



# Reserve *Opinion*

FALL 2000

An Information Bulletin from British Columbia's Land Reserve Commission

## A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

### The Regional Panel Structure of BC's Land Reserve Commission

On April 1, 2000 the Agricultural Land Commission and Forest Land Commission were merged into a single body called the "Land Reserve Commission". During consultations for its strategic plan, the two Commissions heard widespread support across BC for continuing the Provincial role in preserving land for agriculture and forestry. At the same time, there were many positive suggestions on how to better reflect the diverse regions of the province.

One of the first decisions of the Land Reserve Commission was to create a new system of regional panels to make decisions on applications and other land use matters. Each panel represents the LRC and meets with landowners, local governments, First Nations and others, and makes decisions about the Agricultural Land Reserve and Forest Land Reserve in its areas of responsibility. Three panels are in operation:

- Panel A is responsible for the Kootenays, Vancouver Island and Islands Trust,
- Panel B covers the Lower Mainland and the North, and
- Panel C is responsible for the Okanagan and Central Interior.

This panel system is a very significant change from the way the former ALC and FLC operated. It demonstrates the Land Reserve Commission's belief that it must act in concert with many others, especially local governments, to help maintain economic opportunity and encourage wise stewardship of BC's land and resources.

## Why Use Panels?

Using regional panels to make decisions on applications and represent the LRC in each region brings decision-making closer to the municipalities and regional districts most directly affected. It also increases opportunities for residents and others to meet and get to know Commissioners in their own communities. More specifically, this new way of doing business:

- enables more applicants to appear before the Commission to discuss individual applications and policy issues;
- improves responsiveness and flexibility by increasing the number of meetings which can be held, especially with the LRC's local government partners;

- enables Commissioners and staff to become more knowledgeable about the areas for which they make decisions;
- raises the profile of agriculture and forestry locally by having LRC meetings in each region more often than before; and
- helps British Columbians in all parts of the province to better understand the contributions and needs of working farms and working forests in their own communities.

In the long-term it is hoped that the regional panel structure will assist various communities of interest to better understand the province-wide need to preserve the land and water resources needed for vibrant agriculture and forest industries.

## How Do Regional Panels Work?

Three panels meet every month to make decisions for their regions. Each panel meets and tours for two or three days in the regions for which they are responsible. Panels also use their time in the regions to visit properties under application and meet with a variety of individuals, groups and local government officials about the ALR and FLR. The meetings with municipalities and regional districts are particularly crucial

because of the importance of local planning issues in each panel's deliberations.

Panels are accompanied and supported by LRC research and planning staff. To facilitate meeting as many people as possible, itineraries and schedules are available on the LRC's website [lrc.gov.bc.ca](http://lrc.gov.bc.ca) and local media are kept informed of panel activities.

Panel	Regional Districts	Members
<b>A: Vancouver Island, the Kootenays and Islands Trust</b>	Alberni–Clayoquot Capital Comox–Strathcona Cowichan Valley Nanaimo Mount Waddington Powell River East Kootenay Central Kootenay Kootenay–Boundary	Janna Bakker (Langley) Allen Hopwood (Courtenay) Wayne Nowlin (Cranbrook)
<b>B: Lower Mainland and North</b>	Fraser Valley Greater Vancouver Sunshine Coast Northern Rockies Peace River Fraser–Fort George Bulkley–Nechako Kitimat–Stikine Skeena–Queen Charlotte Central Coast	Gus Horn (100 Mile House) Christine Hunt (Port Hardy) Ruth Veiner (Dawson Creek)
<b>C: Okanagan and Central Interior</b>	Columbia Shuswap North Okanagan Central Okanagan Okanagan–Similkameen Cariboo Thompson–Nicola Squamish–Lillooet	Jaswant Dukhia (Vernon) Jamie Ingram (Slocan) Maureen Thompson (Prince George)

Panel A is also responsible for forest practice regulation under the *Forest Land Reserve Act*. The LRC's Chair, Alan Chambers, is a member of each panel, alternates amongst panels and chairs full Commission meetings when it meets as a group.

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When regional districts were assigned to each panel, it was felt that each panel should be responsible for one high-growth/more urban region and one lower-growth/more rural region so that Commissioners would develop the widest possible experience. In the process of appointing LRC Commissioners to each of the three panels, no attempt was made to match specific Commissioners with their own community, although this occurred in some instances. Since Commissioners are appointed for their general expertise in agriculture, forestry, planning, local government, academia or other endeavors, and are expected to make decisions for the entire province, it was not felt that they should be

restricted to their own region or place of residence in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Over 100 communities in BC have land in the Agricultural Land Reserve, Forest Land Reserve or both. For reasons of efficiency and effectiveness it is not possible to have a Commissioner appointed from every one of these communities. However, since Commissioners are appointed for their particular background and experience to make decisions for the entire province, and since local governments have such a wide array of input into ALR and FLR matters, the lack of a representative from each municipality and regional district was not considered a hindrance to the introduction of a panel system.

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## How Do Panels Operate?

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The entire LRC is responsible for the creation or dissolution of panels and for the appointment of members to each. Panels are subject to the same legislative requirements and operating guidelines as the Commission as a whole.

Panels have the same authority as the full Commission for those matters assigned to them. They may exercise flexibility in the application of LRC policies and General Orders in the same manner as the full Commission. However, panels cannot change or create Commission policies or bylaws, or veto General Orders. After an application has been assigned to a particular panel, that panel or the LRC's senior staff can recommend, in accordance with LRC operating guidelines, that an item be referred to the full Commission for consultation or a decision.

If a panel that has already been convened to decide a matter refers the matter to the full Commission **for a decision**, the Commission re-hears all the evidence and gives the applicant an opportunity to be heard by the full Commission. If a panel that has already been convened to decide a matter refers the matter to the full Commission **for consultation**, the final decision will be made by the panel and not the full Commission.

The Land Reserve Commission is ultimately responsible for the actions and decisions of panels and monitors the compliance of panels with its governance policy, the interpretation of policies and General Orders and the effectiveness of each panel. The Commission does this by requiring that panels report a summary of their decisions on a regular basis. LRC staff also monitor panel activities and make both the panel and the Commission aware of inconsistencies and other problems. However, there is no avenue of appeal of a panel decision to the full Commission.

## When Does the Full Commission Meet?

The full Land Reserve Commission meets monthly, at the end of each week of panel meetings. At that time, panels report on matters they considered, meetings they held and other activities in the regions.

At these full Commission meetings, overall policy matters, legislative and regulatory reviews, strategic and business planning and province-wide issues are addressed. The full Commission usually meets at the LRC's Burnaby office but it also convenes in other centres around BC, as did the ALC and FLC before it.

**The entire Commission supports this new way of doing business and the opportunity to meet with as many people as possible to accomplish its mandate. In the process, the LRC hopes this will build even more public support for conserving BC's resource lands and creating jobs for British Columbians.**

For more information about the LRC, regional panels, the ALR or FLR, visit our website or contact the Chief Executive Officer at:

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**Land Reserve Commission**

*Working Farms, Working Forests*



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