



February 20, 2025

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Dear Local Government Planning Staff:

Ministry of Agriculture and Food (the Ministry) staff have noted that there has been a marked increase in Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) subdivision applications over the past few years, resulting in increased referral workload for local government, the Ministry and ALC staff.

An 18 month referral impact review project conducted by the Ministry between March 2023 – October 2024, revealed that the vast majority of ALC subdivision applications referred to the Ministry by local governments were assessed by Ministry staff as “not beneficial to agriculture”. However, local government councils and boards opted to send these applications to the ALC for decision in nearly every instance. While local government decisions to forward these applications to the ALC are inconsistent with Ministry staff input, the overwhelming majority of ALC decisions are consistent with Ministry staff’s assessment (i.e., applications identified as not beneficial to agriculture are refused).

Given the similar input provided by Ministry staff on most subdivision applications and the limited impact that Ministry referral responses appear to have on local government decisions, the Ministry has adopted a new approach when responding to local government ALC subdivision application referrals. Specifically, when the Ministry receives an ALC subdivision application referral from a local government, Ministry staff will conduct a preliminary assessment of the application. If Ministry staff determine that the application is “not beneficial to agriculture”, staff will respond to the referral request by sending a copy of this letter to the relevant local government staff member. If, however, Ministry staff determine that the application is “beneficial to agriculture” or even has a neutral impact to agriculture, staff will conduct a more detailed parcel-specific review of said application which will entail providing a rationale for how and why the application is beneficial/benign to agriculture.

In the absence of a parcel-specific review, local government planning staff and decision makers are encouraged to consider the following when reviewing ALC applications for subdivision on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

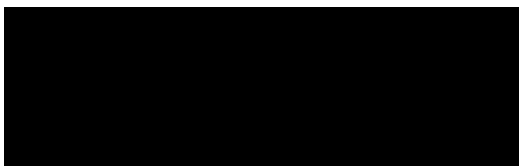
- Subdivision in the ALR frequently results in each parcel having diminished agricultural potential and an increase in land cost per hectare due to increased residential and

accessory structures. Smaller lots and increased residential structures can also increase conflict between adjacent land uses.

- Ministry data, through Agricultural Land Use Inventories (ALUI), shows that smaller agricultural lots, irrespective of where they are located in the province, are less likely to be farmed.
- A [2022 Kwantlen Polytechnic University study](#) exploring the impact of non-farm uses and subdivision on agricultural land found that in regions of British Columbia (B.C.) reviewed, “30 percent of all new parcels created as a result of subdivision ceased to have a farm class status”, and “64 percent of all the parcels had their ownerships transferred within three years after non-farm use and subdivision applications were approved. This percentage becomes higher for subdivided parcels” (Summary Results, p.1-2).
- To advance viable long-term agricultural opportunities on the ALR, Ministry staff encourage ALR landowners to pursue alternative land access and tenure options, other than subdivision, (such as the leasing of portions of the property) as part of a coordinated succession plan. For more information on [B.C.’s Land Matching Program](#), please visit the [Agrarians Foundation](#) organization website.
- The Ministry also provides resources to producers to support successful farm transition, including support through the [B.C. Agri-Business Planning Program](#), as well as succession planning workshops and webinars to familiarize farmers with the steps and practices required for a successful farm transition.
- Ministry staff are available to discuss viable agricultural opportunities with the landowners considering pursuing farming activities on ALR land. For more information or to contact Ministry staff, please visit the Ministry [AgriService BC webpage](#) or email AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca.

While the Ministry will not be providing a detailed review and response to this parcel-specific referral, please feel free to reach out to Ministry staff with specific questions or for advice on this referral or land use planning for agriculture in general.

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Sincerely,



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