, the amendment to the Municipal Act in 1977 providing for review of community plans for compatibility with the ALR could well indicate to local governments the importance agriculture has or will have to the economy of British Columbia. In short, the Agricultural Land Commission, being a quasi-independent body funded through the provincial government had gained support for its cause by using the resources of existing government departments. This helped to gain greater recognition as an important priority and saved the cost of duplication of services.

(c) Negative Aspects

A criticism can be directed at the selection of Commissioners. The selection of the original Commissioners from various backgrounds and occupations, but with a common bond of dedication, knowledge and experience attributed to the success of said commission. The Commissioner's under the ALCA have all been selected from those representing the agricultural sector of the economy. This may reflect the course of action which the Commission wished to follow but could not adequately reflect the breadth of planning necessary to accommodate the interests of other land users. It is necessary for the Commission staff, as well as the Commissioners, to plan for urban as well as rural land uses because the highest pressure use of agriculture land is the former. Furthermore, to be effective, the Commissioners must have minimal ties to a political party. Several Commissioners at formation were Social Credit party members, although it was unknown as to their degree of affiliation. If the Land Commission staff base their decisions on technical advice, while the Commissioners base theirs on political consideration, a public interest decision is unlikely.

Another criticism can be directed at the budget allocated to the Agricultural Land Commission. The budget of the ALC did not have any provision for acquiring land. As such, there has been no purchases of land for agriculture since 1976, or for that matter, no purchase of land bank

property on the periphery of reserves. In fact, the present Commission has about 10,000 acres which it leases to farmers with an option to purchase, but due to this small scale, precludes it from achieving more than a token impact.<sup>16</sup> To buffer the reserves, a Green Zone Program was conceptualized, but by late 1983, had not been approved. The budget for the Commission has been around \$1 million for most of the years, but it is to be cut back from \$1.1 million in 1983 to "\$715,042 in 1984".<sup>17</sup> Of necessity, a cutback in staff will be required.

It is necessary to complete the reserve 'fine-tuning' program. This program began with the Land Commission, and was not completed by 1983. The fine-tuning program was directed at delineating various qualities of farmland, in particular, the prime from the subordinate. As was mentioned earlier in the thesis, B.C. is a composite of soil types. The large scale Canada Land Inventory maps used in the original designation of reserves are not sufficient for micro-areas. Perhaps good quality land is lost and poorer quality land is added to the reserves under the existing arrangement. Perhaps landowners who claim their parcel has inferior quality farmland have valid claims for exclusions, but the technique used by the Commission indicates otherwise. Acceptability of the legislation and defensability would be enhanced by a clearer classification of land.

One of the most significant changes in the legislation having a detrimental effect on the reserves was again, the policy of appeal and exclusion. A new section (9.8) of the ALCA allows aggrieved parties to appeal directly to Cabinet, professed by some, to be open to political patronage. Therefore, in practise there are three bodies which have the power to affect the size and quality of the ALR: (1) the Agricultural Land Commission through private applications, (2) ELUC, and (3), the Cabinet, through inclusions, government applications and appeals.<sup>18</sup> To be effective, the Commission must be as apolitical as possible, but I would not be suprised if many appeals are overturned by Cabinet because of political pressure. Regarding this political persuasion, one of the most controversial cases emerged in 1979 when an application to exclude 626 acres near Langley was granted by Cabinet--an application which was twice refused by the Commission. Approvals, such as this, where the government contravenes a Commission decision, could certainly promote uncertainty as to the use or future of the Commission. To quote Gillis:

public perception of the future stability of the ALR is not only important for maintaining support of the policy, but it is important for minimizing problems within the Reserves. If it is well received that the reserves are stable and land will not be easily excluded through the appeal process, then perhaps speculative activity within the ALR will reduce accordingly.<sup>19</sup>



If this is the case, then land investors will look to non-agricultural areas for their operations.

To gauge the impact of the Agricultural Land Commission, it is advisable to portray the hard statistical data. Table 3 is an extension of the table presented in the section regarding the B.C. Land Commission (page 91). An addition this time is the complete set of data from 1974, including the percentage of land excluded by government to government applications.

The reader will find a large discrepancy in the amount of land included compared with the amount of land excluded from 1977 to 1982 inclusive. Approximately 167,907 acres were excluded in this time frame, while only 67,181 acres were included, leaving a net loss of approximately 100,726 acres. On an average yearly basis, this translates into a loss of 16,788 acres per year. When we compare this value with the average loss prior to 1972 (15,000 acres) which was part of the reason for the Land Commission in the first place, or with the 411 acre net gain from the B.C. Land Commission, this figure does not give much credibility to the Agricultural Land Commission.

It is pure conjecture to determine why this massive land loss had taken place, but two suggestions can be made. Firstly, strong development pressure had taken place in British Columbia during the late 1970's and early 1980's, especially in the Okanagan, the Fraser Valley and Vancouver

TABLE 3 Inclusion/Exclusion Statistics (all figures in acres)

Applic. By Years	B.C. LAND COMMISSION				AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION					Total
	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	
Acreage Included	Nil	14981	1277	10621	47297	8033	616	294	320	83439
Acreage Excluded	1463	7788	5824	46854	25897	24113	15005	40689	15349	182982
									Difference	-99543
Percentage of Total Exclusions Attributed to Gov't to Gov't Applic. (Section 11.1)	35.9	56.8	58.4	85.8	81.0	74.4	70.9	78.8	61.7	Average 76.3

TOTAL ALR AT DESIGNATION 11,661,600

LESS LOSS 99,543

ALR AS OF 1 JAN 1983 11,562,057

INCLUSIONS ATTRIBUTED TO AGRI. LAND COMMISSION (1977 ON) 67,181

EXCLUSIONS ATTRIBUTED TO AGRI. LAND COMMISSION (1977 ON) 167,907

DIFFERENCE 100,726

SOURCE: derived from Commission publications

Island. This pressure was echoed by the high number of applications for exclusions by private individuals, but moreover by cities and towns wishing to expand their urban boundaries in reaction to this pressure. As a result of this, greater pressure was put on the Commission. Secondly, political favouritism and the drive for profit could also be contributing factors. Wilson and Pierce noted that "the Premier of the province and at least one of his ministers have been successful in the business of land development in the past and there is a strong faction in the caucus which is similarly disposed."<sup>20</sup>

Referring to the distribution of the exclusions from the table, in the nine years of statistics, government to government applications accounted for the majority, 76.3 percent. Government to government applications, you will remember, are where a regional district or municipality, for example, apply directly to Cabinet for exclusion. The highest percentages of government to government exclusions had taken place during the Agriculture Land Commission realm. Private applications and appeals through ELUC and the Minister accounted for 20.6 and 3.1 percent of exclusions respectively. If enough land was left available for a five year growth, were all the government to government applications warranted? Could not infilling of vacant lots within the urban areas take some of the pressure off agricultural land? The largest megalopolis in the province, the Greater Vancouver region, was reported to have enough

land available in 1972 to satisfy demands for up to 60 years without touching agricultural land.<sup>21</sup> The City of Chilliwack, in the fertile Fraser Valley was persuaded to establish a satellite community in the foothills of the mountains, rather than further encroach on good farmland. These two statements do not do much to justifying exclusions to local and regional governments.

These exclusions (government, private and appeals) taken in composite, account for a loss of over 182,000 acres in 9 years. Considering the land included, the loss comes to about 100,000 acres, or a decline of the reserves of 0.84 percent from time of designation to the end of 1982. This may seem like a small decline in quantity, but quality may be another question. Land Commissioner, Ian Paton remarked that most of the property added to the reserves is Crown land leased for agriculture purposes in the Interior, and doesn't replace the loss of land in the fertile Fraser Valley.<sup>22</sup> For lands included in the reserves from 1975 to 1982, 83 percent are classified as 'secondary'. Secondary, under the terms of reference, means Class 4 to 7, the lowest of the four agricultural capability categories. However, land reserve statistics indicate a disparity in Paton's statement. From 1979 to 1982, government to government applications (section 11.1) indicate that 4.3 percent of the land excluded was 'prime', while 86 percent was 'secondary'. For private applications, 18.6 percent of the exclusions were prime land, while 67 percent was

secondary. This may seem to be an academic argument, but the point is, if poor quality land is included while good quality land is excluded, the end figures may be misleading. The optimum would be to exclude secondary land and include prime. Fine-tuning is needed to achieve this.

A future concern affecting the long term viability of the Agricultural Land Commission may arise with the loss of the regional planning function in the province. The government had defended its stand on local autonomy, while those in opposition took to the media to launch their attack. (Several newspaper clippings are included on the following pages). In the year of restraint (1983), the province believed that the taxpayer would be saved \$7.6 million annually and that regional plans served as a fourth level of government, duplicating or conflicting with municipal governments. Furthermore, this de-regulation measure "would streamline the development process and eliminate costly delays previously absorbed by the home buyer or commercial tenant."<sup>23</sup> Those critical of this move suggest that regional planning does not duplicate work done by municipalities, that regional planning dealt with land uses, servicing and transportation issues that cross municipal boundaries. "The complete removal of all regional planning would be an invitation to municipal councils to compete for development and a broader tax base, regardless of the consequences for their neighbours or for the region of which they are a part."<sup>24</sup> Regional plans did

# Cuts will save millions, Ritchie says

Taxpayers will save millions of dollars through legislation introduced last week which strips regional districts of their planning and zoning powers, Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Ritchie said Saturday.

Ritchie said the Greater Vancouver Regional District and the Capital Regional District in Victoria combined spent between \$2 million to \$2½ million last year for planning and zoning projects alone.

"We've got to start streamlining government at the municipal level," he said. "Our main concern is to cut costs for the taxpayer and give municipalities maximum autonomy."

Ritchie said he didn't know how many regional district jobs would be lost because of the new bill.

Ald. Marguerite Ford, the chairman of Vancouver council's planning and development committee, predicted Thursday the new bill could lead to a greater strain on the Lower Mainland's transportation system, more urban sprawl and less cooperation between municipalities.

But asked whether the new bill could cause tensions between municipalities Ritchie said: "We're quickly finding the councils have a great deal of common sense and we've had just absolutely nothing but cooperation from them. Generally speaking, the municipalities wish to have this authority in their own hands."

Ritchie emphasized the legislation wasn't a move toward disbanding regional districts.

"They will still have an extremely important role to play, providing services such as recreational facilities, sewage and water, and garbage collection," he said.

Ritchie also denied the legislation was drafted after last week's GVRD decision against a Delta rezoning to let Dawn Developments Canada Corp. develop 328 hectares (about 800 acres) of land purchased from Social Credit supporter George Spetifore.

"We've been working

100  
on this bill for a long course, the decision to Delta council, not with time," he said. "Of rezone now rests with the GVRD."

## Regional plans worth retaining

Bill Vander Zalm is long gone from municipal affairs but in the provincial cabinet his spirit lingers on, continuing the task he began of sterilizing regional districts.

A bill introduced this week by rookie Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Ritchie effectively abolishes regional planning in British Columbia, by removing regional districts' powers to enact and enforce regional plans. Ritchie claims the move will "streamline the development process and strengthen the autonomy of local government."

No doubt, but it will also turn the clock back 30 years to an era of unco-ordinated growth, when municipalities did their own thing regardless of the impact on neighboring municipalities or the region as a whole.

The tangible results of that chaos are still with us. It was the need for a better system that led to the creation of regional districts in the 1960s, and to make one of their prime functions the adoption and enforcement of regional plans. These plans established the direction of growth and defined the services needed to accommodate that growth.

While the drafting and implementation was often a painful, contentious and cumbersome process (especially in the Greater Victoria area), the concept itself was — and remains — sensible.

One of the basic tenets of the regional plan for this area recognizes the need to protect the economic vitality of downtown Victoria. But whither the commercial core now that the regional plan is eliminated? Saanich has long envied the city's shopping malls situated tantalizingly on the Victoria side of the border. Once the legislation is adopted, there would be nothing to stop Saanich from a major expansion of its own — either by permitting a second major department store in the Tillicum Mall or a similar-sized development elsewhere in the municipality. How long could downtown businesses fight that kind of suburban competition?

Or, looking at other parts of the region, what happens to the principle of preserving farmland on the Saanich Peninsula if a development-oriented peninsular municipality decided on hell-bent growth?

The bill to abolish regional planning is a bad move, deserving all the criticism the official Opposition and municipalities can muster.

Source: Victoria Times-Colonist

Source: Vancouver Sun  
11 July 1983

# No regional planning = chaos

One of 26 bills introduced to the Legislature on Budget Day was a bill to amend the Municipal Act and remove from that statute any and all reference to regional planning. This has been called the Spetifore amendment because of wide speculation that it arises from the refusal of the Greater Vancouver Regional District to approve an amendment to the regional plan which would have permitted a housing development on the former Spetifore property in South Delta.

Those who follow such controversies will know that the Spetifore farm was refused exclusion from the Agricultural Land Reserve by the Sacred-appointed Land Commission but was later removed from the ALR by cabinet order.

Anyone who lives south of the George Massey (Deas Island) tunnel in Delta and faces the long wait for passage through it both in the morning rush hour going north and in the evening rush hour travelling south, must recognize that there is more than a local interest and a local responsibility in the urban development which takes place south of that bottleneck. There is a regional stake in limiting the amount of urban development in that area. The overriding reason is that the province cannot afford to build another \$100 million tunnel or bridge under or across the Fraser River just to meet the demands of commuter traffic.

Surely this is one of the items that regional planning is all about; to use our resources in a way in which we get maximum advantage; to spend our limited tax dollars in ways which provide the maximum benefit for the largest number of people; to discourage private decisions which have adverse effects on taxpayers at large; to encourage proposals which more fully use the public assets we have already acquired.

The regional responsibility regarding the Spetifore land was to preserve as much good agricultural land as possible and to prevent inappropriate development. The cabinet failed to recognize that it was against its own interest to remove the land from the ALR and

**Howard Sturrock**  
*Chairman*  
*Capital Regional Board*

insist on urban development. The province will eventually foot the bill.

Despite the protestations of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, many local politicians believe that it was the Spetifore case which was the death knell for regional planning. In one bill the government removed all reference to the concept from the Municipal Act.

In many of the 28 regional districts across the province regional planning does not have a high profile. But in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and in the Capital Regional District, where there is the greatest concentration of population, regional planning has been in the forefront of regional activities. It is, in fact, one of the reasons why regional districts were formed in the mid-1960s.

The regional planning staff of seven is small in relation to the 370 full-time staff of the Capital Regional District which manage the 52 other functions of the region. But their work is of vital importance to the citizens of the area. In the long run, the cost is small relative to the enduring economic and esthetic benefits to the community.

In the Capital Regional District two fundamental objectives of regional planning have been:

- ★ Preservation of the rich agricultural lands of the Saanich Peninsula;
- ★ Protection for the commercial core of Greater Victoria from competing large suburban shopping centres.

The regional plan, currently under a five-year review, with the co-operation of the peninsula municipalities, has preserved the rich farmlands of the peninsula from urban development. It has, after a court confrontation with Saanich, reached a compromise over Tillicum Shopping Centre, protecting the viability of downtown Victoria. It has been attempting to encourage development in Langford and Colwood, rather than on Saanich farmland. In the

first five months of this year, the Western Communities accounted for an increased percentage of dwelling unit starts in the Victoria metropolitan area, compared with the urban core and the Saanich Peninsula.

It must be obvious that a proposal to subdivide a 500-acre parcel of farmland in Central Saanich, if such a proposal existed, would have implications for more than just the citizens of Central Saanich. There would be a regional responsibility here, not just in protecting farmland, but also in the provision of sewer and water services and access roads to such an imaginary proposal. There might well be a provincial involvement because of the impact on provincial highways.

Under the provisions of Bill 9, the region would have no opportunity to even raise its voice and draw attention to such implications because the regional planning function would have ceased to exist.

The complete removal of all regional planning is an invitation to municipal councils to compete for the development and tax base, regardless of the consequences for their neighbors or for the region of which they are a part. It is essential that there be a regional mechanism for evaluating and mediating conflicting interests of various municipalities. A formula could be worked out which would remove the veto from the regional government where a municipal government had endorsed a proposal by a 75 per cent vote (Delta Council favored the Spetifore proposal by five votes to four), but I personally would find even that kind of compromise difficult to endorse.

What is needed is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to recognize the essential value of the regional overview. Each regional district should be examined individually — they were created individually — and proposals brought forward as to how the regional needs can be covered by legislation which allows individual regional districts to deal effectively with their own special conditions.

serve a mediatory role in resolving conflicts of interest. Respecting agricultural land, municipalities did have the right to local autonomy before regional districts were imposed, and as experience demonstrated, did a poor job of this stewardship. When seeking to improve their tax base, municipalities cannot afford to retain agricultural land in its present state. Although the Land Commission will still serve as an overview, without the assistance of regional districts in the processing of applications, the workload will become heavier, possibly enormous, given the reduced budget. As a result, the number of applications for exclusions is likely to increase significantly.

#### 4.4 Section Summary

The Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board's significance was in identification of a problem and in means of rectifying it. Bearing in mind that the Board existed for about 20 years and published approximately 40 reports and Official Regional Plan, on the farmland issue, they did a reasonable job. Perhaps, if it was not for their work there would not have been any further response for some time. It was unfortunate that zoning regulations were haphazard and land use classifications were perhaps too broad, but their real virtue was in their opposition to the government expropriation of the land surrounding Roberts Bank Superport. Public conscience was fostered by this opposition and the subsequent move of dissolving the Board by the government, pointing to an admission of guilt.



The stage was now set for a further response, this being the B.C. Land Commission Act. This Act unlike the LMRPB had legislative support, enabling a zoning method to control farmland loss. B.C. had been losing about 15,000 acres of farmland annually prior to the formation of the Commission. Over a three year period, the agriculture land inventory had grown by an average of 411 acres per year. This successful response is due chiefly to the ideology of the NDP and the selection of Commissioners.

Following the defeat of the NDP in 1976 came a third response and the one which is still with us today, the Agricultural Land Commission Act. This response was more focused than its predecessor - strictly agriculture land control. With this narrowed mandate, one might expect an improved outcome of the reserves, given also that by 1977 public acceptance of the legislation was fairly high. However, the interpretation of the Act was different for the Social Credit party than for the NDP, who appointed new Commissioners and permitted two avenues for appeal. The result was an average loss of over 16,000 acres per year over a 6 year term. The blame for this increase does not lie wholly with the Commission or its Commissioners, but rather with the B.C. Government Cabinet. Figures reveal that the majority of exclusions came directly through this route, bypassing or not heeding the advice of the Agricultural Land Commission. For these above reasons, I label this response discretionary control. This response

did have some positive points such as improved communication with other government departments, reducing tax assessment for bona fide farmers, and helping to protect the reserves by taking part in community plan development. Like the Land Commission, this response aimed to protect the farmer as well as the farm.

This brings us to the second stage of the analysis. Here we look at the overall package of legislation to determine the extent in alleviation of nationwide land loss problems.

B. Has the Legislation Addressed Land Loss?

Earlier in the thesis it was mentioned that many forces are at work in society which serve to reduce the opportunities for long term farming. This section will examine pressures in and around the rural-urban interface. We will discover that many of the land use inequities Dr. Firey mentioned in Chapter II, are still much in vogue today.

On a national basis, the pressures can be broken down into two categories. Firstly, the expansion of the urban influence into the countryside has on one hand, added financial difficulties to the farmer through increased taxes, while on the otherhand, has put an added inducement on the farmer to sell, because of the speculative value of the property. Competition for land can be fierce on the

urban fringe. Secondly, the influence of municipal and federal governments have enhanced, but also reduced farming as a livelihood. An example of a farmer's plight on the outskirts of Victoria is documented on the next page. It should be noted that this land is not in the ALR.

To gauge the success of the provincial response in British Columbia of preservation of and maintenance of farms, many of these difficulties should be addressed. The purpose of this chapter is precisely this--to briefly describe the problem from the national perspective and examining the response as it arose out of the experience in British Columbia.

#### 4.5 Urban Expansion

The expansion of the urban influence into the countryside has resulted in difficulties for farmers, often reducing the viability of farming. Some of these pressures are:

- farm fragmentation
- increasing property taxes due to soaring land prices
- land speculation
- competition for land from other than agricultural users
- nuisance

To adequately address the response, a brief description of these difficulties is necessary.

# Farming vs housing conflict growing

Central Saanich farmer Jack Arnaud is prepared to pass up more than \$1 million to see his farmland preserved.

Arnaud said he could sell his 10-hectare Keating Ridge property — which he calls the best farmland on the Saanich Peninsula — to a developer for more than \$2.5 million.

"If I sell it as a farm, I'll probably get less than \$500,000."

But, he said, his thriving vegetable and berry farm can survive only if Central Saanich council stops the residential development — which is permitted under existing zoning — to proceed around his property.

"I can survive as a farmer only if some of the land around me is farmland," said Arnaud.

"If not, I'll have to quit."

About one-third of Arnaud's land is surrounded by housing.

And as the housing increases, so does vandalism, which he said is his biggest problem.

Some of the problems he has encountered are:

- A juvenile broke into one of his greenhouses last year, tore out some tomato plants and planted marijuana.

- Theft of his crops has increased as the housing nearby has increased.

- Thieves looking for Christmas trees have sawed off the tops of fir trees which he used as a hedge.

- Central Saanich council told him a year ago he could not rebuild his land with septic tank sludge, which he said would have helped considerably. Arnaud said council was worried about the heavy metals in the sludge, which he argues is not a problem because the municipality has no heavy industry.

- One of his employees was threatened by a neighbor for operating a noisy tractor on a Sunday. Arnaud said his employee, unaware of his rights, stopped work following the threat.

B.C. Federation of Agriculture general manager Jack Wessel said vandalism from nearby housing is a common problem for B.C. farmers.

Wessel said it would be a shame to see an innovative farmer like Arnaud quit.

"He's been the leading edge in greenhouse technology in this part of the world and his days are numbered if he's surrounded by housing," said Wessel.

Arnaud said people are being short-



Arnaud: farms only

sighted about the importance of good farmland.

"You remember the time when we figured we had all the oil we ever needed in this country?"

"Well, soon you're going to be looking back at the days when we thought we had all the farmland we needed, too.

"Considering I've got the best farmland on the peninsula, I don't see why Central Saanich council can't accommodate me by getting some of these developers who've bought around me to trade for land somewhere else and leave this prime land for farming."

Central Saanich Mayor Dave Hill said Arnaud and others with similar ideas should have spoken up in 1976 when residents were asked to contribute to the community plan.

Arnaud's 10 hectares and another 30 hectares on Keating Ridge, though all zoned residential, have a temporary two-hectare minimum lot size freeze on them so future development can be controlled.

But Hill had little encouragement for Arnaud.

"No, I'm afraid even if he did get more than half of the Central Saanich residents to back him in a proposed change of zoning for the Keating Ridge land from residential to agricultural, I wouldn't go along with it."

But Hill said the two-hectare freeze could be lifted anytime.

Hill agreed Arnaud probably does have one of the best farms on the peninsula with a maximum number

of frost-free days, but his land has long been zoned residential.

"Historically, people in Central Saanich chose Brentwood Bay, Saanichton and Keating as areas to settle in and the Keating Ridge land has long been zoned residential.

"Our council can't arbitrarily change the zoning of land bought by people in that area with the purpose of developing it. What about their rights?"

He said his council can boast being the only municipality in the province that hasn't allowed any land to be taken out of the Agricultural Land Reserve which was established in 1973.

As for the residential development surrounding Arnaud's property, Hill said people in Central Saanich who decide to buy a house near a farm will have to take the bad with the good.

"If anyone living in a house next to a farm in this municipality complains about the smells or noise from the farm next door, they'll get little sympathy from me."

Arnaud, asked if he'd sell his land if council doesn't budge from its position, said: "Where the hell do you go? The best farmland is being used for housing."

Note: Mr. Arnaud's  
land is not is the  
ALR

Source: Victoria  
Times-Colonist  
15 June 1983

(a) Farm Fragmentation

Problem: With the spreading of the urban influence, often small land parcels are severed from a larger farm parcel. If this had occurred often enough, a once economic farm unit was rendered uneconomic with the additional density created in an otherwise agriculturally orientated community. Hobby farms, many times, become the use for these smaller parcels. Hobby farms do not directly result in alienation of land from future agricultural use, but does little to support local agriculture because they are too small to be commercially productive. To service residences and industry, often new utility corridors or roadways are necessary to be constructed. With the allocation of a 200 foot right-of-way, 25 acres per mile are lost.<sup>25</sup> The effect of this is twofold, firstly, removing good agricultural land from production, and secondly, bisecting a large farm parcel reducing agriculture use options for the farmer.

Response: Little was done to prohibit the increasing quantity of hobby farms. Being that the minimum parcel size in an ALR holding is 2 acres, one would expect that many hobby farms are indeed an integral component of the reserves. This is the case, especially on the urban fringe of major towns and cities. Regarding agricultural land in total, farmers perceive the permanence of the ALR's and in the concomitant future viability of farming by "increased investment in many agricultural properties, the establishment of new farms and consolidation of land into larger

farming units."<sup>26</sup> The results of the study by Environment Canada between 1972 and 1977 pointed out that:

land purchases, shown by the survey to be mostly farmers, were more frequent within the ALR boundaries. Similarly, augmentation of management unit size by leasing was more prevalent within the ALR's. Land was leased out for farming activity within the ALR, but no such activity was found outside ALR boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

Jim Plotnikoff, Planning and Technical Unit Director for the Agricultural Land Commission noted that "in B.C., unlike any other province, there has been an increase in agricultural activity."<sup>28</sup>

The legal power delegated to the Commission had much veto power regarding the bisection of viable farm parcels. It was necessary that B.C. Ministry of Highways and B.C. Hydro or any government department, consult with the Commission when expanding of services was warranted. If any conflict with agricultural land would arise, it was necessary for these agencies to modify their plans.

It can be seen therefore, that farm fragmentation, at least within the reserves, is controlled. By saving the farm, it also saved the farmer. Statistics Canada revealed that the number of census farms increased from 20,012 in 1981 compared with 19,432 in 1976. The average capital value per farm increased from \$87,000 in 1971 to \$185,000 in 1976 to \$426,000 in 1981. With this massive increase in farm value, certainly farm fragmentation can be of little consequence in British Columbia.

(b) Increasing Property Taxes Because of Soaring Land Prices

Problem: The difficulty here is that as residential use encroaches on agricultural uses, tax assessments increase. Being that tax assessment is based upon recent land transactions, agricultural land is being assessed at nearly the same value as nearby residential land. This obviously puts a much added cost in carrying out farming occupations and can result in the farmer succumbing to urban pressures to sell out.

Solution: In British Columbia, property assessment is vested with the British Columbia Assessment Authority. In 1977, the Assessment Authority established criteria for the definition of a farm, resulting in a differential taxation scheme. Farmland assessment is based on soil type, land capability and productivity. "Schedules are formulated for each district and region in the province, with different assessments applying to the various land uses and capability classes."<sup>29</sup> In establishing market value for purposes of assessment, the value of farmland is utilized knowing that urban land values far exceed that of agricultural use.

Differential tax assessment in British Columbia is complicated, with any of four Acts involved: the Assessment Act, the Municipal Act, the Taxation Act, and the Public Schools Act. Some of these Acts have overlapping jurisdiction. For instance, all bona fide farmland is exempt from 50 percent of school and hospital taxes. If the farm

is within a rural area, a further exemption for general purposes is granted, however, a farm within a municipality does not receive any consideration for general purpose exemption. From this statement, a penalty is paid for having a farm within a municipality.

As a further encouragement to farming, the Assessment Authority differentiates between the intended land use and actual land use. If land was a part of the ALR it is not necessarily taxed as farmland. A conditional use such as a golf course, if part of the ALR is taxed as a golf course, not as a farm. This provision suggests that farming is the activity which receives the most beneficial assessment to the land user, especially if the farm is located in a rural area. A study of agricultural land assessment in B.C., concluded that:

the Farm Classification Program contributes to the preservation of agricultural land by removing some of the overhead costs of farming. The taxes on bona fide farmland are substantially lower and, in some cases, totally eliminated, thus providing an appealing financial incentive for farmers and their families. By reducing the total expenses of farming operations, farming viability is increased, and the cost of conversion to non-farm use is higher.<sup>30</sup>

From this statement, the provincial response in B.C. has removed some of the taxation pressure on genuine farming activities, and partially penalized those who use farmland for non-food production.



(c) Land Speculation

Problem: Farmland lying in the path of urban development has been a target for land speculators. The reason cities located on flat land is because costs of construction of buildings and services are much less than on undulating terrain. Developers and speculators realize the potential that farmland offers. Of probably greater importance has been the prices for which farmland can be purchased; many times less than that of urban land. The farmer is attracted by a quick-profit opportunity, providing a healthy retirement package and removing the anxiety that exists with crop failures, market fluctuations and so on. The developer/speculator may realize a profit potential with suburban and rural homes selling for, in time, prices comparable to or above those of homes within the city. Earlier, Firey's model and observations were mentioned which suggested that in fringe areas, less than optimal functioning of community occurs. In this case, disunity is referred to as an irrelevance of settlement patterns to soil capability.

Response: The invocation of Agricultural Land Reserves in British Columbia created essentially, two land markets, the ALR land market and the non-ALR land market. Without the reserves the land market would be influenced more by market demand, as was illustrated as being the problem. In Saanich, a rural region of Victoria, "100 percent of surveyed land-

owners located outside the ALR's...estimate their property to be in the 'over \$20,000' value category, whereas only 8 percent of those properties in the ALR's were estimated to be in that category."<sup>31</sup> From this information, it can be deduced that property values for non-ALR land were bound to rise because of reduced supply of developmental land. Those landowners within the reserves interested in selling their land for profit motives would have to battle with the Land Commission for exclusion. With the value of ALR land holding steady, it would be possible for serious farmers to augment their operation by increasing their parcel size without paying the market prices for non-ALR land. The effect of this is to consolidate land parcels, increasing farming viability. To again quote Manning and Eddy, "the percentage of landowners in the ALR's who indicated long term farming futures was double that of those outside the ALR boundaries with similar quality holdings."<sup>32</sup>

(d) Competition for Land

Problem: Competition for land is acute on the rural-urban fringe. Farmland is often suitable for damming to provide hydro-electric generation, suitable for strip-mining, oil exploration and for recreational uses such as golf courses. Being that rural-urban areas have an affinity to city and country, use options may be numerous. Sometimes these uses, often generated by urban proximity affect farm operations by the removal or placement of fill on good farmland.

Furthermore, countryside resources like sand, gravel and water are needed to satisfy urban demands. Regarding irrigation, the farmer must purchase water at the same price as the urban user, adding a considerable expense to his operation. Because of this competition for land, the value to another use is sometimes greater than the value agricultural use warrants.

Response: In British Columbia, the value of land for other uses within an ALR is less than outside the ALR. For the farmer, the reverse is true. This being the case, agriculture use only competes with agriculture use within an ALR, while the other uses such as residential, industrial, utility corridors and resource exploitation have to compete with each other on non-ALR land. One area which the legislation does not reckon with, however, is the enhancement of farming other than supplying and safeguarding of land. For example, the supply and costing of water is a municipal or local responsibility which sees that the farmer usually pays a high price. This will be discussed in more detail later.

To prohibit the removal of topsoil and placement of fill on ALR's it was necessary to strengthen the legislation of the Soil Conservation Act. Under current legislation, the Land Commission must approve in writing any such requests for departure from the Act, before the local authority can issue a permit. The statute defines 'soil'

as including "the entire mantle of unconsolidated material above bedrock other than minerals" (s. 1) and 'fill' as "any material whatever brought on land in an Agricultural Land Reserve". An appeal mechanism was included in the statute as was a provision for carrying out research without the requirement of a permit. The penalties for contravention of the Act were fairly stiff; an initial fine of up to \$200 under the Summary Convictions Act as well as a daily fine of up to \$500 under the Soil Conservation Act.

The Land Commission believes that land can be utilized in a number of ways without directly affecting its capability to produce food at some future date. A layer of concrete or asphalt greatly diminishes the ease of conversion to food production. However, a golf course, for example, is physically easy to convert to food-producing land as the earth mantle is relatively undisturbed. This is why a golf course is a conditional use under legislation. It can be said that the Commission has done much to enhance farming as a livelihood and done something to punish those who detract from this theme. Recognizing that not all ALR lands need to be in food production at present, the Commission has allowed conditional uses capable of providing a livelihood for the owner until such time that it is needed for food production. The danger of temporary uses is that they can become permanent. Vigilance over the type and magnitude of conditional uses is necessary.

(e) Nuisance

Problem: A direct cause of termination of farming activity has been the incompatibility between the farmer and his urban neighbour. A mutual nuisance is the result of this incongruity. The farmer is subject to nuisance factors such as vandalism, pilferage and trespass from his adjoining urban neighbour. The neighbour is discontented with farming activities such as fertilizer and livestock odours as well as the noise associated with the dawn to dusk activity of agricultural activities. This incompatibility is associated with the inhabitation of the countryside by a higher density population, a population which for the most part originated in the urban area. As well as the presence of an urban culture, small lot zoning has contributed to the pressure put on farming. The end result of this is for the farmer to terminate his operation.

Solution: Little can be done to influence a person's selection of a homesite. Many reasons are given for locational preferences of rural areas. Because of these reasons, farmers are often a minority population. The response in British Columbia has been to increase the compatibility between the farmer and his neighbour. The methodology has consisted primarily of odour control. In this respect the 'Green Zone' program was formulated in 1977. This program was established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in conjunction with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Agricultural Land Commission and the B.C. Federation of

Agriculture. Its purpose is to ascertain minimum separation distances between intensive agriculture and other uses, and to construct by-laws which could be adopted at the municipal level. In the past, by-laws were invoked which restricted or limited agricultural activities. The Green Zone by-laws were hoped to ensure that:

- (a) intensive agricultural operations (egg, poultry, dairy, beef feedlot and hog operations) are properly designed and built with the necessary equipment to minimize potential for future problems.
- (b) intensive agricultural operations are sited in locations removed from existing neighbours, and
- (c) new housing developments are located away from intensive agricultural operations.<sup>33</sup>

As of the fall of 1983, several by-laws had been constructed but has not been approved. In order to further reduce conflict, this must be done as soon as possible.

This program serves to appease the general public, rather than the farmer. Perhaps this is necessary as public pressure has and will continue to be a force contributing to termination of farm activities. The B.C. response does not deal with vandalism, trespass or pilferage, hardships placed on the farmer by the general public. By appeasing the public, it may not necessarily appease the farmer. Methods of reducing nuisance to the farmer may be worthy of investigation.

## 4.6 Government Influence

### Municipal Government

Problem: For many years, local land use decisions have been carried out in the local area. It was not always realized how the ramifications of a decision in one area would affect an adjoining area. If the key decision-makers were of a bent favouring development, often farm-land would be rezoned to a use which would generate a larger tax base. In general, lack of political support through differential assessment taxation or the provision of irrigation water at an equitable cost have resulted in a depleting agricultural land base. The following is how local government in Ontario treats agricultural land, which may be typical of the national local level treatment.

1. Financial trade-offs--this means that agricultural land does not produce the same tax revenue for a municipality as does such uses as residential, industrial or commercial.
2. Short term political decisions--councils elected on a short term basis find it difficult to make decisions based upon long term considerations which tend to affect their constituents on a day-to-day basis.
3. Land assemblies--land assemblies within urban fringe areas have removed large areas from agricultural production in anticipation of future urbanization.
4. Pre-designation of urban areas in Provincial plans--often large areas of land are designated by council as being urban, to supply, say, up to 25 years of development. Once an area has been indicated for development and has been acquired by development companies, the attempt will be made to get it placed as a first priority in terms of future development.

5. Capital budgets and servicing commitments-- the need to identify future areas for development 30 to 50 years in advance of actual development so that hard services can be designated continues to create problems from an agricultural viewpoint.
6. Municipal political structure--there is a tendency in some areas of two-tier government for the councils of lower-tier government (area municipality) to deal with official plan amendments in rural areas. Lower-tier councils may be less cognizant of a regional policy for agriculture of the long-term implications of urban development in rural areas.<sup>34</sup>

A seventh factor may be added, not related to long term planning, but rather a policy statement. A hardship has been placed on farmers by "limits on use of equipment on local roads, placement of manure and waste, spraying, etc."<sup>35</sup> Many local governments appear to see land as a saleable commodity rather than as a resource.

Response: The legislation in B.C., partially removed the municipal interest in agricultural land. If the land was of agricultural significance it was at least temporarily locked into the ALR. I use the word 'temporarily' because of the large amount of exclusions granted to local government. It did appear that the legislation had an educational value to many if not all local governments because of their direct involvement in the designation process. Sympathy might have been generated by local governments to the long term benefits of retaining lands of food production capability.



A valid criticism of the Land Commission lies in the lack of planning for urban growth; the provincial responsibility seemed to be the classification and identification of food producing land. The responsibility for further enhancement of farming activity was under the auspices of local government. Property tax reduction and subsidized irrigation water costs would be two of many things which local governments could do. We have seen earlier that farm taxes are less in a rural area than in a municipality. This appears to suggest that farming activities are better suited to rural areas. However, as cities continue to grow (expand) what was once a rural area now becomes a municipality. I think municipalities should be aware of who the pioneers were and give them the benefit of complete differential tax assessment as well. Without doing this, it could be cause to terminate operations or move further afield. Municipalities could also encourage farming by subsidizing water for farm use. Mostly what exists now is a quantity discount, with a similar base rate as residential users.

The future may bring more anxiety for the farmer with the move toward local autonomy. Regional districts in B.C. did much to remove the competitive edge of one municipality over another. A large shopping centre in a rural municipality surrounding Victoria was much reduced by regional district involvement. The opinion of the regional district was that a large suburban shopping centre would do little

to enhance shopping in downtown Victoria. Similarly, new population growth was directed off the fertile farmland of Saanich Peninsula to the sparsely populated Western Communities, again by the role of the Capital Regional District. Originally, municipalities had more control over their region but because it was improperly exercised, was taken away from them. With a prevalence of a growth ethic in southern B.C. and the abolition of regional plans, it will be interesting to see what will happen to farming.

#### 4.7 Section Summary

The Province of British Columbia by invoking Agricultural Land Reserves, had eliminated or reduced many of the problems facing farmers on the rural-urban fringe. Legislative actions gave the Land Commissions' supremacy over many other government departments, alleviating some of the internal government caused land loss problems (examples are the consultation in Hydro and Highway rights-of-way). Establishing a real property taxation rate favoring actual agricultural use, rather than intended use, gave bona fide farmers a financial benefit to continuing farming activities. A third positive feature of the reserves was in reducing the speculative value of farmland. Unlike other farming regions of Canada, B.C. had effectively two land markets, ALR land and non-ALR land. ALR land would only be of interest to someone wishing to pursue agricultural activities, while the non-ALR land would be for any other land use.

Ideally, the land developer would have to overlook the flat, easily developed farmland, in favor of some poorer quality land such as a hilly or upland parcel. If competition from other uses is removed from farmland, land prices will remain relatively stable.

Several factors regarding land loss were ineffectively handled. The biggest problem facing agricultural land is competition from other uses. Having two land markets in B.C. was a good feature, but permissible uses in the reserves may be a potential problem. A golf course is a 'conditional use'. The soil mantle in this use will be left relatively undisturbed, therefore conversion to agricultural use could be relatively simple.<sup>36</sup> However, being a popular leisure activity as well as providing jobs and tax revenue to the community, how would the general public react to such a change in use? I suspect unfavorably. Perhaps what is deemed future agriculture should remain in an undeveloped state until it is needed for food production. Legislation did not do much to diminish the problem of nuisance. Involvement in the formation of the Community Plan helped the Commission suggest uses compatible with agriculture to the local council, yet encroachment pressures still exist for the farmer. The Green Zone program, once accepted, may be of some help, but this remains to be seen. One of the strongest adversary which farming in B.C. faces is local government. The nuisance problem, for one, could be reconciled by local government actions.

Many local governments favor increasing tax revenues by applying for block exclusions from the reserves--uses which pay higher premiums than farming. Regarding irrigation water, rates charged farmers are often similar to residential rates. In short, local governments can do much to foster vitality and viability to farming activities. ALR legislation did little about local government influence; nor could they. Too much control by senior government would assume the role of a dictatorship; senior governments have a moral responsibility not to meddle in local affairs. More local autonomy could increasingly harm present and future farming enterprises. The onus is on local government to carry out the groundwork laid with the invoking of the Agricultural Land Reserves.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>B.E. Smith, "The B.C. Land Commission Act--1973," (unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1975), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>David Baxter, The British Columbia Land Commission Act--A Review, (Vancouver: Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration, University of British Columbia, 1974), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>7</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Province of British Columbia, Land Commission Act, 1973.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>10</sup>J.T. Pierce, "The Agricultural Land Commission: A Review and Evaluation", in Plan Canada, 21:2 (June 1981), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup>Personal interview, Mr. Jim Plotnikoff, Agricultural Land Commission, Burnaby, B.C., December 21, 1983.

<sup>12</sup>Province of British Columbia, Annual Report, year ending March 31, 1974, B.C. Land Commission, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>J. Wilson and J.T. Pierce, "The Agricultural Land Commission of British Columbia," in Environments 14 (3), (1982), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup>J.T. Pierce, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>15</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>J.T. Pierce, op. cit., p. 55.

- <sup>17</sup>Vancouver Sun, 11 July, 1983.
- <sup>18</sup>J.T. Pierce, op. cit., p. 55.
- <sup>19</sup>M. Gillis, "An Analysis of Landowners' Attitudes towards the B.C. Agriculture Land Reserve" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1980), p. 96.
- <sup>20</sup>Wilson and Pierce, op. cit., p. 20.
- <sup>21</sup>Baxter, op. cit., p. 24.
- <sup>22</sup>Victoria Times-Colonist, 12 August 1983.
- <sup>23</sup>Province of British Columbia, Restraint and Recovery: The Next Steps, (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1983), p. 25.
- <sup>24</sup>Victoria Times-Colonist, 29 July 1983.
- <sup>25</sup>Simon Fraser University, Department of Geography, "A Time to keep the farmlands of Delta," Burnaby, B.C. April, 1980, p. 13 (mimeographed)
- <sup>26</sup>E. Manning and S. Eddy, The Agricultural Land Reserves of British Columbia: An Impact Analysis. (Ottawa: Environment Canada, Land Use in Canada Series, number 13), 1978, p. 94.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 58.
- <sup>28</sup>Plotnikoff, op. cit.
- <sup>29</sup>J.D. McCuaig and H.J. Vincent, Assessment Procedures in Canada and their use in Agricultural Land Preservation. (Ottawa: Environment Canada, working paper No. 7), 1980, p. 4.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Manning and Eddy, op. cit., p. 51.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>33</sup>Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, "A Place to Live, A Place to Farm", Pamphlet, no publication date.

<sup>34</sup>J. Blair, "Stronger Provincial Guidelines for Local Land Use Policies, in Food for the Cities. (Ontario: Bureau of Municipal Research, 1977), p. 59.

<sup>35</sup>McCuaig and Vincent, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>36</sup>Although a golf course is a conditional use, it is unlikely it would ever be turned into food-producing land. The economic cost of constructing a golf course is in the range of \$50,000. per hole. At a cost of this magnitude, it is almost sure this golf course will never be farmland.

CHAPTER V: REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to describe and evaluate the attempt of the British Columbia government to preserve agriculture land for future generations as a food source in a world of growing shortages, and to save a way of life, incidentally, the fourth largest industry in the province. I have chosen to break the solution into three distinct responses, each spanning one time frame and achieving one significant purpose. The Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (1949-1969) I describe as the identification response; the B.C. Land Commission (1973-1976), I describe as a regulatory zoning control response; the third response, the Agricultural Land Commission (1977 to present), I describe as a discretionary control response. Throughout this thesis, we have seen an inter-relationship between these responses.

The acceptance of the responses have been obviously due of course, to the strong provincial legislation, but as well, by the internalizing of the conservation ethic among the general public. People have seen or heard about the despoilation of the environment, pollution, erosion, acid rain, poisoned aquifers and so on. British Columbia has a low supply of arable land and the best farming areas are coincident with the most highly valued residential property. Some trade-off is necessary to accommodate both agriculture use and residential use. Despite adversity from competing sources, the conversion of farmland has been



reduced. I suggest the public internalization of the conservation ethic has been gained partially because the present Social Credit government has been responsible for much excluded land. Public opposition to political moves was amply demonstrated by the protest over Bill 9, the Municipal Amendment Act, mentioned in Chapters III and IV.

The analysis section had a twofold purpose; firstly, investigating the significance of each of the responses; secondly, how the legislation in B.C. dealt with farmland loss problems common throughout developing countries. From this analysis came seven significant findings. Listed below are these findings; the ordering having no respect for level of importance. It should be noted that any reference to the 'Commission' can refer either to the B.C. Land Commission or the Agricultural Land Commission. The balance of the chapter consists of an 'optimal' model which I propose, the lessons which planners should be cognizant of, and the future direction of the agriculture land ethic.

### 5.1 Significant Findings

- (a) No one institutional arrangement is necessarily the right one.

This statement is based on the two legislative responses, the B.C. Land Commission Act and the Agricultural Land Commission Act. I believe on one hand that the first legislative response was successful because of the selection

of Commissioners, the government acceptability of the legislation and the implementation of the preservation strategy. On the otherhand, the large scope of the Act (farmland preservation, land-banking, park land reserves and greenbelt reserves) could not adequately address the farmland issue. It seemed that most of the work done by the Commission was regarding farmland, and perhaps the legislation would have been eventually revised under the NDP, but this will perhaps never be known. The latter response, the Agricultural Land Commission did address primarily the farmland issue, but did not seem to be supported fully by the provincial government. The amount of government supported exclusions was evidence of this. More about the exclusion process will be mentioned later. An idealized formula would borrow from both experiences.

(b) Provincial control of the agriculture land resource is possible and practical.

History has shown that local control over some land uses is not practical. For example, control over airports, coastal ports and Indian reservations, no matter their location, have been under Federal Government control for some time. Because agriculture lands encompass much of Canada, with each province having varying amounts, Federal Government control would not be feasible. The next senior level of government (provincial) would be the worthy recipient of this duty. We have seen that local governments

often show little respect for farmland, and because it is of local or national importance as a resource, it is possible and practical to have this covered under legislation as well. Sanctions are placed on much of man's activity in one form or other, sanctions placed to enable food production cannot help but to serve all of mankind's interest.

Regarding the type of sanction of provincial control, the model developed by B.C. has received much praise. An analysis of farmland preservation techniques categorized B.C.'s type into the 'comprehensive-mandatory' classification. This type is classified in the study as being 'non-voluntary, direct, centralized and comprehensive.' The authors determined that "the comprehensive-mandatory policies are viewed as having achieved the greatest success."<sup>1</sup> Three provinces of Canada share this typology: B.C., Quebec and Newfoundland.

In terms of effectiveness of the legislative tool in real numbers, provincial control is practical. Before 1972, B.C. was losing 15,000 acres of farmland per year, with the growth rate B.C. had seen in the late 1970's and early 1980's, this figure was sure to rise. In contrast, over the course of nine years, the average yearly farmland loss has been reduced to less than 15,000 acres, therefore the provincial response has to be deemed successful.

In the case of B.C., support was given to the provincial response by farm groups only when a multi-faceted program was implemented, an example being the income assurance programs. As I suggested earlier in the thesis, essentially two land markets were created by the imposition of land reserves: ALR land markets and non-ALR land markets. Before the Land Commission was legislated, farmers counted on the resale value of their land as a retirement income. Under the legislation, farmers could not expect normal land value increase, and thus felt the loss of security provided by the former arrangement. If the farmers could be guaranteed an income, they would be appeased. The Farm Income Assurance (Insurance) Program will insulate the farmer from market conditions. Depending on market demands, a premium is paid to the producer or to the government. Like any insurance program, it is necessary to contribute some capital in order to receive some in return. A minimum income is thus established under this program. Essentially, this program can be called a stabilization program.

It may be concluded that government control of agriculture land is possible and practical, but it is a matter of give and take. For example, by removing private property 'rights', the government felt it necessary to provide a program to eliminate some of the risks for the farmer. Over the long haul, the legislation saved the farm by encouraging investment and reducing land speculation and saved the farmer by cushioning market swings.

(c) The largest hurdle detrimental to the Land Commission is the exclusion of land from the reserves.

By using Canada Land Inventory capability maps of a large scale, it would be possible to include poorer quality land into the reserves, as it would be possible to exclude the higher quality land. It would be equitable to both the government and the farmer to have a mechanism to include or exclude land after the original designation of reserves. If and when the fine-tuning of CLI maps are complete, exclusions and possibly inclusions may not make any sense. The amount of land excluded by private individual application to the Commission has been minimal (21.6 percent, 1974-1982 inclusive), however, 'block' applications by regional districts or municipalities to Cabinet have been the major source of exclusions. The Cabinet, by not heeding Commission advice shows little respect for the Commission; the Commission's vigilant role is greatly restricted.

The most controversial case of late involves the Spetifore property in Delta. George Spetifore, a known Social Credit party supporter, was successful in getting his property excluded by Cabinet. However, because it was zoned agriculture in the Official Regional Plan, it still could not be developed. Because of opposition to a rezoning application (newspaper clippings surrounding the incident on the following page), the Plan was declared null and void by an Act of Parliament (Bill 9, Municipal

## NDP fights land switch

Agriculture critic Karen Sanford (NDP—Comox) Tuesday urged the Greater Vancouver Regional District to reject proposed redesignation of the Spetifore property in South Delta from agricultural to urban use.

Sanford, in a statement to the legislature on behalf of the NDP caucus, said the over-riding concern is to secure the limited agricultural land base of the Lower Mainland for future generations.

The Agricultural Land Commission, created under the 1972-75 NDP administration, has determined the property is viable farmland and a subsequent independent GVRD study agreed.

But the Social Credit government removed the Spetifore property from the ALR through "the political appeal process," Sanford said.

She urged the government to rescind the cabinet order removing the Spetifore property from the ALR and to work with the GVRD to secure park designation for a portion of the land.

"Our over-riding concern is that the diminishing agricultural land base of the Lower Mainland should be preserved," Sanford said.

"The priority of agricultural use is secured through the Agricultural Land Commission, but normal land planning procedures have been circumvented by the actions of the Social Credit government."

Source: Victoria Times-Colonist  
29 June 1983

## Big project suffers big setback

VANCOUVER (CP) — A vast housing project on South Delta farmland got a major setback Wednesday when Greater Vancouver Regional District directors voted 40 to 28 against it.

But Surrey Mayor Don Ross warned that the provincial government might arbitrarily approve the development on the former Spetifore property.

Directors opposed changing the regional plan for the 328-hectare (800-acre) Dawn Development project, saying farmland should not go for housing and traffic problems would increase.

The district's planning committee had recommended approval.

The proposed development, revised by Delta municipality, would have turned 89 hectares into parkland and 239 hectares into home development.

Farmer George Spetifore, a strong Social Credit supporter, sold the land to Dawn Development Corp. in 1981 after the district rejected his proposal to develop the land for housing.

"If we don't approve, I truly believe it will go through anyhow," said Ross. "Within six months it will be approved (by Victoria)."

"This has been the most relentless and cold-blooded pursuit of a development I've ever seen," said Vancouver Mayor Mike Harcourt, opposing it.

Mayor Marilyn Baker of North Vancouver said that if the provincial government approved the development, "so be it, but I have to get up in the morning and stare at myself in the mirror."

Source: Victoria  
Times-Colonist  
30 June 1983

Amendment Act). The Commission acts on sound technical advice, while the government acts on political will. This apparent conflict ends up with more land being lost to agriculture use. As I mentioned in Chapter III, the B.C. Land Commission showed an average yearly gain of 411 acres in the ALR from 1974 to 1976; the Agricultural Land Commission showed an average loss of 16,787 acres per year from 1977 to 1982. The principles or policy under which the Commission operates is largely under provincial government direction. Depending upon which government is in power reflects the amount of Cabinet exclusions. This thought brings me to the next significant point.

(d) More independence should be given to the Commission.

The Commissions receive funding from the provincial government. Being accountable to government (publishing Annual Reports), yet not necessarily having any strong leverage in government actions, makes them subservient. Their mandate would be more usefully achieved if government involvement was minimized. During the course of my research, I carried out interviews with four individuals having expertise in the B.C. responses. These people were: Bill Lane, first chairman of the B.C. Land Commission; Mary Rawson, a former B.C. Land Commissioner; Jim Plotnikoff, an employee of the Land Commission and now Planning Director with the Agriculture Land Commission, and lastly, James Wilson, a senior employee of the Lower Mainland Regional

Planning Board, and now a professor of geography, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. I asked these people if the Commission should be an independent body. All, with the exception of Lane said an unqualified 'yes'. Lane said nothing is independent from government. Mary Rawson believed that the original Commission was independent. She alluded to the selection of Commissioners and minimal government involvement, as being crucial to the success of her Commission. Ideally, the Land Commission should have an opportunity to address any proposal for exclusion and hold the government accountable for valid reasons for exclusion. This will not likely occur as long as the B.C. government is the sole funder of the Commission.

(e) In spite of ongoing controversy, the fundamental problem has been largely addressed.

Unlike many of the prior findings, this statement has a positive connotation. It was the aim of both Commissions to preserve the family farm and enhance farming as a viable activity. I can say that this has happened. B.C. has had an increased in the number of farms and increased investment in farm holdings, demonstrating that indeed farming viability has been increased. With only two government acts wielding more legislative power than the Commission, the Commission is in a strong position to influence traditional land use manipulators like B.C. Hydro and the Ministry of Highways.



The creation of agriculture districting by a super-zoning technique has resulted in greater confidence in the future of farming. The use of zoning if properly administered and respected, yields a greater sense of consistency and a sense of neighbourhood. Being that zoning regulations must be flexible, the provision for variances is often incorporated. In the case of the Commission, variances are the inclusion and exclusion of land from the reserves. How and why this is done is the ongoing controversy. Irrespective of this, two governments of conflicting ideology have carried on the response to farmland loss, suggesting that the conversion of land is a key issue in B.C. I am sure that if no response was carried out in 1973, the loss of agriculture land would be much greater than that which would have occurred since 1973.

(f) The legislation and evolution of it did serve an educational role.

During the ten plus years of agriculture land preservation in B.C., the general public became aware of its importance to the goodwill of the province and to the nation. I believe that the general public has internalized the conservation ethic, ranging from the prominence in the political platform in 1972 to the most recent controversy surrounding the Social Credit workings (such as Spetifore property, Dawn Development re-zoning application, and Municipality of Delta block application). My suspicions

of the internalization of the conservation ethic are confirmed by two surveys of public concerns. The first survey was undertaken by the defunct Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, sampling twenty-three major urban centres.

According to (the results of) the survey, throughout the Greater Vancouver area, 'save agricultural land from development' typically ranked fourth out of 25 issues, being outranked only by the concern for the reduction of inflation, unemployment and crime respectively. This finding was corroborated by a Goals for Vancouver Survey in 1979 in which ninety percent of all respondents indicated that farmland preservation was important to them.<sup>2</sup>

I doubt that there could be any serious dismantling of the legislative response, given the results of these two surveys. Such a move may not be politically feasible. I may conclude that despite government actions to restrain or perhaps dismantle the Commission, public conscience and pressure to maintain a 'watchdog' position will prevail.

- (g) Municipal governments should be encouraged to take steps to support the viability of agriculture.

The provincial government, by introducing legislation to halt farmland conversion and by promoting agricultural activities as a worthwhile economic venture did much to ensure long term farming, but local government land use philosophies leave much to be desired. Many municipalities in the province believe the highest and best use is still the one which provides the most return to the district.

The thought here is the greatest property tax revenue. Agriculture returns to the community a low tax revenue. However, the value that agriculture has can be measured in other terms such as amenity conservation, not easily quantified in economic terms. Over the long term, farming provides food for the community, a basic human need. Land for shelter is also a basic need, but if food production is given up for housing, where will future food supplies come from? The point I am trying to make is that housing or industry can result in short term high yield economic gain to the community, while agriculture is a low yield but long term venture, capable of sustaining population.

Again referring to the George Spetifore case, "the municipality of Delta sought to expand its tax base by applying to Cabinet... for the exclusion of 523 acres of land from the ALR for a housing development."<sup>3</sup> This case illustrates Delta's concern for increased taxes rather than increased food. It also illustrates how local governments can appeal to Cabinet, bypassing the Commission, to have land excluded. Incidentally, Cabinet did approve the release of land from the reserves, but being that the Regional Plan classified it as agriculture, it still could not be developed. With the 1983 amendment to abolish regional planning, this subject land could now be developed. Because of this recent event, it is more imperative that local governments attempt to encourage farming.

I believe that Delta is the exception rather than the rule; many local governments are supportive of agriculture. In order to improve the farmers' lot, providing irrigation water at a low cost, encouraging farming by reducing property taxes for bona fide farmers (those actively farming) and preserving the integrity of farming by keeping conflicting uses a safe distance from agriculture, are three positive steps.

Many communities in B.C. see land as a resource rather than as a saleable commodity. This thought can help to increase farm viability. For the exceptions, like Delta, perhaps the agriculture conservation ethic will prevail in time, especially with notorious cases like George Spetifore. Without cooperation of municipalities, especially the ones rich in prime agriculture land, we will see the reserves dwindle faster. I believe that the public cry will prevent or stall many large scale exclusion, whether they be private, like Spetifore/Dawn Developments, or public, like Tilbury Island or Roberts' Bank.

## 5.2 Optimal Model

From the material presented in the thesis, as well as from my significant findings, in this section I would like to conceptualize what I would like to see if it was again 1972, and a new preservation strategy were to be constructed. I acknowledge that the reader may view what follows as an unrealistic dream.

Firstly, I believe the CLI mapping procedure was adequate to roughly determine the lands of agricultural significance. To further delineate the best agricultural lands, the fine-tuning process would be carried out expeditiously, particularly in areas subject to the highest development pressures (e.g. Vancouver Island, Lower Fraser Valley and the Okanagan). This process could initially necessitate a large budget.

Secondly, regarding administration of the reserves, the Commission should be as independent as possible from government. This would require a funding source probably removed from government. Sources could be private corporations or individuals, or contributions from farming organizations such as the B.C. Federation of Agriculture. This latter source would likely contribute only if the Farm Income Assurance Program remained in place, which regardless, I believe, is necessary to protect against market and climatic vagaries. Regarding the selection of Commissioners, I believe, there should be a mix of professionals like was the selection under the B.C. Land Commission. If the Cabinet appointments are not based on political patronage, more equitable decisions would be the outcome.

Thirdly, realizing that the biggest obstacles faced by the Commission is the exclusion process and the competition for urban land, it is necessary to rectify these problems. I believe that exclusions should be addressed

only to the Commission, and Commission approval or rejection of the applications is final. The more channels available for appeal, the less integrity is given to the reserves. The second obstacle mentioned was the competition for land. Under the original Commission, land banks were provided to act as a buffer between reserves and conflicting uses. This is one solution; another has been suggested by the present Commission of establishing minimum separation distances from conflicting uses.

Fourthly, the Commission should take a more active role in planning for urban and rural users. For many years, agriculture got what was left over after all the other users were satisfied. Now, the Commission gives agriculture use the first priority. It would be fair and equitable to consider all users of land in any planning scheme. Public perception of the Commission would be enhanced by conducting studies and projects available for public consumption.

To summarize, minor changes would be necessary in the establishment of reserves, while major changes would be necessary in the administrative policy. These latter changes would take the form of closer scrutiny in the selection of Commissioners and a stronger method of reducing the amount of successful appeals for exclusion. By reducing provincial government involvement in this scheme, undoubtedly the success rate of the Commission would be

greater. However, placing property rights in some third party removed from government may be a cause of controversy. In addition to this, there could be a problem with securing funding. These two problem areas could be alleviated if government took a more low profile position and increased their vigilance of the effect of land exclusions.

### 5.3 Lessons for Planners

Bill Lane, former chairman of the B.C. Land Commission remarked that "urban planners are not experienced with rural problems".<sup>4</sup> I share his sentiments, for urban planners don't share the sensitivity needed in rural communities. Urban planners may be concerned with urban renewal, re-development and community expansion. This is their belief in betterment for the neighbourhood. On the other hand, betterment in rural areas does not necessarily mean expansion. The rural landscape is often orientated towards open space--parks, golf courses, and farmers' fields. An urban planner may believe that the greatest good for the greatest number may be a new housing subdivision. This may hold true for the urban community, but not necessarily so in the rural community. A housing development on good farmland is a long term loss, as mentioned previously, as a loss of a potential food source. Furthermore, the rural landscape is often composed of large lots, void of urban amenities such as street lights, a municipal water supply and sewerage. If a growth initiative is proposed by planners or developers on the rural landscape,

agriculture land is usually the choice for this expansion because of ease of development. Take for example, the Canadian Prairies, in particular, the City of Winnipeg. Winnipeg is completely surrounded by prime class 2 and 3 agricultural land. This city has been expanding peripherally in more or less scattered form, resulting in an ever increasing loss of good farmland. My suggestion to planners is to try to encourage local politicians to support urban infill rather than suburban expansion.

It is important that planners do not take the opposite stance--that of defending farmland, but not providing accommodation for other uses. Direction in B.C. has been towards farmland preservation. To quote Wilson and Pierce, speaking about the Agricultural Land Commission:

The present Commission, possibly because of the narrowed vision of both its mandate and its members, seems to feel no urge to get involved in problems beyond the ALR. Its staff, pre-occupied with manning the defence of the ALR's, seems not to have proposed the necessary broadening of its program. This stance of course, places the Commission in a purely defensive role, in which it grapples indiscriminately with the onslaughts of outside forces as and when they may arise.<sup>5</sup>

The amendment to the Municipal Act in 1977 provided for Commission review of community development plans as well as government funding to ensure that these plans were completed. This was an occasion where Commission planners had the opportunity to suggest locations for land uses conflicting with the reserves. It may be that these



planners were over protective of the reserves, or insufficient funds were available to carefully dedicate the necessary time to each community plan to suggest possible development options. I do know that only three planners are on staff of the Commission, representing the entire province. Each, therefore must be responsible for a large territory.

In essence, the lessons for planners are to be sensitive to urban uses as well as to rural uses. Regarding Bill Lane's comment that urban planners are not experienced with rural problems, perhaps the opposite can also hold true. Some small communities in the province had applied to Cabinet for block exclusions of land from the reserves. This may be in response to poor or incomplete advice from Commission planners, or from the desire to increase the community tax base by allowing greater revenue generating uses. I suspect that the latter holds true in almost all cases. I say this because of the experience in Chilliwack (mentioned in Chapter IV) where urban development was directed off the prime farmland and into the foothills. The message is clear, nevertheless, as it is necessary to accommodate a variety of land uses within any given community. For this to happen requires an individual supportive of agriculture, yet with the foresight to realize that other uses contribute to the economic viability of the community.

#### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Investigation

Having spent considerable time researching the topic of this thesis led me to some areas which may prove worthy of further study. Several important questions, when answered, could prove beneficial to agricultural land preservation techniques. Listed below are several suggestions for study.

- Is there a correlation between CLI classification of land and the type of land excluded? One would hope that the poorer quality land is excluded, retaining the prime quality for agriculture use. How frequently does this occur?
- How are Committee or Board members selected for special interest groups? What are the essential elements? Remember that I believe the original Commission members best served their purpose of the legislation. What attributes set them apart from their followers?
- Is it possible that the 'land-freeze' model of preservation is dated? Is land conversion the biggest issue for the next decade, or is it such factors as soil degradation, erosion, acid rain and so on? If other issues are significant, what changes are needed to the model in B.C.?

#### 5.5 What the future may hold?

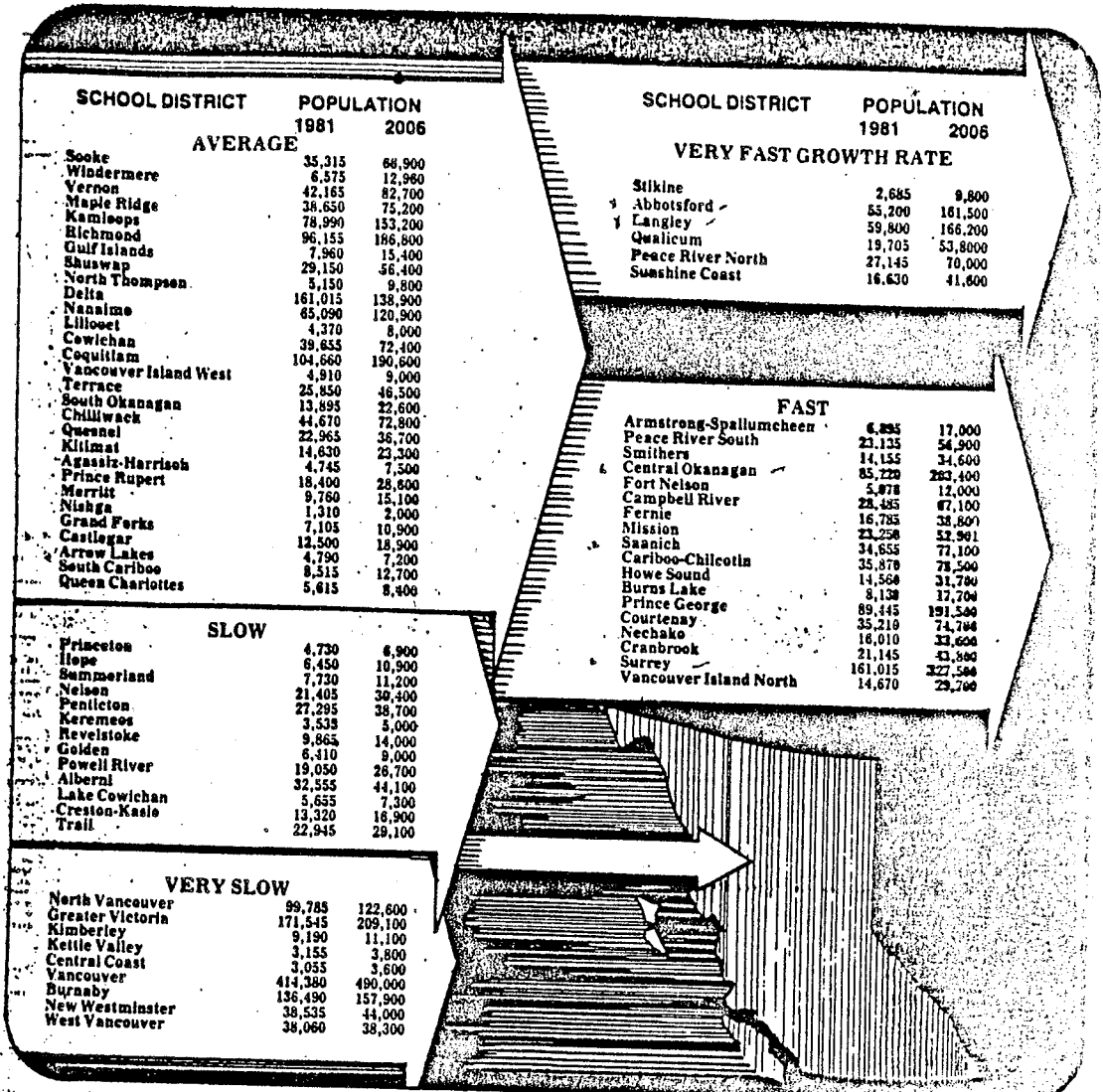
This brings me to the last part of the thesis, dealing with the future life of this preservation technique. Ever since the need to protect farmland came into focus, the responses have been varied and cyclical, but all attempting to achieve the same end. The response of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board can be described as setting the stage for future action by identifying agricultural issues apparent in B.C. (at least in the Lower Mainland). The

response of the B.C. Land Commission can be described as a 'rush into action' by expeditiously bringing out strong legislation to halt the land conversion process. The third, and hopefully not final response, has been a 'drawing back' by the Agricultural Land Commission. This third regime has seen many amendments to the original Act, some advantageous, others disadvantageous to the cause.

The total response has been dynamic, influenced by social, political and economic factors. Social factors such as affordable housing is a pressure because housing costs are greater on undulating terrain than on flat land. Costs of servicing and house construction must be borne by the consumer or taxpayer. Political pressure has been generated by the reality of modern day politics. George Spetifore is a known supporter of the Social Credit party. Perhaps because of this, Cabinet rejected the advice of the Commission and excluded his property from the reserves. This action may be repeated over and over by other supporters. Finally, economic factors relate to the almighty dollar. It has been mentioned that farmland is worth more when used for residential, commercial or industrial purposes-- agriculture use has a low priority. If your farmland was for sale and you were offered \$1 million by a farmer, or \$10 million by a developer, who would you sell to? These land ethic questions make land preservation an onerous task.

One of the greatest pressures, however, facing the Commission is urbanization. The highest number of applications for exclusions correlate well with development pressure. During the late 1970's and early 1980's this was a considerable pressure. Presently, this is not the case. The future, however, may pose a threat to the reserves. A prediction by B.C. Research for the year 2006 shows the major cities of Victoria and Vancouver are to have a very slow growth; fast and very fast growth is expected in some areas of the Interior and Fraser Valley<sup>6</sup> (predictions on following page). If this is the case, more pressure can be exerted on the reserves as many of these areas correspond with good agriculture land holdings.

Due to recent swings in government policy, such as local autonomy, the future of the Land Commission may be in jeopardy. Premier Bennett in an open-line radio program prior to the 1983 election was asked if he intended to dismantle or seriously reduce the powers of the Land Commission. His response was "that's not government policy right now." He went on to say that "there's going to be improvements...that's something that could be done. We've got to respond to local government, I'll tell you that. So don't say that...I would like to keep in place something rigid in which already the flaws of what's been done to the local taxpayer, local government, aren't apparent."<sup>7</sup> A more optimistic remark prior to this was related by Harvey Schroeder, the B.C. Minister of Agriculture and Food. His



Source: The Sun (Vancouver) 7 Oct. 1983

INTO THE FUTURE . . . projections of population by school district

# Expect a mature B.C. by 2006

By WILLIAM BOEI

It will be a mature lot of British Columbians who populate the province in the year 2006.

The baby boomers, who have left their mark on the diaper industry, public schools, universities and unemployment statistics since the Second World War, will still be the largest population group.

They will be 40 to 59 years old in 2006, a B.C. Research report that projects provincial population for 25 years from the 1981 census, notes.

The report deals strictly in numbers, trends, graphs and tables, but between the columns is rich material for speculation.

Will the baby boomers still be listening to 1960s rock and roll on noon-hour radio programs called The Lectric Lunch? Will they line up for a concert — with body searches for booze and drugs — in The Who's 13th biannual farewell tour in creaky old B.C. Place Stadium?

Will managers of private and public pension funds quietly reserve seats on one-way flights to islands in the sun before the boomers start retiring?

"Nobody's got a perfect crystal ball," Alex Tunner, head of the B.C. Research Operations division, says.

B.C. Research predicts the 40 to 59 age group will make up 31 per cent of the B.C. population in 2006, up from 21 per cent in 1981.

And there will be more funerals, not because the death rate will be higher but because there will be more people of advanced age.

There will be relatively fewer people in the zero to 19 age group — 28 per cent of the population, down from 30 per cent now. The "family formation" group, from 20 to 39 years old, will account for 27 per cent of the population, down from 34 per cent.

No one knows whether Mick Jagger will be retired in 2006. But the generation still hoarding its 50-year-old Rolling Stones albums will be able to scoff at the music of a new generation — the echo boomers.

B.C. Research, in a discussion about the bulges the baby boomers have created on every population graph since 1946, predicts that by 2001 "a new but smaller bulge will have emerged — the echo boom."

"This bulge will be the children of those born during the post-war baby boom."

The echo boomers, who are being born about now, will be starting their own families in the early years of the 21st century.

but it won't be in Vancouver.

"Vancouver seems to be becoming less and less of a family city," B.C. Research notes. It shows the echo boom creating bumps on graphs in the Fraser Valley by 2001.

But in Vancouver: "The proportion of children in the city will have further declined."

The children, the report suggests, will be in Coquitlam, Abbotsford, Langley and other places away from the city.

In the 1981 census, Coquitlam showed "an extremely heavy family orientation and a very small proportion of older individuals."

"By 2001, the population will have become more typical but there will still be relatively few people older than 59 years of age, and the echo boom will be larger than in the average community," B.C. Research says.

One more thing: In 1971, 50.4 per cent of B.C.'s population was male. In 1976, that figure was 49.9 per cent, and in 1981, 49.7 per cent.

B.C. Research did not project that line into the future. But if the trend continues, B.C. will have 51.35 per cent women and 48.65 per cent men by 2006.

—David Maclean chart

comment: "the agriculture land reserve is here to stay inspite of the impact it may have on our competitive position in the market."<sup>8</sup> It does remain to be seen what will transpire.

Something that will live on regardless of government action is the conservation ethic. Many allies have been formed since 1973, who will revolt against any measures to remove any solution to the land loss problem. Allies consist of members of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture (who were originally opposed to the legislation), environmental groups, politicians, and most importantly, a portion of the general public. Being a political act, the Agricultural Land Commission Act can be easily dissolved by Cabinet. But because of political accountability to the general public, would Mr. Bennett want to risk losing the 1987 election by making such a choice? Political will may have seen as an adversary to the Commission, but may also be its saving grace.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>O. Furuseth and J. Pierce, "A Comparative Analysis of Farmland Preservation Programmes in North America," The Canadian Geographer XXVI,3, 1982, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup>J.W. Wilson and J.T. Pierce, "The Agricultural Land Commission of British Columbia," Environments 14(3), 1982, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>John T. Pierce, "The Agricultural Land Commission: A Review and Evaluation," Plan Canada 21:2, June 1981, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>William T. Lane, address to the Manitoba Association, Canadian Institute of Planners, 26 February 1983.

<sup>5</sup>J.W. Wilson and J.T. Pierce, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>"Expect a Mature B.C. by 2006," Vancouver Sun, October 7, 1983.

<sup>7</sup>Editorial, Victoria Times-Colonist, July 4, 1983.

<sup>8</sup>B.C. Federation of Agriculture, Member's Report, April 1983.

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APPENDIX 'A'

CLI Land Classification for B.C.

### DESCRIPTIVE LEGEND

In this classification the mineral soils are grouped into seven classes on the basis of soil survey information. Soils in classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 are considered capable of sustained use for cultivated field crops; those in classes 5 and 6 only for perennial forage crops and those in class 7 for neither.

Some of the important factors on which the classification is based are

• The soils will be well managed and cropped, under a largely mechanized system

• Land requiring improvements, including clearing, that can be made economically by the farmer himself, is classed according to its limitations or hazards in use after the improvements have been made. Land requiring improvements beyond the means of the farmer himself is classed according to its present condition

• The following are not considered: distances to market, kind of roads, location, size of farms, type of ownership, cultural patterns, skill or resources of individual operators, and hazard of crop damage by storms

The classification does not include capability of soils for trees, tree fruits, small fruits, ornamental plants, recreation, or wildlife

The classes are based on intensity, rather than kind, of their limitations for agriculture. Each class includes many kinds of soil, and many of the soils in any class require unlike management and treatment.

#### CLASS 1 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT LIMITATIONS IN USE FOR CROPS.

The soils are deep, are well to imperfectly drained, hold moisture well, and in the virgin state were well supplied with plant nutrients. They can be managed and cropped without difficulty. Under good management they are moderately high to high in productivity for a wide range of field crops.

#### CLASS 2 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE MODERATE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE MODERATE CONSERVATION PRACTICES.

The soils are deep and hold moisture well. The limitations are moderate and the soils can be managed and cropped with little difficulty. Under good management they are moderately high to high in productivity for a fairly wide range of crops.

#### CLASS 3 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE MODERATELY SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES.

The limitations are more severe than for Class 2 soils. They affect one or more of the following practices: timing and ease of tillage, planting and harvesting, choice of crops, and methods of conservation. Under good management they are fair to moderately high in productivity for a fair range of crops.

#### CLASS 4 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THE RANGE OF CROPS OR REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSERVATION PRACTICES, OR BOTH.

The limitations seriously affect one or more of the following practices: timing and ease of tillage, planting and harvesting, choice of crops, and methods of conservation. The soils are low to fair in productivity for a fair range of crops but may have high productivity for a specially adapted crop.

#### CLASS 5 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE VERY SEVERE LIMITATIONS THAT RESTRICT THEIR CAPABILITY TO PRODUCING PERENNIAL FORAGE CROPS, AND IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES ARE FEASIBLE.

The limitations are so severe that the soils are not capable of use for sustained production of annual field crops. The soils are capable of producing native or tame species of perennial forage plants, and may be improved by use of farm machinery. The improvement practices may include clearing of bush, cultivation, seeding, fertilizing, or water control.

#### CLASS 6 SOILS IN THIS CLASS ARE CAPABLE ONLY OF PRODUCING PERENNIAL FORAGE CROPS, AND IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES ARE NOT FEASIBLE.

The soils provide some sustained grazing for farm animals, but the limitations are so severe that improvement by use of farm machinery is impractical. The terrain may be unsuitable for use of farm machinery, or the soils may not respond to improvement, or the grazing season may be very short.

#### CLASS 7 SOILS IN THIS CLASS HAVE NO CAPABILITY FOR ARABLE CULTURE OR PERMANENT PASTURE.

This class also includes rockland, other non-soil areas, and bodies of water too small to show on the maps.

#### \* 0 ORGANIC SOILS (Not placed in capability classes).

### SUBCLASSES

Excepting Class 1, the classes are divided into subclasses on the basis of kinds of limitation. The subclasses are as follows:

SUBCLASS C adverse climate - The main limitation is low temperature or low or poor distribution of rainfall during the cropping season, or a combination of these

SUBCLASS D undesirable soil structure and/or low permeability - The soils are difficult to till, absorb water slowly or the depth of the rooting zone is restricted

SUBCLASS E erosion damage - Past damage from erosion limits agricultural use of the land

SUBCLASS F fertility - Low natural fertility due to lack of available nutrients, high acidity or alkalinity, low exchange capacity, high levels of calcium carbonate or presence of toxic compounds.

SUBCLASS I inundation - Flooding by streams or lakes limits agricultural use.

SUBCLASS M moisture - A low moisture holding capacity, caused by adverse inherent soil characteristics, limits crop growth. (Not to be confused with climatic drought).

SUBCLASS N salinity - The soils are adversely affected by soluble salts.

SUBCLASS P: stoniness - Stones interfere with tillage, planting, and harvesting

SUBCLASS R shallowness to solid bedrock - Solid bedrock is less than three feet from the surface

SUBCLASS S: soil limitations - A combination of two or more subclasses D, F, M and N

SUBCLASS T adverse topography - Either steepness or the pattern of slopes limits agricultural use.

SUBCLASS W excess water - Excess water other than from flooding limits use for agriculture. The excess water may be due to poor drainage, a high water table seepage or runoff from surrounding areas.

SUBCLASS X minor cumulative limitations - Soils having a moderate limitation due to the cumulative effect of two or more adverse characteristics which individually would not affect the class rating. (This subclass is always used alone and only one class below the best possible in a climatic sub-region).

### CONVENTIONS

Large arabic numerals denote capability classes. Small arabic numerals placed after a class numeral give the approximate proportion of the class out of a total of 10. Letters placed after class numerals denote the subclasses (limitations).

Black symbol denotes non irrigated capability rating. Red symbol denotes irrigated capability rating.

\* Denotes class or subclass not present on this map.

### EXAMPLES

An area of Class 4 land with topography and stoniness limitations is shown: 4<sup>T</sup>

A complex area rated for non irrigated farming as Class 4 due to topographic and soil moisture limitations and Class 2 due to soil moisture limitations, in the proportions of 7:3 is shown: 4<sup>T</sup>2<sup>M</sup>

A complex area rated for irrigation farming as Class 3 due to topographic limitations and Class 2 due to soil limitations, in the proportions of 6:4 is shown: 3<sup>T</sup>2<sup>S</sup>

N.B. The color used for a complex area is determined by the first digit of the symbol. Generally the dominant class appears first in a complex symbol. However, in complexes of two arable classes (1-4) and one non arable class (5-7), the arable classes are shown first if they total one half or more of the map unit.

This pattern is overprinted on the color in complex area except those having ratios of 8:2, 8:1:1 and 9:1.