

June 26, 2024

**RE: MUNICIPALITIES WITH AGRICULTURAL LAND**

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to the mayors and councils of all BC municipalities with a significant amount of land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to see if you would be interested in participating in a meeting of farming municipalities at this year's UBCM convention.

Last year, I organized a meeting of district municipalities to explore commonalities and from that meeting it emerged there were essentially three types of districts: those based on mining, forestry, or agricultural (sometimes more than one).

Summerland is a proud farming community, and we would like to connect with other agricultural municipalities in order to speak about common challenges. As it is not only district municipalities that have a farming base, I am sending this letter to the mayors and councils of all 36 cities, towns, districts and villages that have more than 20% of their land base in the ALR. (If I am missing any, feel free to forward them this letter!)

Here in Summerland, we have restricted development in 86% of our land base, which contributes less than 3% of our property tax revenues. We are concentrating growth in the remaining 14% but our existing infrastructure extends well beyond our growth boundaries.

Our ability to appropriately service agricultural land within our municipal boundaries is becoming an expense that is increasingly carried on the backs of residential ratepayers who do not reside in the ALR.

In our view, the status quo is jeopardizing the sustainability of the ALR and it is time to innovate with a new approach that supports provincial policy goals for resiliency, food security, and maintaining the integrity of the ALR.

The District of Summerland sees itself as a partner in the implementation of provincial priorities, but we need the recognition and support of the Province to do our part. Saving farmland is a benefit to all British Columbians, yet it's the residents of our municipalities, the ones with significant amounts of farmland, who bear the financial burden for the rest of the province.

Over the years, we have spoken about this question of fairness with provincial ministers and staff in Agriculture, Municipal Affairs, and Finance (and this year we are requesting a meeting with the Premier), yet we never seem to get far. We are usually told we can raise the tax rate on Class 9 properties, however even if we tripled our existing Class 9 rate it would only generate an additional \$100,000 and we would have one of the highest farm rates in BC.

Alternatively, we have been told we can apply to reduce our municipal boundaries, which does not recognize that our farmland is interspersed in and around our residential areas.

We have come to the conclusion that we will not make any headway working in isolation and we need to reach out to other municipalities facing similar challenges. As such, we want to test if there is interest in participating in a meeting of farming municipalities at this year's UBCM in order to speak about our common challenges?

If there is sufficient response, Summerland would be pleased to book a room and organize the meeting as we did last year for the district municipalities meeting. Please if you could let us know by the end of July by emailing me at: [mayor@summerland.ca](mailto:mayor@summerland.ca).

Further, you may be interested in the following resolution sponsored by the District of Summerland that will be coming forward to this year's UBCM Convention:

***Servicing ALR properties***

*WHEREAS the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) plays a critical role in protecting and promoting food security for all British Columbians;*

*AND WHEREAS distances between agricultural parcels makes the cost of maintaining infrastructure to those properties disproportionately expensive and cannot be recovered from farm-class property taxes;*

*AND WHEREAS, as a result, the cost of servicing farm land for the benefit of all British Columbians falls unfairly on residential taxpayers within agricultural communities;*

*THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM work with the government of British Columbia to develop a program to support local government efforts to adequately service ALR lands.*

The resolution has received the support of the South Interior Local Government Association (SILGA), and we hope it will receive your support at UBCM.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Holmes".

Doug Holmes  
Mayor of Summerland

cc Mayor and Council of:

Abbotsford	100 Mile House	McBride	Pitt Meadows	Summerland
Armstrong	Kamloops	Merritt	Port Coquitlam	Surrey
Ashcroft	Kelowna	Midway	Prince George	Vanderhoof
Central Saanich	Kent	North Cowichan	Richmond	Vernon
Chilliwack	Keremeos	North Saanich	Salmon Arm	
Coldstream	Lake Country	Oliver	Sicamous	
Delta	Langley	Osoyoos	Smithers	
Houston	Lillooet	Penticton	Spallumcheen	