



Farm Assessment Review Panel
Farm Assessment Review
PO BOX 9432 STN PROV GOVT
VICTORIA BC V8W 9N6

January 19, 2009

Dear Sirs,

You do not have an easy task!

The Okanagan Kootenay Cherry Growers Association is a member of, and supports, the position presented by the BCAC on October 27, 2008 on the current review of farm assessment and the issue of defining farm land and farmer. This is a particularly difficult issue in the Okanagan where there are a lot of 'lifestyle' home sites and the benefit of farm land classification and farm status may, in fact, increase the value and desirability of certain parcels of land for the wrong reasons. As the values increase, the economics of purchasing the land for commercial farming decreases and the land is, in effect, removed from the productive base regardless. Similarly, while it is imperative to support the ALR as a means to preserve land for agricultural use, the development of private "estates" with large houses, extensive personal-use grounds and paved driveways, effectively removes the parcel from production for the foreseeable future.

At the same time, it is unfair to determine that land is agricultural based on the size of the lot; there are some types of intense production that may be viable (e.g. greenhouses), small lots can still be leased and operated by *bona fide* farmers (a re-emergence of the feudal system that differentiates the land lords from the farmers but at least keeps land in production!), or some people may be prepared to live with a meagre subsistence farm income they can eek through their own labour or subsidize with off-farm income.

We certainly support the delinking of the definition of farmer for the purpose of other programs (e.g. PST) from the farm assessment system, in favour of an easily verified income tax based system to ensure farm land is actively farmed or used for closely related farm activities, and done so with commercial intent (reasonable expectation of profit).

Yours truly,

Christine Dendy
Treasurer, OKCGA