

Provincial Land-use Framework Initiative Cross-sector Forum

Red Deer- December 4 to 6, 2006

Summary Report

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and Canada West Foundation



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Preface

In early December 2006, 152 Albertans convened in Red Deer for two days to discuss the Government of Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF) initiative. A majority had participated in a series of stakeholder and municipal officials focus groups held earlier in the fall, and all participants brought extensive experience with land-use issues to the Red Deer Forum. As a consequence, the discussions were both well informed and intense, generating a rich array of commentary, insights and recommendations.

The challenge is to capture the Forum's highlights without losing the wealth of detail, to identify broad points of consensus without neglecting areas where consensus was more difficult to find, and without overlooking more individual suggestions. We tackle this challenge by first looking at the *forest*, providing a thematic overview of the Forum, and then appending more detailed discussions of the *trees*. In so doing, we recognize that our sketch of the forest will imperfectly reflect many of the individual trees, and indeed may omit some altogether, but this risk is unavoidable.

However, to limit this risk, we delivered a web-based feedback survey on the Forum Draft Summary Report. The feedback survey provided Forum participants the opportunity to read, in advance, the Draft Summary Report, and to submit their comments regarding the broader themes and essential findings from the Forum. Through the web-based survey, participants were able to identify any major errors or omissions in the Draft Summary Report. We used this information to ensure that this final Forum Report accurately reflects the findings from the Red Deer Cross-sector Forum. Where appropriate, respondents' comments have been included in the text of the Report. Appendix II of this document includes the comments--verbatim--received from the participants through the web-based feedback survey.



The Red Deer Forum was designed to maximize the engagement of participants. Ten concurrent breakout sessions were used to capture the opinions, insights and advice of participants, who in turn were asked to address a sequence of themes:

- Session 1 - A Vision for Land Use in Alberta
- Session 2 - Outcomes and Scope of the Land-use Framework
- Session 3 - Growth Management
- Session 4 - Priority Land Use
- Session 5 - Governance and Decision-making
- Session 6 - Strategies and Actions to Achieve Priority Outcomes; and
- Session 7- Open Session: Additional Issues and Concerns

The report that follows is built around these themes, thereby following the same trajectory as the participants. It concludes with a set of general impressions and recommendations. None of these were put to a vote among the Forum participants; instead, they reflect our best professional efforts to bring into focus a very rich but in many ways diffuse event.

A Vision for Land Use in Alberta

Visions of their province's future inevitably infuse and inform land-use discussions among Albertans, and the Red Deer Forum was no exception. Participants grappled with how to articulate a long-term provincial vision for land use; how to use this vision to integrate social, environmental and economic values; and how best to anchor that vision in specific principles and values. In this last respect, Forum participants gave particular emphasis to the following:

- The vision must be for the long term, and must be based on the values and pride of all Albertans, including First Nations and the Métis. From this flows the need for extensive public consultations.
- The vision should embody a land ethic reflecting the need to respect and care for the land, to recognize limits to its carrying capacity, and to retain, restore, and where necessary reclaim its productive capacity.
- Sustainability was identified by many participants as a core value, although it was also clear that sustainability carries with it a great variety of meanings and applications.
- For some participants, a land-use vision created opportunities for global leadership in land management.

A number of other concerns and values came from the discussions of a provincial land-use vision. Forum participants talked about the need for a comprehensive vision that would reach across ministries and, indeed, across governments. There were tensions between the need for a vision that allows a flexible response to changing circumstances, and the desire for a vision that does not readily shift with changes in the political environment. The importance of intergenerational equity was frequently mentioned. At the same time, participants had difficulty dealing with the pre-conference suggestion that harmony, authority and accountability be key principles.

It should be noted that the discussion of a land-use vision frequently moved well beyond land use per se to embrace other values and concerns. Thus participants spoke of the need for clarity, inclusiveness, transparency and fairness, and of the need to recognize regional differences as well as the importance of place-based decision-making. Most participants also indicated that the LUF should adopt an integrated approach to land, air and water management. Efficiency was endorsed as a core principle, but one that should reflect full-cost accounting and ecological integrity, not simply financial costs. It should also be noted that although the visioning discussions often began with public lands, private lands were quickly woven into the mix.

Forum participants were certainly aware that an extensive list of principles would generate conflict among principles, and at some point priorities would have to be assigned. However, this very difficult task was not tackled systematically at Red Deer.

Overall, the visioning discussions were driven by a very strong pride of place, and by a determination that through effective land stewardship, this pride of place could be today's gift to tomorrow's generations.

Outcomes and Scope of the Land-use Framework

The LUF initiative raises a fundamental question: what outcomes could Albertans achieve through this framework that they cannot achieve through the status quo? This question, which is linked in turn to the potential scope of the LUF, was tackled in the second breakout session of the Red Deer Forum.

To generate discussion, facilitators provided nine outcome statements taken from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Roundtable on Environment and Economy:

- **The quality of air, water and land is assured.** Participants generally supported this outcome, although some questioned how land quality would be measured and assured.
- **Alberta's biodiversity is preserved.** In broad strokes, this outcome was non-controversial, although a more detailed recommendation from the 1991 Roundtable that "aesthetically attractive areas be set aside for recreational, cultural and spiritual needs" encountered some opposition from those who felt that "aesthetically attractive" was too restrictive and subjective. It was also suggested that the preservation of historical resources not be overlooked.
- **We live within Alberta's natural carrying capacity.** Although some questions were raised about the meaning of carrying capacity, there was general agreement that the carrying capacity of the provincial land base must be addressed by the LUF.
- **The economy is healthy.** Although the advantages of a health economy were readily apparent to the Forum participants, some objections to this outcome statement focused on its limited scope, with many suggesting that it should be expanded to reflect the "triple bottom line" of social, environmental and economic health; they also suggested that it should refer to "healthy communities, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment". Others believed it should be revised to incorporate the notion of a sustainable economy, one that is "diverse, resilient, globally competitive, and socially and environmentally responsible."
- **Market forces and regulatory systems work for sustainable development.** While participants generally agreed with this outcome, they suggested that it could be expanded to include "recognition of the provision of environmental goods and services (EGS) by private landowners." They also suggested that any such outcome should include a recognition of full-cost accounting and the need for remediation of past environmental damage.
- **Urban and rural communities offer a healthy environment for living.** Within the context of general support, some participants called for the need to address conflicts between urban and rural communities.
- **Albertans are educated and informed about the economy and the environment.** In almost all Forum breakout groups, there was significant support for the need to educate and inform Albertans about the economy and the environment, and thereby to engage them in land-use planning.

- **Albertans are responsible global citizens.** There was some level of agreement with this outcome, although some would explicitly include downstream and downwind neighbours in Canada.
- **Albertans are stewards of the environment and the economy.** Participants expressed support for this outcome statement, with the caveat that it might be expanded to incorporate social and cultural stewardship.

In general, the Red Deer participants endorsed the high-level outcomes generated by the 1991 Roundtable. However, although these provided the start to the discussions in Red Deer, they were by no means the end. Indeed, some questioned their continued applicability to land-use discussions in 2006, and also asked why the 1991 outcomes have not been achieved. These concerns reflected a more general sense of unease among some participants with the entire discussion of outcomes. Some suggested that clear outcomes are difficult to specify until a land-use vision for Alberta is in place.

This was not an easy phase of the Red Deer consultation process. Nonetheless, there is no question that the participants sought a provincial LUF that is multi-layered, providing meaningful and specific direction at various levels, and connections among these multiple levels. Specifically, a LUF should include an overarching provincial vision along with mechanisms for setting landscape level objectives and targets, with implementation capacity at the regional, municipal and inter-jurisdictional levels. Most groups stressed that a LUF should provide concrete decision-making systems, and direction on roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, with sufficient flexibility for place-based decision-making within provincial guidelines, and with the “teeth” for enforcement. More specifically, the Red Deer Forum participants articulated a LUF that would:

- provide an “umbrella” or overarching principled context for land-use decision-making, one that would be consistent across the province and based on the values of all Albertans while also having the capacity to reflect regional differences;
- specify clear linkages to other key policies and legislation (e.g., those relating to air such as the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, and to water with the Water for Life strategy), including those at global, national, provincial and regional levels;
- locate government authority and responsibility with respect to land management in Alberta;
- facilitate the integration/coordination of government departments and agencies around an overarching provincial vision;
- both measure and address cumulative effects;
- incorporate full-cost accounting for natural capital;
- establish clear provincial objectives, targets and priorities for place-based decision-making;
- minimize the environmental footprint of resource development and community growth;
- provide a platform for public education, and for developing a land stewardship ethic among Albertans;
- identify trade-offs and consequences;

- allow for conflict resolution;
- have sufficient implementation and enforcement “teeth”; and
- promote greater investment in innovation, in science-based decision-making, and in community capacity with respect to land-use planning.

All of the above related to perceived deficiencies in the land management status quo.

At the same time, none of the above should overstate the degree of consensus among the Forum participants. For example, while many argued that the LUF should provide a clear road map and destination for Albertans, others saw it providing a set of decision-making processes rather than identifying specific outcomes. At issue, then, is whether the LUF should specify means, ends, or both.

A few groups noted that specific considerations of Aboriginal rights and interests were missing from the 1991 outcome statements. There was a call for explicit reference to First Nation concerns about biodiversity, ecological integrity and equitable economic benefit. In addition, some participants stressed that the LUF must ensure that First Nation governments are part of the land-use decision-making system. Some groups suggested that Aboriginal rights and land interests be woven throughout the framework.

In summary, although participants at the Red Deer Forum were acutely aware of limits on the carrying capacity of the provincial land base, they were less concerned about the policy carrying capacity of the proposed LUF. This group of Albertans brought an expansive set of desired outcomes and scope expectations to the table.

Growth Management

Forum participants expressed a pervasive sense of unease with the current pace of growth in the province, and more specifically with the impact of that growth on the provincial land base. As a consequence, they called for Government of Alberta (GoA) leadership with respect to growth management, a call premised on the assumption that the government has the responsibility, first and foremost, to act in the public interest, a role that markets



cannot be expected to assume. Some participants noted that the provincial government directly affects the rate of growth through its sale of mineral leases, and through policies on such things as immigration and infrastructure. At the same time, participants did not see the responsibility for growth management resting solely with the GoA; other governments also have a role to play, as do market forces. The unique role of the GoA is to define and reinforce core values, thereby ensuring a healthy land base for future Albertans, and for a multitude of uses.

In keeping with the notion that growth management is a shared undertaking, many participants argued that the LUF needs to provide growth management tools and resources for municipalities, regions, industry, non-governmental organizations and landowners. Furthermore, many emphasized that the LUF should bridge existing planning processes in order for growth management initiatives to be effective.

A recurring theme throughout the sessions was that rapid growth generates uncertainty on the land base, and therefore the LUF needs to create greater certainty regarding land use in the short and long-term, and across all sectors and land interests. Thus the LUF should address: conflicts between surface and subsurface rights; the management of cumulative effects; access to land and resources for different purposes (e.g., resource development and recreational access); both urban and rural sprawl, land stewardship; and the delivery of public infrastructure and services in relation to growth.

In the view of participants, unprecedented growth – particularly economic and population growth – has had both positive and negative impacts on the overall quality of life of Albertans. For most participants, growth is positive, but uncontrolled growth is a problem requiring immediate attention (Fort McMurray and the oilsands were often mentioned in this regard). Some indicated that concerted effort needs to be taken by the GoA to close the gap between the speed of growth and the capacity to sustain growth. Participants repeatedly stated that current rates of growth have expanded the human footprint on the environment, increased demand on a broad range of resources (including natural and financial), generated social and environmental problems, amplified pressures on infrastructure and services, prompted a sense of disconnectedness among communities, created conflicts and competition among land users in both urban and rural areas, and transformed cultural values.

As a consequence, Forum participants suggested that the GoA formulate strategies to shape, guide, and even limit growth. Many emphasized that mechanisms and tools (such as incentive policies) must be clearly defined, and processes must be transparent for all parties including government agencies such as the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) and the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB). Further, most indicated that a growth management plan must be based on an inventory of land resources and best practices drawn from other jurisdictions, including those more densely populated than Alberta.

In discussing market forces, some participants noted that excessive growth can undermine efficiency by increasing economic, social and environmental costs. In keeping with the argument that growth management should reflect a balance between government and market forces, some participants stated that the private sector is better situated to assess the global and local landscapes, and in so doing can play a role in bringing resources to specific issues and working collaboratively with the GoA and other stakeholders to manage growth.

A few suggested that this process is evidenced by some companies' recognition of the need for stewardship and increased efforts to advance corporate social responsibility. In addition, a few participants indicated that the private sector can play an important role in bringing emerging issues forward to government while the government brings growth management issues to the attention of industry. This exemplified the view that the private sector/market forces and government are complementary and that collaboration is necessary.

The growth management discussions in Red Deer raised a broad range of issues, including the complex relationship between surface and subsurface rights. Many participants stated that the LUF should address urban growth and annexation, density targets for urban and rural developments, infrastructure funding, land trusts and incentives for land donations, regional planning authorities, and transferable development credits. Some participants suggested that the LUF should define the parameters for land stewardship in terms of corporate performance, environmental farm plans, and values on environmental goods and services and natural capital. Participants suggested that the LUF, in conjunction with establishing growth management guidelines, should also include provisions for educating the public on growth management issues.

It is clear from the Red Deer Forum that the LUF initiative must be closely linked with public concerns about the pace of growth in Alberta, with the perceived need for growth management, and with the call for GoA leadership with respect to growth management. Most participants indicated that the LUF should include provisions for assessing growth and its impact, defining and developing growth management strategies, identifying policy tools and mechanisms for managing growth, and providing financial resources necessary for shared growth management with municipalities. Whether these growth management issues can and indeed should be untangled from land issues as the LUF initiative moves forward is much less clear.

Priority Land Use

Participants had little problem discussing the potential incorporation of priority land use (PLU) into a LUF, but there was a relatively weak consensus on what this might mean, what priorities should be brought into play, and even whether PLU should be a component of the LUF. Overall, the majority favoured the incorporation of PLU within the proposed LUF, perhaps as one in a suite of tools, but at the same time expressed a number of caveats including:

- the need to permit secondary and tertiary land uses compatible with the designated priority;
- the need to base priority decisions on a comprehensive baseline land inventory;
- the need to address compensation issues if PLU designations undercut land values and property rights; and
- recognition that multiple priorities may be pursued in a cooperative manner (e.g., oil & gas and forestry developments sharing roads).

Considerable uncertainty exists as to the scale at which PLU should be applied; should this be a feature of regional decision-making, or should it be applied through a provincial framework to relatively large parcels of land (e.g., the Eastern Slopes)? Alternatively, should the LUF define priorities or provide a process through which priorities might be established? The big challenge is to allow the regions to figure out what priorities work for them, but to do so within provincial guidelines.

Potential priorities that might be placed under a PLU umbrella include ecologically sensitive areas, prime agricultural land, watersheds, critical areas (where immediate action is required), and transportation and transmission corridors. Some participants also stressed the need to consider historical and cultural factors (“social places”) in determining land-use priorities.

Some participants expressed concern that “priority” would not provide sufficient protection for delicate environments, or that it might be used to justify non-sustainable activities on some parcels of land (“some uses should be prohibited altogether”). Others asked about temporal limits on priority designations, pointing out that priorities may change over time. Finally, it was pointed out that priority land uses are already in play through parks and special places, an overall commitment to the development of energy resources, and a reliance on markets to determine patterns of land use and development.

The Forum participants tried to square a number of circles in coming to grips with the notion of PLU. A few indicated that definitions of terms, priorities and designations are important. Others reinforced that they wanted greater emphasis placed on compatible uses as opposed to restricting to one use, or prohibiting certain uses in designated areas. They preferred to see it as allowing all uses that are compatible with the priority use rather than making a rigid list of only those that are allowed and those that are prohibited. The need for a healthy mix of uses was said to be important, with the emphasis on healthy. A few participants indicated that there may be cases where there is more than one priority use. A few others said that in highly endangered areas it may be necessary to have only one priority use. A few participants said some uses should be prohibited completely in extreme cases like nuclear or toxic waste dumps where the land could not be reclaimed.

In summary, PLU was seen as an approach with some potential, but also one that raises a host of application concerns. For many participants, the newness of the concept led to considerable caution in moving forward.



Governance and Decision-making

Virtually all participants at the Red Deer Forum envisioned a strong leadership role for the GoA in land-use planning, far beyond that which it currently exercises. In their eyes, the GoA would take a more decisive, coordinated, and long-term approach to ensure that land, along with all other natural resources, is maintained for future generations. To this end, most participants urged the GoA to take the lead stewardship role in preserving and indeed improving the quality of both public and private lands to the benefit of all living creatures. Particular, although by no means exclusive, emphasis was placed on farmlands, watersheds, forests and wetlands.

Participants generally agreed that the GoA should, at minimum, be responsible for defining the overriding objectives of and the framework for land use, including the identification of thresholds for different land uses and targets for environmental protection. These thresholds and targets should clearly reflect up-to-date research and be established in consultation with a range of stakeholders to ensure that they address the discrete, collective, and cumulative effects of different land uses, and to facilitate engagement and support from stakeholders and the general public for thoughtful, proactive, and coordinated land-use planning.

In addition, many participants stressed that the GoA should demonstrate leadership and commitment to coordinated and responsible land-use planning by ensuring that all ministries are explicitly bound, perhaps through legislation, by the LUF in their own business planning, and that provincial planning reflects a cross-ministerial approach. Responsibility for monitoring land use and enforcing compliance would rest with the GoA or, more specifically, with a provincial board that may or may not include regional divisions. Others, however, felt that decision-making and enforcement should remain with municipalities, with the caveat that a shared-governance model would require better resourced municipalities to resolve disputes and enforce decisions. The residual role of the GoA would be to help coordinate fragmented municipal policies and plans, and to resolve conflicts among municipalities when local decisions have implications beyond municipal boundaries.

Despite the lack of a clear consensus around the allocation of responsibilities among levels of government, most participants would like the GoA to establish clear and consistent ground rules for all stakeholders, including municipalities. They also want fair and transparent processes to articulate and resolve inter-stakeholder discord, and to facilitate, whenever possible, “win-win” outcomes. The core challenge is to strike the appropriate balance between provincial guidelines, embedded within a LUF, and the need for place-based decision-making that brings into play more localized values, interests and preferences. The Red Deer participants recognized this difficult issue of institutional design but did not resolve it in any detailed fashion.

Strategies and Actions to Achieve Priority Outcomes

In one of the last breakout sessions, participants were asked to bring forward their priority outcomes for the LUF, and to recommend strategies for achieving these priority outcomes. The following section pulls together this complex discussion by identifying eight priority outcomes, and by sketching in the strategies attached to these outcomes. Appendix I provides greater details.

Outcome #1: The LUF protects key environmental assets.

In one way or another, every group asserted that protection of Alberta's environmental assets should be, indeed must be, a core outcome of the LUF. These natural capital assets include air and water quality, biodiversity, and healthy landscapes. The Forum participants recommended that the GoA and Albertans could achieve this outcome by:

- conducting a thorough and publicly available baseline inventory of land resources in Alberta as well as an inventory of existing policies related to land use;
- establishing measurable objectives for environmental protection (e.g., agricultural land, wetlands, native grasslands, wildlife habitats and wildlife, biodiversity);
- monitoring the achievement of objectives at the regional level;
- supporting integrated land management projects;
- educating the public about the importance of land management to their quality of life; and
- developing a basket of effective policy tools for protecting environmental assets.

Outcome #2: The LUF will ensure that Albertans live within the province's natural carrying capacity.

This outcome, drawn from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Round Table on the Environment and Economy, clearly resonated with most groups, although a few participants thought that the province has already reached the tipping point where growth is outpacing the ability of natural systems to recover. Recommended strategies for achieving this included:

- defining and determining parameters for "natural carrying capacity";
- monitoring the cumulative effects of multiple land uses on natural carrying capacity; and
- developing public awareness and education programs.

Outcome #3: The LUF promotes shared stewardship of the land.

Shared stewardship for Alberta's land was a recurring theme throughout the Red Deer Forum, one that was also found in the 1991 Report of the Alberta Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. A stewardship ethic and the consequential shift in core provincial values could be promoted within Alberta by:

- establishing a stewardship plan within the LUF;
- clearly defining roles and responsibilities for stewardship; and
- developing policy incentives for stewardship.

Outcome #4: The LUF helps promote integrated land-use planning between urban and rural jurisdictions.

At least half of the groups saw the LUF playing a role in reducing current conflict between urban and rural areas. Participants suggested that this could be done by:

- defining urban and rural boundaries;
- developing regional growth management plans (including incentives for densification and policies relating to the urban/rural fringe, the protection of prime agricultural land, and transportation options for smaller urban centres);
- creating regional cost/revenue sharing plans; and
- putting into place a clearly defined process for conflict resolution through which trade-offs could be achieved.

Outcome #5: The LUF ensures a healthy quality of life for Albertans.

Participants noted that the LUF needs to take an integrated, holistic approach to what constitutes a healthy quality of life for Albertans. This approach would go beyond sustainable land uses to include a healthy economy, community infrastructure (e.g., roads, housing, clean water supply) and community services (e.g., social supports, health and education). These objectives could be promoted through:

- an assessment of existing socio-economic conditions in each region of the province;
- policies to preserve and/or improve Albertans' quality of life; and
- the development of indicators through which social, economic and cultural outcomes could be monitored.

Outcome #6: The LUF clearly defines roles and responsibilities for all groups.

Many Forum participants spoke about the need for a clear governance framework for the LUF, with commensurate resources for those assigned responsibilities for implementation. Strategies through which this outcome could be achieved included:

- learning from the experiences and best practices of other jurisdictions, in Canada and beyond;
- establishing an entity with overall responsibility for the LUF (perhaps a multi-stakeholder advisory council, a super-ministry, a cross-ministerial body, or a “Ministry of Land-use”); and
- building an effective, user-friendly information management system for the LUF.

Outcome #7: The LUF supports protection of agricultural lands.

One group named protection of agricultural lands as one of its top five priorities. It proposed:

- developing a common definition of “agricultural land”;
- encouraging landowners to adopt sustainable land-use practices through policy incentives; and
- developing priority land-use designations.

Outcome #8: The LUF ensures effective and timely reclamation of lands.

Some concern was expressed at the Red Deer Forum that land reclamation has not kept pace with the rate of growth in Alberta. Thus one of the breakout groups articulated a number of strategies through which this outcome could be achieved, including the establishment of standardized provincial requirements for reclamation, tracking lands not yet reclaimed, and making the timely reclamation of such lands a policy priority.

Open Session: Additional Issues and Concerns

The last morning of the Red Deer Forum allowed participants to identify additional topics that they wished to explore. Drawing from the “parking lot” ideas in each group, a comprehensive list of suggested topics was compiled on the final day of the Forum. Participants were asked to review the topics and to vote, using a “dotmocracy” process, on the topics that they considered most relevant. From this process, eight key topics emerged; participants were encouraged to attend the session of their choice. Because “Managing Growth by Setting Targets” and “The Land-use Framework Process” received a significant proportion of the votes, facilitators conducted two breakout groups for each of these topics.

Education and Communication: Open and transparent grassroots public consultation and a comprehensive public education program were viewed as essential for moving the LUF process forward. It was suggested that consultation with the broad public should begin by determining the public's values related to land and land use, followed by discussions about trade-offs. Grassroots consultation that respects First Nations and Métis values, governance and traditional land uses were specifically mentioned as necessary.

Research Required to Support the Land-use Framework: Participants agreed that to ensure the success of the LUF, a central database needs to be established so that all land-use decisions are informed by evidence-based and traditional knowledge. Examples of suggested research requirements included comprehensive needs assessment involving all stakeholders, and decision support systems (e.g., simulation models).

Land-use Framework Process: Participants generally felt that the LUF process is being rushed. As such, all participants agreed that the LUF should include both short and long-term outcomes, and implementation strategies (i.e., enact quick wins in the next six to eight months while creating longer term plans). Participants called for political will and leadership from the Premier and Cabinet, and for all the Ministries to support the LUF. Participants repeated the need for broad public consultations and adequate provincial resources to support the LUF process. Other process suggestions included the need for a multi-stakeholder approach similar to the Clean Air Strategic Alliance; the need for education workshops with Members of the Legislative Assembly; greater consistency across legal documents; and the need to engage First Nations and Métis communities on their own terms.

Many participants expressed their satisfaction with the diverse range of interests represented at the Forum, and viewed it as an opportunity to create awareness and bring issues to the table. Others, however, were less satisfied and noted the compressed timelines and pace of the sessions – too much content, not enough time. Concerns were raised about the quality and consistency of the recording methods and the data obtained. Participants linked these comments to several questions about the integrity of the final report. There was some comment about insufficient background material and a disconnect to the sessions. Some participants noted the absence of vital stakeholders (e.g. youth, minority populations, urbanites, seniors, First Nations).

There were many suggestions for improving the process as it moved forward, including testing and validation of the notes prior to rolling out a report to the community, receiving input from stakeholders who were not present, ensuring that the GoA prioritizes the LUF process, integrating the planning process with other processes (e.g., the Water for Life strategy), conducting a best practices review, and aligning the LUF with public input.

Environmental Goods and Services: Here the primary focus was on ecological goods and services, defined as the elements of nature that aid or increase mankind's well-being (e.g., air, water, land). It was generally noted that ecological goods and services represent a flow, wherein natural resources and their benefits are not isolated to one area but transcend and connect to many other regions (e.g. river systems providing water, habitat, and irrigation).

Some participants suggested that because the broader population is benefiting, the stewards of ecological goods and services (e.g., landowners, farmers) should be compensated for financial losses resulting from their conservation efforts. Suggested methods for doing

this included tax credits, per acre/per annum payments, capital gains credits, payments for setbacks from water sources, and green cover programs. However, the group generally agreed that prior to initiating incentive or compensation programs, more information is required with respect to an inventory of critical habitat, valuation processes to determine priorities, a review of existing policies, and possible approaches to balancing private property rights with obligations related to environmental goods and services.

Managing Growth by Setting Targets: With growth defined as all variables that influence the size of the human footprint on the landscape, participants generally agreed that the GoA needs to set both targets and limits to effectively manage growth, although there was varying opinion about the division of responsibilities in this respect between the provincial and regional governments. Participants noted the need to define and agree upon terminology (e.g., targets, thresholds, limits). However, it was generally agreed that targets are measurable and aligned with objectives and outcomes whereas limits were seen to be economic, social and environmental in nature, and aimed at addressing the root causes of issues related to growth. Participants specifically noted that targets and limits are driven by both science and values.

The group suggested that a range of preliminary investigations are required prior to the development of targets and limits. These might include an inventory/capacity assessment for natural resources, growth projection scenarios, and a gap analysis of existing legislation and policy. Public engagement was viewed as an important component of the process to establish targets and limits (e.g., establishing priorities, determining values, information dissemination). In addition, the development of a diverse stakeholder working group to conduct the technical work required for the definition of targets and limits was raised. It was noted that for this to be successful, high-level political buy-in and financial support would be required.

Land and Resource Information System: The group suggested that a land and resource information system is a key building block if the LUF is to proceed. Further, it was suggested that the GoA needs to be the primary driver in this regard. Participants cited a range of potential benefits including reduced duplication, savings in both time and money, increased access to information, enhanced decision-making, and improved coordination. In summary, participants recommended a blueprint for a cost effective, appropriately-scaled information system for the public, industry and government that is accessible, accurate and timely.

Land-use Stewardship: Forum participants suggested that the LUF could contribute to stewardship through enhanced regulations, enforcement, and education. Discussion in this last respect focused on the importance of cultivating a responsible land ethic in Alberta, one that would promote respect for the land and an understanding of differing points of view with respect to land use.

Shared Collective Governance: Participants in this session reinforced the Forum's general consensus about the need for an overarching provincial framework that would have sufficient flexibility to capitalize on local planning and implementation expertise. Thus the LUF should provide a legal framework and overall direction for stakeholders along with integration across government departments and agencies and a land base inventory. An important role for the GoA is to provide Albertans with the shared information they need to manage growth on the provincial land base.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Red Deer Forum was a complex event that brought together not only a great deal of land-use experience and expertise but also a wide range of stakeholder perspectives and interests. As the above discussion shows, the Forum generated a rich but also diverse array of insight and recommendations. Care must therefore be taken in extracting general conclusions and recommendations, particularly given the fact that the Forum participants themselves were not asked to do so. Nonetheless, we would venture the following:

- There is a clear and emphatic expectation of GoA leadership on the land-use policy file.
- Scoping concerns related to the proposed LUF have not yet been resolved. Should the LUF articulate a provincial vision, or serve a vision articulated elsewhere? Should it apply to the management of subsurface rights and resources? To what extent is the LUF a growth management strategy? Public discussions about the proposed LUF will continue to be sweeping in scope unless some constraints are imposed.
- It is essential to articulate provincial guidelines and to provide direction regarding place-based decision-making. The Forum participants expect a provincial LUF with clearly stated goals, objectives and enforcement teeth, but also want to ensure place-based decision-making and sensitivity to regional interests and values. Striking this balance is both essential and difficult.
- Public discussions of the LUF initiative will be confused unless the initiative's relationship with other programs and initiatives (e.g., the provincial wetlands policies, the Water for Life strategy) is clearly articulated.
- Albertans have no desire to reinvent the wheel when it comes to land-use policy frameworks. They want to know what is different about the current initiative, how it builds upon existing policies, and how policy development in Alberta can be advanced and enriched by national and international learning.
- Quality of life as the overarching frame within which Albertans place land-use discussions.

Throughout the Forum, participants seemed torn between impatience to get on with the job and the desire not to rush, to “get it right.” They expressed the need for movement, but also for more detailed work and more extensive public consultations. One way to bridge these conflicting needs and aspirations would be to ensure that the next stage of public consultation presents participants with, at least, a draft LUF to which they can react. Our sense of the Red Deer Forum is that Albertans want evidence that the framework development process is working towards developing tangible strategies to address land-use issues.

APPENDIX I

Session Summary Overviews





SESSION 1

– A VISION FOR LAND USE IN ALBERTA

Key Concepts and Terms for a Vision

During this session, Forum participants were asked to discuss the key terms and concepts that they would like to see in a vision for the LUF. As well, participants reviewed two sample vision statements.

Participants spoke with passion about a guiding vision – the values it needs to capture, the key values it should espouse and the way it should be structured. The sense conveyed was that the vision is the foundation of the LUF, hence every word and nuance is important.

Structure and Scope of the Vision Statement

The general view was that the vision must somehow inspire Albertans by capturing commonly-held values such as pride of place, a sense of the “common good” and current social values. However, participants held disparate views about how the vision should be stated. Some groups thought that the two sample statements were too broad or “vague” and said that a lack of specificity would hamper implementation of the LUF. A few groups called for the vision to specifically reference clean water and air, and healthy forests, with specific objectives for each. Other groups asserted that the vision statement needs to be broad if it is to be inclusive of Albertans’ common values. In this case, details about how to achieve the vision would be reflected through local nuances.

Most groups indicated that the vision must be far-reaching, spanning a 50 to 100 year horizon or longer, and based on immutable values that will stand the test of future generations. However, one group cautioned that while some land-use issues (such as quality of life, wildlife, and clean water) span multiple generations, others (such as oil and gas, mining, and certain forestry practices) are sustainable over a finite period.

A few groups said that key terms such as “sustainable” and “highest quality of life” need to be defined if Albertans are to have a common understanding of the vision. A few individuals thought the word “Albertans” should be included in the vision to help convey inclusiveness, commonality and shared responsibility. Other key words seen as important included: “co-management”, “maintain”, “enhance”, “restore” and “balance”. One group suggested that an image could be used to reinforce and better convey the intent of the vision.

A few groups gave specific feedback on the two sample statements. Of these, about half favoured the first statement, indicating it provides a long-term, values-based focus. Others preferred the second statement as a better fit. One alternative statement was offered: “A system for management of land and resources for Albertans in order to achieve landscape goals and objectives in a timeframe that is reasonable.”

Session participants commented on the following key concepts and terms:

Sustainability

Despite concern about multiple interpretations of the term, all groups agreed on the need for the LUF vision to embrace and express the core concept of “sustainability”. Definitions of sustainability encompassed: human health, the environment, communities, the economy, quality of life, inheritability, “the land – not just the resources it offers”, adaptive and regenerative.

A few groups called for the vision to go beyond the notion of “sustaining” Alberta’s land and resources to “enhance” them. People noted that some natural assets (water, air and land) are already degraded and need to be repaired, reclaimed and restored to their original capability. This included reintroducing biodiversity and reclaiming sterilized lands for production. Two groups asserted that Alberta’s current pace of growth is not sustainable.

Overuse of the word “sustainable” and a lack of consensus about its meaning prompted a few people to suggest using an alternative word such as “perpetuate”, “adaptive” or “regenerate”.

Respect for the Land

Most groups thought that the LUF vision should advocate for “respect” and “care of” the province’s land. Embedded in this was the notion that Albertans are ultimately stewards, rather than owners of the land, and have a responsibility toward it (“the land owns us – not we who own the land”). “Respect” implied a number of things, including:

- A comprehensive concept of land.
- Land as a privilege rather than a right.
- Embracing broad cultural values.
- An ethical vision – acknowledging the carrying capacity or threshold of the land, water, agriculture.
- The broader notion that the landscape has intrinsic value and should not be viewed only for its resource capacity.
- The environment as Alberta’s natural capital.
- Advocating for healthy landscapes to sustain plants and animals.
- Preservation of open space (e.g. a land trust).
- Densification of municipalities to reduce land impacts.
- Honouring the capacity of the land to provide Alberta with a secure food supply.

Balance

Overall, groups believed that balance is a key concept to be reflected in the vision. Many groups embraced the triple bottom line approach, with one group suggesting it be “enshrined in a charter”. A few groups said that it was appropriate and necessary to include the word economics “as it drives everything”, but the challenge will be to balance development and preservation of land in a way that best benefits Albertans as a whole. One group said the vision should acknowledge that compromise and trade-offs will be required. Another said that balance is an outdated paradigm and impossible to achieve.

Collaboration

Linked with the concept of balance was the need, expressed by most groups, for a collaborative approach to developing and implementing a provincial land-use framework. Some groups defined collaboration as a sharing of responsibility and power between the GoA and regional/municipal governments, others included the federal government while some expanded the definition to include industry, First Nations, and landowners. Collaboration also meant active “partnerships” and “co-management”; one group said the LUF should be developed by a multi-stakeholder group.

Leadership and Accountability

Some groups focused on leadership as integral for translating the vision of a LUF into a reality. People called on the provincial government to lead a vision that is creative, innovative and competitive on both a national and global basis. And while the GoA was seen as the key driver of the LUF and ultimately responsible for achieving it, the GoA was not seen as having the sole responsibility. Participants said that all levels of government need to commit to and be accountable for the LUF vision. According to more than a few, this should also include industry, First Nations, recreational users, Métis communities, farmers and ranchers. Leadership was also described as commitment – making decisions, taking things forward, setting measurable targets, as well as enforcing firm, clear policies, guidelines and regulations.

For a few groups, provincial leadership also involved empowering as well as building capacity for and adequate resourcing of provincial ministries and local governments so that they can implement the LUF. One group thought the GoA should provide land-use definitions to lend consistency to municipal land-use bylaws. Another said the government should show foresight by acknowledging that growth, including the trend toward rural depopulation, needs to be managed.

Integrated Land-use Planning

Closely tied to balance, and a core term for many groups, was “integration”. A few saw it as a loaded term, open to interpretation. For the most part, people agreed that there is a need for a province-wide approach to management and custodianship of Alberta’s land, air, and water. Some participants suggested other provincial initiatives such as the Clean Air Strategic Alliance and the Water for Life strategy should be reviewed and, where appropriate, elements integrated with the land-use planning initiative to ensure against redundancy and inconsistencies in the policies where they relate to land use. Some articulated integration as the interconnection and seamlessness of ecosystems, saying that the LUF should proactively address cumulative effects in recognition of a multitude of influences on the land. There was a fair amount of criticism of the “piecemeal” land-use planning to date.

Diversity

Recognition of diversity was a fundamental concept for most groups and related to three main themes: regional diversity (including rural/urban differences), economic diversity (between “have” and “have not” areas) and ecosystem diversity.

Aboriginal Rights

A few groups said that the LUF vision needs to address Aboriginal treaty rights and traditional uses and to integrate these into every form of planning. One group asserted that First Nations are more than stakeholders – they are a level of government.

Feedback on Guiding Principles

During this session, groups were asked to comment on framework guiding principles identified during previous stakeholder focus group sessions. Groups were generally supportive of the principles, but offered many comments about how they might or should be interpreted, implemented and reworded.

Number of Principles

While many groups suggested new principles (see the following section), a few said that the present list was already too long. They suggested fewer principles, merging of one or more, or incorporating the principles into the vision statement. Three groups synthesized and ranked the principles in the following order:

Group A

- i. Authority/accountability.
- ii. Fairness and equality.
- iii. Reflect regional diversity and interests.
- iv. Sustainability.

Group B

- i. Authority, accountability and clarity (empowerment of local governments to include First Nations government and Métis settlements).
- ii. Comprehensive.
- iii. Meaningful engagement, communication, cooperation, transparent, open.
- iv. Fairness and equity.
- v. Long-term vision means forever.
- vi. Societal, political will and leadership.
- vii. Diversity – regional, cultural.
- viii. Sustainable principles: harmony, knowledge-based, science, tradition.

Group C

- i. Clear governance structure.
- ii. The harmony principle – with a different word to capture accommodation of different land uses but not that all land can be used for all purposes.
- iii. Political will.
- iv. Sustainable integration.

The principle of accountability and governance topped all three lists. Sustainability was also a priority for each group. Fairness and equality, diversity, and political will were on two of the three lists.

Other participants were concerned that condensing the principles might result in the loss of something important. Instead, they suggested various ways of restructuring the list:

- Develop a list of priority principles and use subtitles to incorporate other principles (e.g. “efficiency” could be a subtitle).
- Separate the high-level, strategic principles from operational principles.
- Prioritize so that some principles are weighted more heavily than others.
- Reduce duplication, e.g.:
 - o Remove “Harmony” – it is inferred in “Comprehensive” guiding principle.
 - o Remove “Comprehensive” – it is inherent in the vision and need not be restated (alternatively, it could be part of “Authority and Accountability”).
 - o Remove “Clarity” – it is already captured under “Authority and Accountability”.
 - o Remove “Political Will, Commitment and Leadership” – it is the same as “Authority and Accountability”.
 - o Merge “Reflect Regional Diversity and Interests” with “Fairness and Equity” (the word “interests” to precede the word “diversity”).

Finally, a few people said that the principles were too broad and open-ended – they suggested that the explanations should clarify the implications.

Authority and Accountability

This principle, seen as crucial, generated the greatest volume of opinion and emotion. There was consensus that the LUF must ultimately be accountable to Albertans and that it is essential to precisely define accountabilities – who (which level of government) will be accountable for what. This was a particularly sensitive issue for people in one group, who said that municipalities should have the authority to make decisions that reflect their citizens’ best interests. They added that the provincial government should not download tasks that are inappropriate for municipal government, or fail to provide capacity-building and resources for LUF-related tasks. Others in the same group argued that municipality-based decisions do not necessarily meet the greater good of neighbouring districts or of a region as a whole, hence some decisions need to be made at a provincial level.

More than a few participants expressed concerns about the term “empower”, with some stating the need for a definition. A few took issue with “empowering municipalities”, saying that municipalities are already empowered through the current Municipal Government Act. They added that variations in how

individual municipalities approach planning has meant disparities in growth across the province and that empowerment of municipalities is in direct conflict with regional cooperation. A few others suggested re-establishment of regional planning bodies, with an enabling framework, greater power and clearer roles than in the past. Such bodies would deal with issues on a larger scale than local land use.

One group said the principle needs to also explicate empowerment of Métis settlements and First Nations government, and perhaps landowners as well – those who have authority or power over land use need to be held accountable as stewards of the land.

A compromise notion was a new governance framework that identifies specific responsibilities for different stakeholders, with municipalities having a certain level of authority within overarching provincial regulations. Several mechanisms for accountability were suggested: legislative reform, an amended legal framework, empowerment of local governance bodies in addition to municipalities (such as regionally or watershed-based bodies), clear timelines for delivery, clear feedback cycles, a multilevel stakeholder group, and a “super Ministry”.

At least one person questioned how “Ministerial discretion” would apply to LUF decisions.

Comprehensive

A few groups expressed agreement with the need for a “global perspective”, noting the global context of the oil and gas industry and the effect of climate change on Alberta’s land. A few participants said global was appropriate but the LUF must also honour and incorporate the local perspective. Other comments included:

- We need an inter-provincial perspective on land use.
- Who will define what is meant by “major land-use issues”?
- “Levels of government” should be changed to “forms of government”.
- This principle means comprehensive land-use planning, for example, by watershed.

Consultation and Public Education

Feedback from specific groups included:

- In order for Albertans to support the LUF, they need to be educated about land-use issues and the need for a framework.
- The explanation of the principle should be expanded with a separate bullet articulating meaningful consultation with First Nations and Métis communities.
- Government agencies need to consult and communicate with one another to be mutually aware of all land-use issues, plans and potential solutions.
- Consultation means informed discussion – a two-way sharing of information.
- Consultation means collaboration through strategic alliances and multi-stakeholder processes.
- Education and consultation should be listed as separate principles.

Fairness and Equity, Cooperation and Communication, Transparent and Open

This principle was generally supported. Comments included:

- The word “consultation” in “inclusive, transparent, responsive consultation” should be replaced with decision-making processes.
- The word “stakeholders” should be replaced with “shareholders” (i.e. shareholders in Alberta’s lands) (One group expressed unanimous agreement on this.)
- Transparency and responsiveness will help create certainty for business, values and resources.
- The present system of land-use decision-making is unfair – only those directly affected have rights.
- Communication needs to improve between First Nations and municipalities, and between all levels of government and stakeholders.
- Explain that this principle applies to processes, regulations, legislation.
- Add the word “trust”.
- Add the word “advocacy” (advocacy for win-win solutions).

Flexibility/Adaptability

Participants wrestled with how a land-use framework for Alberta can balance the need for “flexibility and adaptability” with the need for “certainty and firmness”. However, they believed that it was essential to aim for this balance. People also said that while the LUF needs clear strategies and policies that are consistently applied, flexibility is needed to respond to long-term changes such as:

- Emerging knowledge concerning ecosystems, cumulative impacts and best practices.
- Accumulated traditional knowledge.
- Emerging economic and social indicators.

Some participants thought that too much flexibility, especially on short-term decisions, might create conflict and uncertainty. On the other hand, too little might result in an unresponsive, outmoded LUF.

Harmony

The few groups commenting on this principle raised various concerns. A few people said harmony is unrealistic (“everyone can’t be happy”), unachievable and/or in conflict with other principles. One group supported the explanation of harmony but had trouble with the term; they suggested changing the title of the principle to “Choices and Limits” (pertaining to what the land can accommodate). Another group suggested “Respect for Land”. A few participants thought that the phrase “all at once” should be deleted because it suggests there is no limitation on land use and a few others said that harmony must include First Nations/Métis treaty and constitutional rights.

Long-term Vision

A sense of consensus prevailed that the LUF should embrace a long-term vision. Specific comments included:

- The vision needs to engage people so there is a sense of ownership and inspiration for everyone –all levels of government down through individual landowners.
- There should be no timeline.
- First Nations’/ Métis’ perspective of long term means seven generations (200 or more years).
- The words “land”, “growth” and “conservation” should be included in this principle, along with the three pillars of sustainability.
- Add that the vision “needs to be flexible and adaptable”.

Political Will, Commitment and Leadership

A number of comments on this principle related to municipal concerns:

- Local governments not only need a “financial commitment” from the GoA, but also they need capacity, i.e. a transfer of funds from the GoA to municipalities to support LUF implementation. One group commented that financial commitment should be the first bullet.
- Financial commitment to local government should include:
 - o Sharing of implementation costs so as not to burden “have not” areas.
 - o Provincial-led training for municipal planners.
 - o Provincial-led public education on the LUF.
- It is not only important for the GoA to “walk the talk” – all levels of government (including the leaders) and all Albertans need to do as well.
- The objectives of each provincial government department must align with the LUF.
- Delete the phrase “walk the talk” and replace with “be the leader”.

Clarity

A few groups regarded clarity as an overarching principle but not necessarily one that needed to be listed separately. Possibly it could be part of “Authority and Accountability” or “Flexibility/Adaptability”. Other comments emerging from the discussion about clarity included:

- The GoA should be clearly named as the prime leader in the LUF.
- Emphasize open, transparent, inclusive and responsive decision-making (i.e. not behind closed doors).

Reflect Regional Diversity and Interests

For some participants, respect for regional and local differences was a point of particular passion. A few were concerned that, overall, the draft principles emphasize homogeneity and might override the principle addressing diversity. Most participants supported a regionally-based approach to land-use decisions but a “region” did not necessarily mean a politically-defined jurisdiction. At least a few people suggested ecological zones, landscapes and watersheds reflecting ecosystems that may extend beyond provincial boundaries.

One group noted that the LUF should be a unifying document emphasizing shared opportunities and commonalities and that correspondingly, the phrase “recognizes diversity between rural and urban communities” should be deleted.

Some skepticism was expressed about how a LUF can reflect the range of diversity in the province; there is a fine balance to be negotiated between consistency and diversity.

One group said that the phrase “room for regional and municipal differences” was insufficient and should be expanded to include “First Nations and Métis”. Participants in this group said that Albertans need to be educated about what constitutes a Métis reserve; a few also said the phrase “cultural sustainability” should be incorporated into the title of this principle.

Other comments:

- The explanation of the diversity principle is focused entirely on diverse human interests – it should also reflect ecological diversity.
- The phrase “recognizes diversity between urban and rural communities” should be reworded to “recognizes diversity between people’s interests”.

Regular Monitoring, Enforcement and Review

Many participants thought that this principle was essential to the credibility of the LUF. Several articulated a need for well-researched, science-based information (including an inventory of the carrying capacity of Alberta’s various lands) to be used as a baseline for setting measurable objectives. These objectives should form the basis for regular progress reports, such as an audit presented to the legislature.

Science was not seen by all as the sole driver for LUF policies. A few participants also called for integration of social and cultural values into the monitoring and review principle. One group suggested that the LUF should include full-cost accounting models (e.g. identification of the cost of removing a wetland; the relative return on investment between a wetland and a treatment plant for treating wastewater) as well as models that project cumulative effects.

The “precautionary approach” proposed by some participants was met with skepticism by others, who said that we cannot rely upon science for many key decisions, especially where science is not able to give conclusive evidence (e.g. the effects of climate change). A third argument was that the precautionary principle and cumulative effects are broad enough to be guiding principles and should be reflected in the framework.

Other comments included:

- If the LUF is to be monitored and enforced effectively, there must be a legal framework of accountability and appropriate resources.
- Monitoring, enforcement and review are operating guidelines rather than principles.

Sustainable Principles Integration

Overall, but with some caveats, groups concurred with the three pillars of sustainability. One group suggested the three pillars are sacrosanct and should be enshrined in a charter. Other participants said that while all three pillars are important, they are not equal –environmental sustainability should be weighted more heavily, hence the phrase “sensitive to environmental issues and concerns” should be strengthened. It was suggested that the explanation include:

- A commitment to maintaining biodiversity.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of scientific, traditional Aboriginal and other knowledge.
- Management of cumulative impacts.

Finally, a few people said the first bullet in the explanation (“financial sustainability”) should be removed because it implies additional emphasis on the pillar already referenced under “economic sustainability”.

Efficiency

Some groups had trouble with efficiency being defined in terms of economics. Participants said that efficiency should not mean the “cheapest means of doing business in Alberta”, as some thought the definition implied. The explanation should be changed and/or broadened to include:

- A full accounting of all costs, including the cost of reduced sustainability (i.e. sustaining some activities may drive costs upward).
- Adding the word “effectiveness” to the title of the principle.
- Streamlining decision-making processes about budgeting.
- Achieving objectives in a cost effective manner.

A few people in another group stated that the aim of this principle should be “efficiency of land use”; i.e. if a more efficient use is identified for a parcel of land, the present user should not necessarily have the right to continue with the current use. However, it was acknowledged that it would be “politically difficult” to shift the land use.

A few people said that efficiency should not be included as a principle.

Values-based, Emphasizes People

A few groups argued that the phrase “emphasizes people” should be removed from this principle because it implies that human interests supersede those of “flora and fauna”. One group questioned who would define “values”, their definition being that the primary values of a LUF are a respect for and stewardship of the land, ecological integrity, human health, and fair process. Other comments included:

- “Albertans” includes First Nations.
- “Benefits all Albertans” is not achievable; “Respects all Albertans” is a better term.
- Shorten the second bullet to “Based on principles”.

Additional Principles

A few groups suggested additional principles:

- Economics – a driving force in Alberta so it should be a separate guiding principle; it is not referenced sufficiently in other principles.
- Effectiveness – defined as demonstrable improvements in land-use decisions and management of cumulative environmental impacts.
- Respect for the Land and Stewardship – some regarded this as a fundamental principle.
- Reclamation/Equivalency – restoration of “used” land to its former capabilities.
- Dispute Resolution – a well-defined process for resolving conflicts.
- Clear Governance Structure – incremental to Authority and Accountability.
- Choices and Limits – rather than Harmony.
- Responsibility of Stakeholders to be Engaged and Involved – referencing shared responsibility for the LUF.

Process issues

A few comments emerged concerning the consultation process for the LUF:

- Why are there no youth at the Forum? They need to be involved and consulted.
- This process is being fast-tracked; greater public involvement is required.
- An action plan is needed to deal with immediate land-use issues.





SESSION 2

– OUTCOMES AND SCOPE OF THE LAND-USE FRAMEWORK

During this session, participants were asked to discuss the scope of LUF including whether it should be a high-level framework, a detailed plan, or a combination of these. They also reviewed outcome statements from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Roundtable on Environment and Economy and discussed high-level outcomes for the LUF.

Scope

There was no clear agreement about the desired scope of the LUF. In some groups the opinions were split, with some participants suggesting that the LUF should be a high-level framework while others believed that it should be a more detailed, concrete framework. A slightly greater number of groups believed that LUF should be a combination of the two levels. Most of these said that the framework should have a high-level focus at the provincial level, increasing detail at the regional level, and the most detail at the municipal level.

Some groups expressed frustration with the question about the scope of the LUF, saying they lacked sufficient information, detail and context to respond confidently. These groups struggled with terminology, feeling too rushed, uncertainty about what a framework is, what it would entail, and how it would be different from policy or process, and the question of authority. Some said that it was important to clearly identify who has authority before addressing scope, while others said the scope should be decided first, and authority assigned accordingly.

LUF Should Enable Decision-Making

In spite of these challenges about the scope there was strong agreement about the purpose of the LUF. Participants were asked to discuss if the framework should be: a) a new, high-level framework that provides general direction to policy-makers, b) a detailed plan that provides concrete direction to policy-makers, or c) something else. Regardless of their choice all agreed that what they really want is a framework that enables decision-making. This was expressed in a variety of ways. There were those who said the LUF should provide direction and coordination to decision-makers, sometimes described as a “road map” or a plan. Others said the LUF should provide a context for decision-making.

Those who preferred a detailed plan or both a high-level framework and a detailed plan frequently mentioned the need for the LUF to set out clear objectives, targets, priorities and goals that could be reviewed and evaluated. On the other hand, those who chose the high-level framework or a combination of both options frequently expressed the need for the LUF to set out a process or mechanisms for decision-making. They suggested that the “LUF needs to define processes for establishing the detailed legislation or outline for how decisions are made.” Sometimes, these participants said that the current problems with land use in the province have arisen because it is not clear how land-use decisions are made. They would like the LUF to provide clarity, guidance and transparency to decision-making.

One participant who preferred the high-level framework option said that the LUF should identify trade-offs and consequences so decisions could be clearer. A few others who preferred a combination of options said that LUF should provide outcomes and strategies and “set parameters and provide guidelines for the process to achieve objectives/vision.” A few indicated the need for growth management processes and a conflict resolution process in the LUF, although a few said that if the question of authority was settled, conflicts would be more easily resolved.

Authority

As mentioned previously, a number of groups indicated that the question of authority or responsibility for decision-making was troublesome when considering scope. For a few, the problem was resolved by having a scale of detail. These groups said that at the provincial level there should be broad general principles that provide an “umbrella” or “overarching” context and structure for land-use decision-making. These principles would be consistent across the province and based on the principles and values of all Albertans. Within that structure there would be regional processes or more detailed guidelines to allow for regional agreements and reflect regional differences. The most detailed and concrete level of decision-making would take place at the municipal level where decision-making would be quite prescriptive and specific. The level of authority would follow from this structure. This description of the scope was described as a “hierarchy of nested plans” or likened to the current system of land-use planning tools at the municipal level: “We have the Municipal Development Plan, Area Structure Plans, and Land-use Plan. We need this same level of scale and scope at the provincial level for the LUF.”

A few participants were troubled by the idea of a regional level of decision-making or authority. They were not convinced that this would improve clarity or do much other than increase bureaucracy. A few others insisted that the answer is to increase the provincial government’s authority and make the LUF much more directive and less consensual. A few others suggested the opposite – those that are closer to the people (i.e. municipalities) should have more authority and decision-making capacity than the provincial government. A few stated that the answer is to include a statement of roles and responsibilities that specifies who makes what decision and how those decisions are made within the LUF. Others said that the question of “how, who and what” must be settled before the question of scope can be adequately addressed.

A few participants said that what was important to them was that the LUF has “teeth” to enable implementation and be enforceable. One participant described LUF as “a constitution for accountability”.

Integration and Coordination

Within the context of the LUF’s scope, integration and coordination was an area of discussion for a few participants. They said that the LUF should define land use and that the definition and the framework must be comprehensive enough to include uses that impact air, water, the surface of the land, as well as the sub-surface. A few said that social impacts must also be included. It followed from this that the scope of the LUF must integrate and coordinate all policy, legislation and management plans – similar to Alberta’s Water for Life strategy. There were comments that government silos must be addressed, and the LUF not be undermined by other policies or laws. A few expressed concern that all this integration work could not be undertaken in the three month timeframe set out by Forum organizers and sponsors, yet it was seen as “critical.”

The Importance of Education and Attitude Change

A number of participants stressed the importance of addressing the need for public education about land-use issues and changing public attitudes toward land use. A few also pointed out that the LUF will not be successful or widely accepted without ensuring informed public input. Others noted that consideration of global land-use issues and solutions as well as a global context is important. A few insisted that the LUF must take a long-term view.

Outcomes

The approach to identifying Forum participants' preferred high-level outcomes for the provincial LUF varied between groups and in some cases, within the groups. However, the group processes typically involved a combination of some or all of the following: feedback about the outcome statements taken from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Roundtable on Environment and Economy, general group (and/or subgroup) discussion about preferred outcomes, and specific articulation of preferred high-level outcomes. It is important to note that outcome discussions in Session 2 were preliminary and priority high-level outcomes were further discussed during Session 6.

Participants in a few groups questioned the value and/or the purpose of an exercise aimed at generating high-level outcomes. One group indicated that discussing outcomes was inappropriate without a preliminary list of key issues. Another group suggested that it was premature to generate outcomes without an articulated vision for the framework. A few groups were hesitant to engage in a detailed discussion regarding outcomes as they were unclear about what outcomes should be in this context. A few expressed dissatisfaction with the limited time allotted for the outcome exercise.

Response to 1991 Outcome Statements

To stimulate discussion about preferred outcomes for the LUF, nine outcome statements that were adapted from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Roundtable on Environment and Economy were reviewed during Session 2.

Response to the 1991 outcome statements was mixed. Although many groups generally endorsed the list, the outcome statements were commonly viewed as a starting point – modification and ongoing reaffirmation would be required as the LUF process moves forward. Although supportive, a few stressed the need to further define and clarify each outcome – one group expressed this as the need to “drill down each of these outcomes”. Another group suggested that in a 1991 context, the outcomes may have been too proactive but with an increased sense of urgency in 2006, the outcomes listed are relevant.

In contrast, one group rejected the 1991 outcome statements and objected to them being used in 2006. Another indicated that they were led astray by the 1991 list and unsure of their purpose. Still another group said that they did not have enough context to judge the 1991 outcomes because outcomes are tied to time, place and scale. One group criticized the 1991 outcome statements suggesting that the focus was economic, not on land use. A few groups indicated that vague and/or loaded terms require definition. In this context, one group specifically referenced the terms: “health”, “quality of air”, “sustainability”, and “aesthetically”. Another group noted that the word “land” is ambiguous with a range of possible meanings depending on interpretation (e.g. prairie, agricultural, city).

In a few groups, the interdependent nature of the outcome statements was raised. Because of this interdependence, participants said that for success to be realized, all outcomes would need to be achieved. A few others noted the potential for conflicts between some of the outcomes. However, this could be overcome if strategies to achieve the outcomes are founded on collaborative, win-win principles.

A few groups questioned why the 1991 outcomes had not been implemented. One group suggested that the focus of the discussion should be on implementation – more focus on “how rather than on who”. Another group discussed the elements required to ensure implementation of the LUF. These were identified as:

- Identification and removal of legislative or policy barriers as a means of facilitating better decision-making.
- A coordinating agency that would provide direct alignment and support for achieving outcomes.
- Tools that enable creation of a good political environment to support the framework.
- Alignment of ideas and goals – although a vision is often shared between parties, different directions may be taken to achieve it.

The following is a summary overview of the key themes and ideas from the general discussions and direct feedback related to the 1991 outcome statements.

The quality of air, water and land is assured

Many of the groups generally supported this outcome. Some questioned how quality would be assured and suggested that more definition is required. One group said that a measurement of air, water and land quality is required. Another suggested that the outcome requires a means of measuring land quality against a triple bottom line, but expressed concern about how quality would be measured. One group called for a reference to water quantity as well as quality. Another considered this outcome to be status quo.

Alberta’s biodiversity is preserved

Some groups voiced general agreement with this outcome statement. One group indicated that this outcome should refer to environmental “protection” rather than preservation. Another suggested that it should emphasize the “maintenance” of biodiversity rather the preservation of biodiversity. One group thought that historic resources (i.e. recognition and preservation) had been overlooked and should be incorporated under biodiversity. The reference to aesthetically attractive areas generated debate. In one group it was suggested that the statement should extend to include other areas, not just aesthetically attractive areas. Another group thought that “aesthetically attractive” is a value for some people, while others believed it should be eliminated from the outcome statement.

We live within Alberta’s natural carrying capacity

One group said that a more proactive statement is required. A few groups suggested that carrying capacity required definition. Another suggested that all but the third bullet referencing values and consumption patterns should be deleted. In one group, there was discussion about the appropriateness of the term “carrying capacity”; however there was general agreement that the notion of carrying capacity must be addressed.

The economy is healthy

Concerns with this outcome statement typically focused on its limited scope, with many suggesting that it should be extended to reflect a triple bottom line – social, environmental and economic health. Others believed it should be revised to incorporate the notion of a “long-term” and “sustainable” economy. One group suggested that the outcome should reference long-term economic sustainability through a shift in dependence from non-renewable to renewable resources. A few groups made specific suggestions for rephrasing the outcome statement, including: “long-term productivity for future generations” and “economy is diverse, resilient, globally competitive and socially and environmentally responsible”. It was suggested that all bullets currently reflecting broader economic development matters should be reworded to address land use, specifically. In keeping with the suggestion that the outcome should expand its scope to address the triple bottom line, one group indicated that it should not only include a healthy environment and a healthy economy but also healthy Albertans, as human health should also be a priority.

One group recommended that the previous four outcome statements be amalgamated and simplified to “healthy communities, healthy economy, and healthy environment”.

Market forces and regulatory systems work for sustainable development

While there was some level of agreement among the groups responding to this outcome, a range of additions and revisions were provided. One group believed that the first bullet (“economic incentives to encourage environmentally responsible behaviours”) should be amended to include “recognition of the provision of environmental goods and services by private landowners”. This was echoed by another group who suggested that, in addition, incentives should not be limited to “economic” incentives and behaviours and should be both responsible and “appropriate”. Another group suggested that full-cost accounting be specifically related to land-use decisions. Still another suggested that this outcome be extended to ensure that past environmental concerns are addressed and that reclamation by industry occurs in a timely manner. A few believed that this outcome must include regulatory change or the status quo will remain.

Urban and rural communities offer a healthy environment for living

Within the context of healthy urban and rural communities, some groups indicated that provisions and processes to address urban and rural conflicts is an outcome that should be realized. In a few groups, specific strategies were suggested, including: growth areas around urban centers where no development is allowed, inter-municipal development plans, addressing land fragmentation, and revenue sharing. One group suggested that the outcome statement be revised to “urban and rural communities provide a healthy environment for living”.

Albertans are educated and informed about the economy and the environment

In almost all Forum groups, there was significant discussion about public education.

Overall, there was general support for the outcome to educate and inform Albertans about the economy and the environment. Some extended education to include “encouragement of conservation and stewardship”. One group said that the outcome statement should be revised to shift responsibility to the government and to reflect the notion of engaging citizens in land use. Specific revisions suggested include: changing the outcome statement to “Albertans are engaged in decisions about land use and

amending the first bullet to "decision-makers provide leadership in informing and engaging citizens." A few suggested that improved access to education and information should be referenced. Consistently, however, groups called for outcomes related to public education and information about land use (see following section).

Albertans are responsible global citizens

There was some level of agreement with this outcome, although a few offered suggestions for revisions. One group suggested that the outcome statement be amended to "Albertans are responsible and recognized as good global citizens." Another group suggested that the first bullet should be changed to "In making decisions about land use, we consider impacts on others outside Alberta (e.g. downstream, downwind, neighbours."

Albertans are stewards of the environment and the economy

Some groups expressed general support for this outcome statement. One group said that it should be extended to incorporate social and cultural stewardship. A focus on increasing stewardship programs rather than increasing regulations was suggested by another group.

Missing or Necessary Outcomes

Across most of the groups, there was some discussion about outcomes that were missing from the 1991 list and/or preferred outcomes that were considered to be necessary.

Flowing from the discussion around the scope of the LUF, many groups expressed a desire for explicit outcomes that would address decision-making, coordination and integration, and public education specific to land use.

Some groups said that a rigorous and effective decision-making process should be a fundamental outcome of the LUF. A few suggested that this should involve collaborative processes that are more democratic and that empower citizens and stakeholders. Another suggested that a natural corporate based decision-making process be incorporated, where land-use decisions are based on full natural capital (i.e. cost of industry, cost of footprint). Still another group called for decision-making centres that are better distributed and closer to activities on the land.

Many groups agreed that integrated, cooperative and coordinated links among all interests should be realized as an outcome. Some of the groups reiterated the need to eliminate silos through integrative processes that enhance communication and cooperation among all levels of government, regulatory bodies, stakeholders and the public. A few groups suggested that a process outcome should involve explicit identification of roles and responsibilities. One group stressed the need for alignment of ideas and goals, suggesting that although a vision is often shared between parties, there may be different directions taken to achieve the vision.

There was strong overall agreement that an outcome of the LUF process should be improved public information and education specific to land use. Many groups believed that there is a significant need for Albertans to understand the relationship between land and their quality of life. Some expressed this as a need to cultivate a "land based ethic" by providing Albertans with an understanding of their connection to the land through awareness and knowledge. A few groups suggested education should be aimed at shifting attitudes, redefining the land ethic, and changing behaviours. As well, these groups emphasized

that education programs should specifically target youth. One group suggested that public education should increase across the lifespan of the LUF and that active not passive strategies are needed to realize this outcome. A few believed that the provincial government should drive the public education process.

Some groups expressed concern that cumulative effects were not considered in the 1991 outcome statements and believed that recognition of cumulative impacts and limits is an essential outcome of the LUF. Of these, the need for ongoing monitoring, inventories, and baseline data was frequently highlighted. A few others commented that “nobody makes decisions at this level” and that a management structure recognizing the impacts of cumulative effects at the landscape level is required so that the necessary changes can occur.

A few groups believed that encouraging and supporting innovation in land-use planning and management is a necessary outcome that is missing. Some referred to the need for investment in science and planning capacity. Others elaborated by highlighting the need for investment in land and water-based science.

A few groups noted that specific consideration of Aboriginal rights and interests were missing from the outcome statements. There was a call for explicit reference and response to the two legitimate expectations of First Nation governments: the maintenance of biodiversity and ecological integrity of lands not taken up; and ensured equitable economic benefit for First Nations people as lands and resources are taken up. In addition, some participants indicated that the LUF must ensure that First Nation governments are part of the land-use decision-making system.

Some groups identified elements that should underpin all LUF outcomes. For example, many of the groups expressed concerns about the measurability of the 1991 outcomes. As one group pointed out, “all outcomes must be measurable so we know when we reach them.” Most of these agreed that outcome statements for the LUF should provide concise and clearly articulated direction and include specific goals, objectives and quantifiable measures. A few groups believed that social and cultural elements should be integrated throughout the LUF in general, and within the outcomes specifically. One group extended this to include recognition of historical elements (i.e. historical future planning). Some groups suggested that Aboriginal rights, land-based interests, consultation and co-management should be woven throughout the framework.

Preferred High-level Outcomes

Due to time constraints and variances in session processes, not all groups generated lists of preferred high-level outcomes. Of those who did, the majority did not prioritize outcomes. To ensure that each group’s contributions are reflected, the following section provides an overall listing of the high-level outcomes that were articulated during Session 2. (Note: In Session 6, Forum groups further discussed and prioritized their outcomes, and proposed preliminary strategies for achieving their top priorities.)

- Consistent fringe (urban/rural) policies
- Maintain water and air quality
- Processes for conflict resolution/assessment of trade-offs
- Energy management plan
- Compensation (credit trading) for impacts of land use
- Prioritize creation of community – recognizing role/importance

- Manage for biodiversity/ecosystem services
- Landscape protection, aesthetic value – no billboards, no sporadic development, related to tourism attraction
- Market forces – work with them to achieve desirable outcomes (economical, environmental and social)
- Transportation (inter and intramunicipal, land use)
- Combination of outcomes:
 - o #1 – The quality of air, water and land is assured
 - o #2 – Alberta’s biological diversity is preserved
 - o #3 – We live within Alberta’s natural carrying capacity
- More stewardship programs than regulations
- Albertans understand the importance and contribution of land to their quality of life – Albertans are educated and informed about the economy and the environment.
- The economy is healthy and sustainable in the long term combined with the environment is healthy
- Legislation and regulatory reform is ongoing to support a successful LUF
- Economy not dependent on non-renewable resources
- Address problems/issues with fragmentation
- Albertans are responsible global citizens
- Albertans are stewards of the environment and the economy
- Market forces and regulatory systems work for sustainable development
- Living within our natural carrying capacity, meaning clean air and water, healthy landscapes and addressing cumulative impacts
- Healthy economy
- Albertans' have a stewardship ethic
- Ensure my grandchildren have healthy, safe supply of food
- Increase acknowledgment of social and cultural elements
- Consideration and/or cumulative effects
- Management structure committed to change relative to the vision
- Decision-making systems are rigorous, professional and efficient
- Better cooperation among all parties including integration of regulatory bodies
- Support protection of agricultural lands
- Recognize regional differences and helps resolve rural/urban conflicts
- Ensure that resources are used in a responsible/sustainable manner
- Include revenue sharing within regions
- Have priority land-use designations
- Establish access management plans, recognizing unique characteristics of Crown and private land and the compatible and appropriate local land use
- Identify measurable outcomes
- Support education and public awareness so that Albertans are good stewards of the land

- Must respond to the two legitimate expectations of First Nation governments:
 - Maintain biodiversity/ecological integrity within lands not taken up
 - Ensure equitable economic benefit for First Nations people as lands and resources are taken up
- Integrated process by all land users to minimize the footprint that is enforced by government (legislation and teeth that forces shareholders to talk/dialogue)
- Stewardship of environment and economy
- Quality and quantity of air, water and land assured
- Alberta should be responsible global citizens
- Not reliant on healthy economy (healthy and sustainable)
- Incorporate a natural capital-based decision-making process
- Inventory for baseline
- The environment is healthy
- Roles and responsibilities of government is clear in the LUF





SESSION 3

– GROWTH MANAGEMENT

During this session participants were asked to discuss their understanding of growth, responsibilities for managing it, the role of the LUF in addressing it, and land-use management tools.

What is growth and what are the positive and negative implications of growth?

First, it is important to note that one of the breakout groups did not address this question arguing that there were more critical issues requiring discussion. The remaining nine groups agreed that growth is inevitable and often has positive implications for Albertans, particularly in the economic, social, and cultural realms. However, these participants emphasized that the current rapid rate of growth, or what some perceive as uncontrollable growth, generates uncertainty and also has negative implications for Albertans' overall quality of life. Viewing the existing pace of growth as an urgent matter, almost all of the participants stated that growth management must be a priority for the GoA arguing that the LUF should create greater certainty regarding land use for all levels of government and stakeholders in the short, medium and long term. For many participants, an effective growth management strategy needs to consider not only the rate of growth but also the limits to growth.

Situating growth in the context of the human footprint, many participants defined growth as any activity placing demands on the landscape and generating changes relative to the baseline. With regard to the latter, most participants concurred that Alberta does not have accurate and updated baseline data emphasizing that gathering and compiling this data should be a primary concern for the GoA. Overall, participants conceived of growth and the impact of growth in spacio-temporal terms spanning dimensions such as: population, economy, culture, knowledge, technology, education, urban and rural development, natural resource extraction, renewable and non-renewable resources, biodiversity, environment and cultural diversity. According to all the sessions that addressed the question, unprecedented growth – particularly economic and population growth – creates both winners and losers thereby fuelling tensions and often competition among stakeholders on any given issue.

Convergence emerged among participants with regard to the numerous examples they provided, which exemplified the duality of many growth outcomes. For example, all participants noted that economic growth is not necessarily distributed equally across sectors, individuals, communities or geographical regions and is frequently accompanied by inflationary pressures. They argued that increased employment opportunities and higher wages can lead to increased disposable income and spending, and thus to a higher standard of living and improved quality of life. However, they also recognized that this economic activity can lead to labour shortages, increased production costs and greater pressure on resources such as housing, services, health care, education, transportation networks and recreational venues. Many sessions suggested that most levels of government as well as most stakeholder groups are ill-equipped to address the challenges evolving with rapid growth and expressed the need for the development of capacity building mechanisms.

Some expressed concern regarding increased consumption and noted that while it can contribute to the expansion of some sectors, it also promotes consumerism and materialism, which can have potential negative implications if this leads to the erosion of core values and attitudes. Many groups suggested that as Alberta becomes even more of a consumer society, it will also become more dependent on goods and services external to the province thereby forging a culture of dependence. It is important to note that a few participants took the opposite view arguing that this was simply representative of the broader trend of globalization; for them, this interdependence is an indication of progress. At the same time, some groups suggested that economic prosperity raises individuals' expectations and suggested that if growth subsides, expectations may not be met. Some participants stressed that greater economic wealth provides the province with the necessary resources to invest further in post-secondary education and in some instances, more research and development in some sectors, although they did not specify which sectors. Other groups noted that the current period of economic growth has led to greater technological innovation, which has primarily positive implications for a broad range of Albertans.

Similar arguments emerged with regard to population growth. Most participants suggested that migration into the province played an important role in addressing labour shortages and also had the potential to contribute to Alberta's cultural diversity. However, when participants considered the influx of people in terms of population density, most group discussions viewed population growth more negatively. They suggested that an increase in population equated to increased stress on the system, especially in terms of the social programs, housing, recreational facilities and infrastructure networks. A few noted that such trends also contributed to social problems such as increased crime and possibly ethnic tensions. For many groups, a further downside of rapid growth was the loss of a sense of connectedness within communities.

In addition to the rate of growth, most groups suggested that it is imperative to consider Alberta's land use in terms of the limits to growth. In this context, most participants focused on the productive capacity of Alberta's land base and noted that in many areas multiple demands are made on any given land area (e.g. agricultural activities, resource extraction, residential and commercial developments as well as recreational pursuits). Most groups agreed that rural sprawl is becoming a significant issue, often having negative implications for the environment and land stewardship. Further, many groups suggested that this trend takes prime agricultural land out of production, and in many instances drives land prices upward. For some groups, this discussion evolved into a debate regarding private ownership rights.

Almost all groups agreed that Alberta's current growth pattern is best characterized as reactionary rather than proactive growth management based on best practices; this is due to the lack of planning by most levels of government. By extension, most groups stated that this also means there is an absence of knowledge sharing and coordinated development among governments, business, and non-profit sectors. All groups that addressed this question stated that the current rate of growth is not sustainable, adding that it will have many negative long-term consequences in environmental, social, cultural, and possibly economic as well as political terms. Almost all agreed that innovative land management approaches must be developed, sooner rather than later, in order to reduce the human footprint on Alberta's landscape.



Should the Government of Alberta and/or market forces assume a role in managing growth in Alberta?

Overall, almost all groups suggested that growth should be managed in Alberta; however, a few participants stated that we must proceed with an element of caution, as the market remains the predominant driver of growth. A few also questioned whether growth management is possible in a democratic system. Discussions regarding who should manage growth yielded two principal findings. First, the market is the primary driver of growth; however, profit generation and not the public interest is its central motivating factor. Thus, almost all the participants agreed that growth management should not be left to market forces alone, although they indicated that these forces could play a secondary role in some instances. Second, according to nine of the ten groups, the GoA needs to take a leadership role, to assume ownership of the LUF and to develop a growth management model based on shared responsibility for land use.

Significant convergence emerged among all the groups regarding the role, if any, that market forces could assume and why they should not be the principal mechanism for growth management. Central to all the discussions was the view that the public interest and by extension the social, cultural and political issues are peripheral considerations, at best. Many groups cited Fort McMurray as an example of the extent to which market-based development is void of considerations beyond revenue generation. At the same time, some groups noted that while markets are imperfect they do certain things very well, particularly in terms of efficiency, and could perhaps be incorporated into growth management strategies. Similarly, a few groups suggested that market forces, vis-à-vis industry, could assume a greater role in influencing responsible land stewardship and take a greater interest in land-use policy-making. Extrapolating from market forces, some groups suggested that the private sector has fewer constraints and greater capacity to access global and local environments. In this context, some groups suggested that if business were to work collaboratively with government and other entities it could play a role in bringing both financial and human resources to growth management issues. A few participants suggested that industry, based on daily operations, could bring emerging growth management issues to the attention of government in much the same manner as government raises growth management issues with industry. Although some groups identified aspects where market forces could play a role, most participants indicated that growth management strategies should strike a balance between government and market forces, arguing that policies that reign in market forces are essential to ensure that future generations have multiple use of the land base. Many believed that the preservation of lands for future generations will not be ensured if market forces dictate land use.

With the exception of one group, central to all the group discussions was the issue of GoA leadership, which participants indicated is key to the development and implementation of growth management strategies and mechanisms. Almost all the groups indicated that provincial leadership has been notably absent. For most participants, this has been to the detriment of Alberta's land base. All but one group suggested that the GoA should assume a leadership role in managing growth. One group was divided as to whether the provincial government or market forces should take the lead in growth management. Another group went further to suggest that the GoA has an obligation to manage growth. Reinforcing the call for GoA leadership, a few suggested that the government also plays a role in driving growth through mechanisms such as lease sites and immigration, and thus, it is well placed to define the acceptable limits for change and to influence the rate of development. Most participants equated government involvement with preserving core values and ensuring long-term multiple use of the land base.

Without exception, the groups agreed that the GoA must engage with stakeholders when developing growth management strategies and mechanisms. All the groups emphasized that assuming a leadership role does not mean that the GoA should have overriding authority on land-use policies generally, and growth management strategies, specifically. Rather, most participants emphasized that the GoA would be responsible for developing a growth management model based upon shared management among all levels of government and stakeholders. Most groups conceived of the GOA's leadership role as one of a partner to various levels of government and stakeholders. Many suggested that the government should set the parameters for managing growth and that local entities should implement the strategies. Many participants indicated that partnering with entities at the local level allows the province to capitalize on the specific knowledge and expertise held by local stakeholders regarding the particular needs and demands of the area. Almost all the groups suggested that growth management strategies should be premised upon best practices with the objective being to close the gap between the rate of growth and the capacity to sustain growth. Overwhelmingly, the participants stated that the creation of an inventory of resources and a subsequent baseline assessment are the essential starting points of a growth management system. They added that the GoA has access to the information (such as Geographic Information System-GIS-generated data) and the resources required to generate such a database.

According to all the groups, once the GoA has established an accurate baseline it must set expectations for all affected parties and develop the guidelines for growth management in the LUF. More specifically, most of the participants suggested that key responsibilities of the GoA included: defining growth management objectives, articulating core values, setting acceptable limits and targets for growth, determining and monitoring the rules and regulations, and developing the tools and mechanisms for managing growth. Elaborating on the latter, some participants suggested that managing growth required instruments that guide unfettered market forces. At the same time, some indicated that there is a fine balance between rules and incentives. Some groups noted that in some cases regulatory mechanisms are required to manage growth, but in other cases, industry incentives to maintain good growth practices are useful. A few participants suggested that the government should not be regulating or setting targets for growth. Most participants emphasized that all tools and mechanisms must be clear and transparent for all parties, including government agencies such as the EUB and the NRCB; they argued this would encourage responsible land stewardship. Regarding government agencies, some suggested that these bodies could play an important role in implementing and monitoring the rules. Some participants believed that the government should coordinate growth activity between sectors and particular uses to avoid potential conflicts. For example, some suggested the government should address concerns at the juncture of urban-rural growth and demands for resource extraction. At the same time, most participants indicated that the GoA should not micro-manage issues.



Repeatedly, most of the groups stated that the success of growth management hinged on adequate funding to all parties across all geographical regions that are responsible for implementing these strategies. Almost all the groups called for costing-sharing between the government and its respective partners. According to a few participants, the GoA should provide seed money and assume a partnership role with local entities to develop growth management initiatives. Essentially, all groups reiterated that public engagement must continue on an ongoing basis arguing that the GoA must work to facilitate buy-in from all stakeholders as this is essential to a successful land-use program.

Should the LUF address the following areas: 1) management of cumulative effects; 2) access to land and resources for different purposes; 3) urban growth and sprawl; 4) land stewardship; and 5) delivery of public infrastructure and services in relation to growth?

To begin, it is important to note that one group refused to address this question; thus, the summary is based upon the responses of nine groups only. Of the remaining nine groups, participants from eight groups responded with a resounding “YES” to the need for the LUF to address the first four areas identified in the question: 1) management of cumulative effects; 2) access to land and resources for different purposes; 3) urban growth and sprawl; and 4) land stewardship. A few participants in one of these groups stated that the fifth issue – delivery of public infrastructure and services in relation to growth – required further qualification.

In general, in addressing this question, discussions revealed substantial repetition with regard to the broader role of the LUF stating that it should frame the vision, identify the principles and objectives, set the rules and regulations, and shape the tools and mechanisms for land use. Most reiterated that the LUF should focus on the “big picture” and map out land use, thereby serving as a directive for land users and managers rather than focusing on creating strategies for the GoA’s micro-management of land use. Across all the groups, participants stated that definitional and conceptual clarity regarding terms such as cumulative effects, access to land, and urban growth and sprawl is essential before proceeding to the next stage of drafting specific strategies and mechanisms. With regard to the issue of planning mechanisms across the five areas, some groups noted that effective planning mechanisms are already in place for certain activities (though they did not specify these activities); however, they emphasized that the lack of effectiveness of these mechanisms is due to the absence of coordination and integration. Building on this point, many participants stated that the LUF needs to bring together the various stakeholders and levels of government in order to bridge existing planning processes as well as to develop new ones. Another common theme, throughout the groups and across all of the questions posed for growth management, was the need for the LUF not only to provide guidelines for how growth management will be shared but also to ensure that the necessary financial resources are available to partners engaged in this endeavour. Agreement emerged across the groups that growth management guidelines must be based upon sound analysis of current economic realities and best practices. Many participants indicated that the LUF should reflect lessons learned from other jurisdictions within Canada and beyond, if appropriate.

Management of cumulative effects

Management of cumulative effects was hotly debated among participants and across groups. Throughout the groups, discussions quickly revealed that almost every participant had a different conception of what constituted cumulative effects. Many groups stated that in order to address this issue, cumulative effects must be clearly defined as most participants agreed it is mired in conceptual ambiguity. Many participants suggested that a concise definition would help to clarify what constituted a positive and a negative cumulative effect for all land users and managers. For some others, the issue was less one of definitional vagueness and more one of how to manage cumulative effects.

Once definitional and conceptual clarity is achieved, some participants indicated that the next step is to compile an inventory of cumulative effects. Some participants suggested that modelling, such as that undertaken by Brad Stelfox, could play a key role in addressing this issue. Accordingly, they indicated that the presentation of various scenarios would provide important information regarding the potential implications of cumulative effects. In addition, through this process it would be possible to determine

a set of values and indicators that could be used to set thresholds. Further, this information would assist in the identification of a range of trade-offs that could be considered when developing responses to cumulative effects. Further, many participants suggested that modelling would be extremely useful in determining the long-term vision and goals essential for creating tools and mechanisms. Some participants suggested that the creation and enforcement of timelines with regard to cumulative effects is essential as these would help to determine explicit targets and goals.

Throughout the groups, agreement emerged regarding the need for tools although they did not elaborate on specific tools except to suggest that best practices should be rewarded. Some extended this logic by suggesting that it should be a privilege to engage in various activities on the land base rather than a right. With respect to tools and mechanisms, one group's favourite statement was: "There needs to be a spectrum of options that includes: incentives, thresholds, and regulations. These must be monitored and it must be clear what is being measured." Some participants noted that establishing thresholds is a difficult task; they emphasized that competing uses must not exceed threshold boundaries. A few participants indicated that while it is important to bring land users together, the process needs to be formalized and not merely voluntary in order to help ensure compliance. These participants suggested that perhaps this could be achieved through a regulatory body.

Access to land and resources for different purposes

The nine groups responding to this question agreed that it should be addressed by the LUF. However, discussions did not delve deeply into this issue. To start, most groups agreed that it is imperative to integrate existing planning processes in order to ensure against duplication. For some participants, advancing policies on this issue hinged on reconciling individual interests with the collective good while some other groups did not deem this to be a central issue. In some groups, participants stated it is necessary to create "certainty of access to resources" for all interested parties; they indicated that the LUF must define the parameters for access to land and resources. Some participants emphasized the need to be sensitive to areas such as sacred lands, historical designations, and medicinal plant location designations. For some participants defining access to land must occur before rights are bestowed upon landowners. Similarly, some groups stated that surface responsibilities need to be clearly articulated as do subsurface rights. Many participants expressed concern regarding a disproportionate focus on the economic aspects of land use. These participants suggested that the range of options for future land use should not be foreclosed based on economic considerations alone. At the same time, many groups suggested that there is limited expertise to inform decisions at all levels of government and across regions, which leads to suboptimal strategies. Some groups also raised the issue of the appropriate scale of authority for decision-making and implementing measures. Most participants agreed that both should be addressed at a level higher than the local council. Following along this path, some groups suggested that regional planning authorities should be re-introduced.

Urban growth and sprawl

While the nine groups agreed that this issue must be addressed in the proposed LUF, most participants concurred that the term urban sprawl is outdated and needs to be redefined and reconceptualized within the context of new urban-rural development realities. For some participants these issues require consideration of annexation, infrastructure grants, land trusts, incentives for land donations, regional-planning authorities, and the creation of transferable development credits. A few participants suggested that the terms population growth and distribution better captured the essence of current growth trends. Following this logic, some participants suggested that growth in one area could be a population shift in another area, providing amenity migrants as an example.

Most groups agreed that the central factor is ‘space’ whereby the issue is one of density (or what some term as intensification, especially in many urban) versus sprawl. In some groups, participants stated that it is time the logic of density – building upward not outward - drove development. They suggested that servicing more densely populated communities could be more cost effective. They used the provision of emergency services as an example, whereby servicing an inner city area may require one station versus numerous stations dispersed throughout the suburbs. Within this context, many participants argued that the urban-rural interface is the main factor underlying urban sprawl. By extension, some groups indicated that this evolving reality is also at the root of emerging urban-rural conflicts. Many participants noted that increasingly rural growth is characterized by rural sprawl, a reality that requires urgent attention. At the same time, some participants cautioned against generalizing rural growth patterns across the province and suggested that rural sprawl is most characteristic around the Calgary area. This prompted some to reiterate that a regional mechanism for monitoring and analyzing these trends should be developed. In some instances, participants stated that municipalities must be consulted more regularly and given a larger role because they are the front line on development issues. Moreover, many agreed that the urban-rural growth issue is too complex for the GoA to address in the absence of consulting with affected parties.

Land stewardship

While all the groups stated that land stewardship must be included in the LUF, detailed discussions were scant. A key concern for all the groups was financial resources. According to many participants the GoA should assume primary responsibility for land stewardship. Some groups suggested that the goal of stewardship must be sustainable development; however, many recognized that sustainable development is a highly contested concept requiring clarification. A few groups suggested that integrated land management should be an essential component of public land management. Some participants emphasized that the LUF must define the parameters for land stewardship in terms of corporate performance; environmental farm plans; values on environmental goods, services and natural capital; and land trusts and taxation. According to many participants the LUF must also outline, in detail, the incentives for parties to practice responsible stewardship. Most groups agreed that public education is essential for successful land stewardship. Among a few participants there was agreement about the need for provincial support to buy private land from developers. A few others stated that greater effort on the part of the GoA is required to maintain the size of lands that are in one way or another designated for environmental purposes. Many participants also raised the issue of financial accountability noting that responsible land stewardship would require increased land management, which they argued is a costly but essential endeavour.

Delivery of public infrastructure and services in relation to growth

Of the nine groups, all but one agreed that this issue should be addressed in the LUF. The dissenting groups argued that the GoA and LUF should not play a role in the delivery of public infrastructure but rather it should be involved in planning public infrastructure and services related to growth. Further, some participants diverged on the issue of whether the GoA or local government are best placed to deliver public infrastructure and services in relation to growth. Some argued that local governments were best placed to take the lead on this issue as they have the most extensive knowledge and understanding of issues such as urban growth, which is a key factor placing further pressure on infrastructure and services. According to some participants, the LUF should provide timelines for deliverables on this issue.

What tools and mechanisms currently exist or are required by land users, land managers, communities, and municipalities to manage public and private land use?

Originally, this question took the form of three distinct questions intended to elicit responses specific to public and private lands. Throughout most of the groups, discussions rarely made a distinction between public and private lands or between land users, land managers, communities and municipalities. Therefore, based on the discussions across the groups the three questions have been reformulated into one question (stated above) that captures the essence of the original questions and views expressed by the participants.

Across the groups convergence emerged among most participants around two central points: i) traditionally, land-use planning and management has taken place in isolation; and ii) the existing kit of tools and mechanisms are insufficient to address current demands on both public and private lands.

With regard to these findings, most agreed that key components of land-use planning and management of both public and private lands were: standardized data collection, access to information, monitoring, clearly defined targets, financial resources, inter-jurisdictional cooperation, and tools. In most groups, discussions of land management, authority structures and decision-making processes preceded exchanges regarding specific tools and mechanisms. Many participants suggested that existing inconsistencies in land-use policies (and by extension application of land-use tools) across jurisdictions is the direct result of a disconnect between the activities of the province, municipalities, and boards. Overwhelmingly, participants cited minimal inter-jurisdictional cooperation, with respect to information sharing, implementation and enforcement, as a deeply entrenched problem requiring immediate action. Further, most participants stated that the lack of cross-departmental information sharing at the provincial level not only is problematic but also contributes to the lack of inter-jurisdictional information sharing. Almost all participants agreed that greater coordination of inter-departmental and inter-jurisdictional communication is essential. Repeatedly, most of the groups raised the issue of “region” suggesting that current patterns and trends in growth dictated a regional dimension for effective land-use management.

Based on these observations most participants suggested these shortcomings could be addressed by developing a reliable integrated management system which, among other things: i) increased capacity-building among stakeholder groups to enable greater participation in land-use management; ii) developed mechanisms to facilitate the coordination of activities and to encourage cooperation across jurisdictions and stakeholder groups; and iii) provided a comprehensive inventory of above ground and subsurface resources that would be accessible through a single database accessible to all levels of governments and stakeholder groups. Almost all the participants agreed that integration is key to land management arguing that it has been notably absent. Some participants suggested that the GoA should examine integrated land management models currently used by other jurisdictions. A few suggested that the Forest Management Agreement should be considered; however, one participant strongly disagreed. A few noted that some inroads have been made on this issue with the creation of the Land Related Information System; however, some participants disagreed arguing that it has many shortfalls.

With regard to tools and mechanisms, views varied regarding what constituted tools and the type of tools to be adopted or enforced. The lack of consensus about the definition of tools served as a stumbling block for some participants when attempting to determine whether the existing tools are adequate or more are required. However, most groups suggested that communities, land users and land

managers as well as municipalities did not possess adequate land management tools. All the groups emphasized that adequate financial resources is the most important tool.

With regard to public lands one participant cited the example of leaseholders, stating they often act like private landowners. Many participants suggested municipalities or some form of regional body should have a greater role in managing public lands in areas such as the white zone as they typically are better informed about the activities undertaken in these areas. A few participants raised the issue of compensation (citing the case of land trusts as an example) expressing concern about who will pay. Some questioned the effectiveness of compensation tools given the cost factor. A few participants suggested there is a lack of regulatory tools. With regard to municipalities and the management of private lands, most participants agreed that the ability of municipalities to manage land use effectively is limited by inadequate funding as well as a lack of manpower; they explained that increased financial resources would allow for consultation with experts such as biologists and planners. A few participants indicated that municipalities need tools that facilitate cooperation; one group suggested these could take the form of using a third party to assist in the coordination of activities. According to a few participants, market-based instruments such as tradable development rights (modelled on the tradable carbon credits in the Kyoto Protocol) are effective mechanisms. However, participants noted that these are generally under-developed or non-existent in municipalities. Across all the groups, participants agreed that a broad range of tools is necessary; a few provided Technical Design Report as an example. Most groups indicated that tools must be user-friendly, scale appropriate, and have analytical capabilities. Many participants suggested that well-defined timelines and targets should assist with the development of tools and mechanisms. Across the board, participants stated that implementation and enforcement mechanisms, as well as research and development provisions are necessary. Further, almost all agreed that the structure of authority and decision-making rules must be clearly articulated if the LUF is to meet its objectives.





SESSION 4

– PRIORITY LAND USE

During this session participants were asked to discuss a definition of priority land use and how it might be applied. The definition presented for discussion stated that “priority land use could mean assigning priorities for uses of land to different geographic regions.”

What do we assume Priority Land Use to mean?

Not all groups responded specifically to this question although the dialogue about other questions in this session revealed a variety of perspectives. Some groups used this definition as a starting point for discussion. A few said that a definition was unnecessary since the meaning changes continuously while a few others stated that the definition needs to include additional concepts. The suggested additions included: reference to enforcement, the basis for how priorities will be ranked (e.g. economic value or environmental), optimal use, consideration of unintended consequences, and recognition that there is a spatial and temporal component to PLU (i.e. it means different things over time or in reference to public or private land). A few said they could not see how the PLU definition that was presented differed from what is already in place or how what is already done could be improved upon.

Some groups either totally disagreed with the definition or questioned its application at this level because they insisted that the LUF should only establish the mechanisms, processes or criteria for setting the land-use priorities. In their view, the actual land-use priorities should be established at the regional or municipal levels. They said that “the framework should address how the GoA is going to set priorities not what they are.” The word “priority” was considered misleading because “it implies one priority but in this case there is more than one.”

Are Priority Land-use Designations Effective?

Most groups noted that we already assign priority land uses in Alberta and many, but not all, agreed that these are not working very well to protect the land. At the same time, most groups were unable to come to a consensus about whether or not they supported the idea of PLU. However, the record of the discussions revealed that most participants within the groups supported the idea of priority land-use designations as a worthwhile tool, but most of these also expressed reservations and cautions. A few stressed that PLU is not “a panacea” but must be seen and used as only one tool of many to effectively protect the land. They strongly cautioned that it should not be used independently. A few noted that PLU is more difficult to apply and enforce on private land than on public land. A few said that it should only be used as a last resort.

Overall, support was not necessarily because PLU was perceived as a highly effective tool, but rather because it was seen as better than making no attempt to control or limit inappropriate land uses. Even those who adamantly insisted that PLU does not and will not work, did not disagree with the principle of PLU. They made comments like, “It’s a nice idea, but...”

There was a wide divergence in perspectives about the problems with PLU, how it could be made more effective, and what could be done to address its deficiencies. It was not possible to determine the degree of support for each perspective, only to note them in the record. As more than one participant noted, “The devil is in the details.”

Identification of Problems and Possible Solutions

Market forces were identified as a primary reason that PLU does not work or has limited effectiveness. As well, it was noted that PLU draws boundaries on the land. These have an immediate impact on supply and demand and land value. As one participant said, “Drawing lines causes conflict.”

The solution, according to one perspective, would be to have more consistent province-wide application and enforcement of land-use designations. Those with this view believed that the provincial government should take a firmer approach to establishing priority land-use areas and strictly enforcing them “no matter what”. It was pointed out that this would provide certainty to the market – everyone would know which land uses could occur on various lands in the province.

Others pointed out that this solution would create other problems such as immediate devaluation of some land. They said, “Designations freeze land use and can harm people.” Agricultural land was the most frequently cited as being vulnerable to devaluation. It was noted more than once that many rural landowners are currently struggling. Further, some landowners rely on being able to subdivide their land or use it for non-agricultural purposes in order to off-set current lower incomes from agriculture or to secure their retirement future. Usually, rural landowners can get more money for their land per acre if it is not sold for agricultural uses. Many producers also appreciate, or rely on, the income they receive from oil and gas activity on their land. Restricting the use of land to agriculture could impact any, or all, of these economic opportunities. One participant skeptically pointed out that we already designate prime agricultural land as a priority use and this designation has not protected it from widespread subdivision or development. It was said that, “Money still dictates land use.”

One solution suggested was to compensate any negatively impacted landowners. “It would cost a lot of money but Alberta has a booming economy so why not put our money to good use.” It was not clear whether those with this perspective viewed compensation as being applied across the province or only in areas where protection was a high priority. As well, it was not clear whether compensation would be a one time occurrence or continue for a period of time. However, those with this view suggested that over time the economic benefits of protecting the land would outweigh the initial short-term costs –they insisted that we need to take a long-term view.

The negative economic impact from land-use designations was seen to extend beyond individual landowners to include municipalities. It was noted that municipalities receive more tax revenue from land that is developed than from land preserved for agriculture or natural areas. It was proposed that municipalities must have revenue sources other than land taxes. Some suggestions included road or environmental levies. This was disputed by others who insisted that property values tend to be higher around environmental areas and that conservation easements cause land values to increase.

It was emphasized that allowing complementary land uses would off-set some of the negative economic impacts associated with restricting land use to one priority. It was argued that there is a difference between PLU and multiple land use. Those with this point of view regarded PLU as only allowing complementary land uses. A PLU would be assigned and other uses allowed if they did not negatively impact the priority use. Others insisted that it is very difficult to prevent PLU from becoming multiple use. Again, issues were raised about the assignment and enforcement of priorities. Discussions across the groups indicated participants were struggling with how the priorities in PLU would be assigned and whose values they would reflect. A number of group discussions indicated that private land ownership and having the “right to do what I want on my land” is a key value for many Albertans. PLU was seen as coming into direct conflict with this value.

A solution to this challenge was that the provincial government would establish the targets, parameters, and criteria for PLU, but that regional plans and agreements would guide municipal and local designations as well as the implementation of PLU. Those who supported this perspective were convinced that the conflict between individual rights and the good of society is more easily resolved closer to home. People are more willing to make sacrifices for the good of their community than for society in general, and for priorities that they were involved in establishing. It was also argued that local government is generally more aware of immediate demands, concerns, and uses.

This was countered by those who said that this regional approach would result in “jurisdictional shopping” where economic opportunities and development would be in regions or municipalities that were the least protective of the land. This would result in uneven prosperity and greater pressure on some jurisdictions – an even playing field was desired. Concern was also expressed that this would give more power to regions and municipalities and there was uncertainty about the benefits of this. A need for strong provincial authority was advanced.

In response to these concerns, it was suggested that the GoA would establish the process for determining priorities and provide the overall, province-wide structure for prioritization and enforcement. This would provide the needed balance in power and help address the impact of regional differences. Those with this point of view said, “The municipal model [best] protects individual interests through processes that are understood and accepted.” For example, if a decision between priorities needs to be made at the local level, the LUF could have a principle that “the most vulnerable” has the right of way – this principle would be applied across the province. In this way, local priorities would be established within the context of principles set out by the LUF, giving the necessary consistency and flexibility.

There was discussion about PLU in terms of public land. The most frequently cited problem was recreational use of public lands. It was noted that the number of off-highway vehicles and users continues to increase annually. The damage caused by this use has led to some restrictions to access, but this has concentrated users into smaller areas, increasing the level of damage in the approved use areas, or causing users to move even further into new areas.

A potential solution would be to insist that PLU is applied province-wide not just to address specific problems in certain areas – every area of land in the province needs a designation and approved priority use or uses. There was disagreement about who would make the designations. Again, there are those who thought province-wide direction should come “from the top down”, while others suggested that it should involve a “bottom up” approach. Others believed that a province-wide approach would be possible only on public lands, not on private lands.

In the face of this complexity and the values conflict, a few participants insisted that PLU simply cannot work. These participants said the problems are just too complicated and impossible to rectify. A few firmly stated, “There is a cost to being green and Albertans are not willing to pay that cost.”

This was countered by those who insisted that persistence is required because the cost of not resolving the problems is too great. It was said that, “You cannot get to total preservation from where we are right now in policy and government regulations, therefore this process of discussion is what we can do right now, and it can be very beneficial in determining or brainstorming how to get there.” There were arguments that too many areas of the province are under immediate threat – action is required. Others simply said that “doing something” would be “better than nothing”. In general, the most frequent comments suggested that PLU be used as just one of a range of tools. Almost no one expressed a preference for PLU to be “the solution”.

Mechanisms and Tools

There was a variety of suggestions about ways to make PLU a more effective tool as well as ideas about additional tools to use in conjunction with PLU. It is important to note that this is only a listing of the suggestions provided and does not reflect group consensus or ranking of preference.

We need decision-making tools

- Prioritization cannot occur without identification of what is on the land and how it is being used and the development of a process for evaluation – a decision matrix was suggested.
- PLU cannot work without good information – we need decision tools, an inventory of the land and water, as well as an inventory of current initiatives that may have an impact on PLU such as the Water for Life strategy, a GIS database that would tell us what we already have, what we already do on the land and under the surface, what commitments have been made to users, soils, rainfall etc.
- This information must be reliable and accessible to all who need it. The federal government has begun a bio/geo mapping project and perhaps that could be used.
- We need more methods of evaluation and testing - intensity/fragmentation tests, ecological integrity maintenance tests, cumulative effects assessment, land capabilities assessment, regenerative tests.

Industry and other land users need to be more accountable

- Provide incentives for companies to minimize their footprint.
- Place more emphasis on mitigation and restoration, including access roads and trails.
- Put in place utility corridors and encourage the use of existing road right-of-ways for pipelines and power lines.
- Industry should not be able to render the land unusable for other uses (it was not clear if this meant present uses or future possible uses, or both.)
- Environmental standards must apply to everyone equally.
- “Energy is the leading land use conflict” – landowners should be allowed to refuse oil and gas activity on their land.
- Industry users need to be encouraged to cooperate with each other to share infrastructure, reduce impact and land fragmentation.

- A policy for reclamation of abandoned wells on agricultural land is needed.
- The oil and gas industry should offset collateral damage from their activities – are they really compensating the landowners/municipalities or the government?

We need to learn from others

- Hinton and Sturgeon County were suggested as good examples of using foresight in planning.
- Referendums are used in establishing zoning in the United States and were suggested as a possibility here. In this way, the public can voice their preferred priority use. Other participants referred to a lengthy California ballot where this practice created problems.
- Northeast British Columbia brought all shareholders to the table and came up with a plan that worked for everyone.
- 12 Story Dairy Farms, a vertical growth in Japan should be considered.
- Use best practices and uses for the land – consider eliminating the grandfathering of rights with proper compensation.

We need to start from where we are and foster public support

- If we intend to use PLU, we need to begin with areas that are widely accepted as needing attention/ protection and move on from there.
- The public must be included in evaluation and designation – if the public is not actively involved, PLU will not work. We need a cooperative initiative. Anything short of this will preclude political will – priorities need to be established from the cooperative plan. The approach isn't to just narrow down a priority area first. There could be multiple priorities in an area that are cooperative (sharing of roads and infrastructure) – losses, gains and expectations must be identified up front.
- The process must be clear, transparent and inclusive.

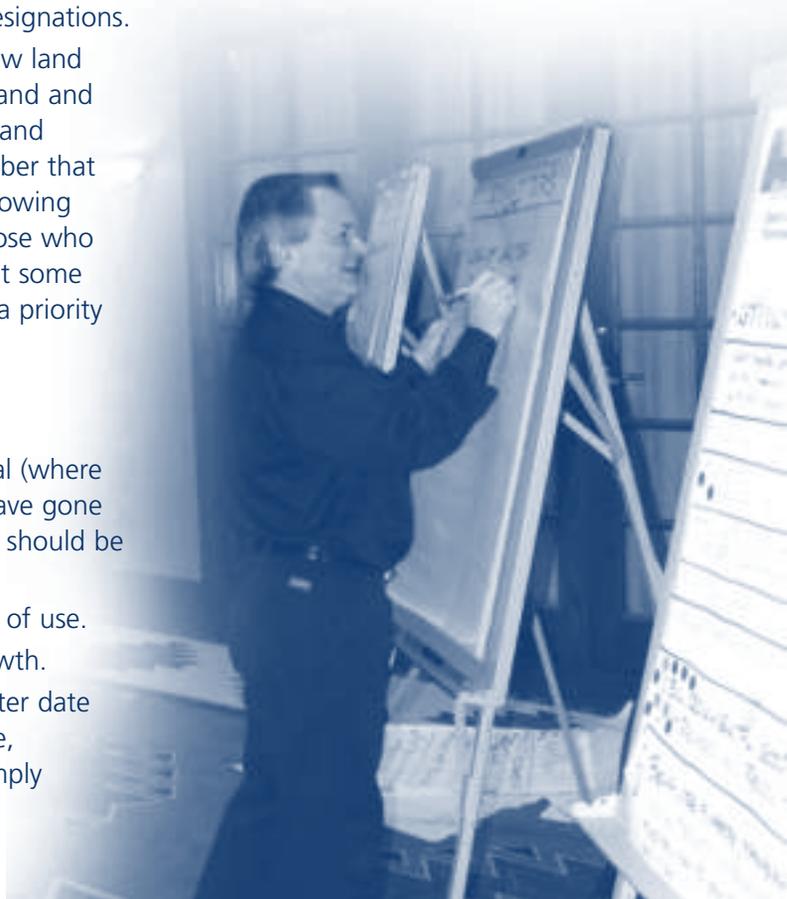
We need to look for new strategies and technologies

- We need a system to build proper trails that mitigate trail braiding and other effects (erosion). Monster quads rip up previous maintenance on trails, which results in a continuous struggle. Can we start integrating use and reclamation for strategic trail placement of off-highway vehicle usage?
- Explore innovative forms of compensation – Transfer of Development Rights could be used alongside PLU – tax incentives, intergenerational transfers.
- Try using incentives and thresholds alongside the setting of priorities – less focus on prohibition and more emphasis on innovation. We don't necessarily have to prohibit – we can set the bar really high e.g. low impact seismic for Caribou routes land. We need to ask how we are going to work this out and the criteria. It is not about prohibiting but about setting limits based on values.
- Define carrying capacity for certain areas and set limits and targets based on that – understand and explore compromises and optimizations. This can best be done with regional partnerships – Integrated Land Management Plans.
- Where there is huge surface intrusion, staging usage needs to occur so reclamation can be carried out.
- Maybe there should be a permitting system in place so that it decreases the amount of users in an area.
- Use timing limitations, seasonal, migratory based, etc. Consider time limits on some types of uses and priority could also change seasonally.

- Use technology with the least possible impact on the natural world (i.e. flora and fauna).
- Must be accompanied by access management plans.
- Should use caveats on the land without ignoring historical input into the land by existing landowners.
- Use land trusts.
- Use growth management tools to pace development and reduce impacts.
- Look for ways to balance the needs of the environment and social and resource capacity – priority should not exclusively follow economics but take account of costs currently not accounted for in the market.
- Need to create scarcity so people have to come together and get creative. Manage demand for resources.
- Offset or balance use in one area with different uses elsewhere.
- Account for scale – Use a Strategic Assessment Approach (i.e. scale, impact).
- Could create a quasi-independent body comprised of individuals with different ranges of perspectives from different disciplines/authorities/ qualified sources – a Land-use Board but not like the EUB. It would have transparency, be impartial, need to have enough power to be effective, would reconcile conflicts, research to solve mitigation problems and find solutions.

We need to have mechanisms that allow for change

- Have a regular review of priority designations.
- Actively encourage and look for new land uses that have less impact on the land and technologies that allow more uses and new combinations of uses. Remember that “it’s about land use” not just disallowing everything – although there are those who want to consider the possibility that some areas may need to have no use as a priority designation.
- A method to appeal designations.
- On going monitoring is needed.
- Designations should be successional (where some priorities such as industrial have gone through their life-cycle, the priority should be changed).
- Length of priority depends on type of use.
- PLU would have to respond to growth.
- If permits are given out and at a later date it is realized that this was a mistake, retraction should be allowed by simply returning the money.



Areas Identified as Needing Consideration for Priority Land-use Designation

In most groups there was strong agreement that certain areas of the province are in need of consideration for PLU designation. The following is a list of areas that were suggested.

- High density urban centres
- Agricultural land (certain classes) – definition of terms and attention to settlement patterns must be taken into account here
- Upstream/watersheds and watercourses
- Forestry
- Ecologically sensitive areas, protected/endangered species areas – perhaps most important for activities that cannot change locations (e.g. certain wildlife populations)
- Core areas of habitat to be set aside
- Conservation lands, facility lands, extensively managed lands, intensively managed lands – see the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy
- Special Places 2000
- Parks/wetlands/water bodies
- Utility corridors
- Eastern slopes
- Urbanizing corridor – Okotoks to Edmonton and future growth areas
- Dry land farming areas (Lethbridge area), irrigated landscapes
- Boreal forest by Elk Island
- Wainwright Reflex Lakes
- Historically or culturally significant areas
- Grasslands (i.e. Cypress Hills)
- Oil and gas activity – has attained too much priority land-use status and is able to go anywhere
- Energy is needed – natural resources (single purpose use) oil sands/ surface mining designations are needed



Some cautions were offered along with these suggestions. A few participants indicated that definitions of terms, priorities and designations are important. Others reinforced that they wanted greater emphasis placed on compatible uses as opposed to restricting to one use or prohibiting certain uses in designated areas. They preferred to allow all uses that are compatible with the priority use rather than making a rigid list of only those uses that are allowed and those that are prohibited. The need for a healthy mix of uses was said to be important, with the emphasis on healthy. A few participants indicated that there may be cases where there is more than one priority use. A few others said that in highly endangered areas it may be necessary to have only one priority use. A few participants said some uses should be prohibited completely in extreme cases like nuclear, toxic waste dumps and any other use where the land could not be reclaimed.



SESSION 5

– GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

During this session participants were asked to discuss the responsibilities for land-use planning, including the roles of the GoA, provincial boards, municipalities, landowners/landusers and industry. As well, they were asked to consider changes or improvements to existing governance structures.

What should the Government of Alberta be responsible for?

What changes or improvements to existing governance structures and processes should be made?

Almost all groups differentiated between the role of the GoA and provincial boards. This section addresses comments about the provincial government while the following section includes thoughts about boards.

All groups said that the primary role of the GoA is to show much stronger leadership in land-use planning and provide the whole province with a clear overarching framework for making land-use decisions as well as the means to implement them. Many said that this framework needs to have legislative authority. One group suggested that it could take the form of a Provincial Development Plan while another said a Provincial Land-use Authority could be established to be responsible for the LUF. There were concerns that, at present, it is not clear where the responsibility for land-use planning lies.” The framework needs to:

- Provide clear direction and apply across all government departments, boards, regions, and municipalities.
- Clearly establish roles and responsibilities and provide a means for appeal and review.
- Establish broad goals, objectives and standards.
- Ensure coordination and establish mechanisms for collaboration and conflict resolution.
- Provide guidance and enable decision-making at the regional and municipal level.

Several groups discussed the GoA’s role in implementation, enforcement and monitoring. Most of these groups said that the GoA has the overall or primary responsibility for ensuring that the LUF is implemented and that there is accountability at all levels. There was a variety of ideas about how this should be achieved. A few groups suggested the GoA set up monitoring agencies and establish clear penalties for those not abiding with the rules. This would require clear measurables. A few other groups said that implementation, monitoring and enforcement are a shared responsibility between the GoA and municipalities. They endorsed a scaled level of authority and corresponding responsibility for implementation and enforcement. A few other groups stressed the need for incentives and for establishing public ownership of the LUF to encourage compliance. A few participants noted that the goal of enforcement must be to protect the land and take account of cumulative effects.

Several groups raised the problem of inter-municipal conflicts and all of these insisted that the GoA is responsible for establishing a means of resolving conflicts. A few said that the lack of provincial leadership and “making land-use decisions in isolation” is the primary cause of these conflicts. They said there needs to be provincial commitment to developing resolution and cooperation. A few said that the province could do more to reward those municipalities that cooperate. “There should be appropriate facilitation so that everyone feels safe as though they are coming into a win/win situation.”

Some groups criticized the provincial government for its lack of clear and timely decision-making. They described provincial land-use decision-making as inconsistent, short sighted and, at times, absent. They said sometimes the GoA has “endless loops” of studies that defer decision, or they may impose impossibly short timelines that don’t allow for considered thought. Other times the provincial government abdicates its decision-making responsibility, creating a gap that is filled by bureaucrats, boards or industry. A few participants said that current planning legislation primarily sets out what “you can and cannot do” but there is no vision or overall plan. A few groups noted that there are some “tough decisions” to make regarding land-use planning and it is the provincial government’s responsibility to make them within a context of fairness, collaboration and public consultation.

Some groups said that the province needs to establish a central knowledge base to enable good land-use planning, monitoring and to support public awareness initiatives. They added, “Good planning starts with good information.” A few see this information system as GIS based; some noted that the federal government has begun work on a bio/geo GIS database – perhaps the GoA could collaborate with them. The database would provide a land inventory, assess gaps, clarify roles and responsibilities, and be accessible to decision-makers and the public.

Some groups also said that the GoA needs to be responsible for providing the necessary resources to implement and enforce the LUF. Many of these complained that the GoA has “downloaded” the costs of provincial decisions without providing municipalities with the means to implement them. They said the GoA needs to provide clear policies and funding strategies as well as access to planning expertise and capacity building.



A few groups said that the GoA should have primary responsibility for stewardship and management of public lands, water and provincial resources. One group said this needs to take place in consultation with the public. One participant suggested that the Environmental Conservation Authority should be reinstated. Another participant expressed concern that recreational use not be overlooked in the LUF. One group noted that the GoA needs to provide more guidance about protecting “wild lands” because although municipalities can dispose of these lands, they can do little to keep them intact. As well, the GoA should provide more rewards and incentives to landowners for stewardship and support programs that promote land stewardship such as the Cow and Fish program. The European model of land banking was also suggested. In these models, landowners are compensated for losses incurred by protecting the land or wildlife. If industry uses land an equal amount elsewhere must be ‘banked’ in order to balance the loss.

What should provincial boards be responsible for?

Almost all groups discussed the role of the GoA separately from the role of boards.

Most groups expressed concerns that current provincial boards, particularly the EUB and the NRCB, exist outside any planning authority and yet have a great deal of impact on land-use planning. In fact, many groups said that in many cases these boards are “defacto planners” because the decisions they make dictate land use and at times conflict with the decisions and authority of municipal land-use bylaws. Most agreed that land-use planning is not a responsibility of these boards. A few participants said that the problem arose as a result of the “planning vacuum” in the province. There was a variety of opinions about ways to address this situation.

Many groups said that there needs to be more opportunity for public input into board decision-making and broader representation of interests in board membership. The definitions of “affected party” are too narrow and a few insisted that municipalities must have the right to be interveners at EUB hearings. A few others pointed out that having intervener status would not be particularly beneficial because hearings are not really about stopping a project, only about making small changes to it.

Half of the groups said that there needs to be a review of current boards to see if their roles and responsibilities should be changed or amended.

Some groups said that provincial boards should be under the jurisdiction of an outside planning board – most suggested a provincial or regional board. One group described this as a Provincial Land-use Authority Board. This board would review all existing legislation, remove ineffective pieces and add extra content. The board would be multi-stakeholder and its authority would supersede all other boards operating under its authority. A few participants discussed the possibility of placing provincial board decisions under a local planning authority but this did not receive much support. It was pointed out that local planning authorities do not have a broad enough view to oversee large oil and gas projects and that likely the not in my backyard (NIMBY) mindset would outweigh the broader provincial good. The possibility of having a Land-use Ombudsman was suggested by a few participants.

A few groups suggested that the authority and responsibility of existing boards be expanded to include land use. This way, boards would be forced to deal with land-use issues directly, as opposed to the current situation where land-use issues are a secondary outcome of board decisions with no one having authority to resolve them.

Alternatively, a few groups said that boards should be required to consider the impact their decisions have on other jurisdictions. A few participants insisted that this should include consideration and compensation of the financial costs that others incur as a result of their decisions. For example, projects that are approved by the EUB or NRCB can result in increased service and infrastructure costs to municipalities. A few participants said that the NRCB should be required to weigh all the costs and benefits of a project and be prepared to stop a project if the costs were greater than the benefits.

There was also discussion about improving the relationship between provincial boards and the public. Some groups said that many landowners and members of the public do not have sufficient knowledge and information about their rights in relation to boards, and have a limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of provincial boards. It was suggested that boards should work more closely with municipalities and provide them with more information for affected landowners. It was pointed out that most landowners with concerns immediately call their local municipal office or elected representative, who are “absolutely neutered” when it comes to dealing with provincial board decisions, particularly the EUB.

A few groups commented that boards lack awareness about each other. They added that this communication gap is mirrored within government where one department does not know what the other is doing and there is no land-use coordination.

Regional Planning

Although a few groups did not discuss this topic, most groups agreed that some type of regional land-use planning is needed in Alberta. It was thought that regional planning would:

- Address overlapping land-use issues.
- Address inter-municipal concerns and conflicts.
- Manage cumulative impacts.
- Provide the necessary authority to make industries work together to reduce impacts.
- Integrate industry into the planning process.
- Provide more certainty to industry and landowners about access issues.
- Coordinate transportation utility corridors, pipeline corridors and roads.
- Enable First Nations and Métis settlements to be included in the provincial land-use planning process and interact with other municipalities on land-use matters.
- Better manage growth.
- Better manage all land, including crown land.
- Enable regional diversity.
- Establish best practices.

There were a variety of ideas about ways to define or establish regions. A few groups said that consideration should be given to environmental or natural areas such as watersheds or air sheds. A few would like to consider municipal jurisdictions, resource areas, geographic areas and social settlement patterns along with natural areas. A few preferred fluid regional boundaries so that they could change depending on the project, issue, services, or impact. For example, the recent pine beetle crisis might require different regional participation than water management issues. Others suggested that boundaries be established by an arbitration process, or for regions to be established solely by voluntary membership or self-selection.

A few groups suggested that we should learn from other existing models. Examples included:

- The Health Region model.
- Some form of water council such as the multi-stakeholder Watershed Planning and Advisory Council developed under the auspices of the Water for Life strategy or Clean Air Strategic Alliance model.
- The Southern Foothills study where landowners, municipalities, and residents collectively discussed planning.
- The Province of Manitoba has brought urban and rural associations together to solve many issues.
- In British Columbia municipality bylaws protect riparian areas on private land (set limits to private property rights).
- Strathcona County and Wood Buffalo have a regional government model.

- Many jurisdictions in Alberta have reached agreements and resolved conflicts successfully, apply what they learned and build in rewards for those who cooperate.
- Learn from models that have not worked in other areas of Canada.

There was no agreement about the structure of regional land-use authorities, how membership or representation would be achieved, or the level of authority they should have. In spite of this lack of agreement, most groups expressed concerns about a regional system interfering with, or usurping, local authority. No matter what regional planning system is put in place, most groups strongly desired that local authority over local planning be maintained. Generally, suggestions about structure addressed the need to protect local autonomy.

A few groups said that regional boards must have significant authority if they are to be effective. A number of ways to protect local autonomy were envisioned. A few suggested restricting the regional body's authority, i.e. only to inter-jurisdictional matters. Others indicated that the regional body would need to consult local municipalities before making decisions and have some accountability to local landowners. Regional bodies would be accountable to both the GoA and the local municipalities in the region. A few would like to see an alternative dispute resolution mechanism in place for resolving disagreements within the region.

A few groups indicated that final land-use authority should be with the GoA and the LUF – these would direct the authority and responsibility for all local municipalities. The GoA would provide policy and direction but implementation would occur at the local level. Regional bodies should remain collaborative and cooperative and should not create another level of government. A number of these groups thought that a mandatory approach would not foster cooperation and would only generate conflict. At times they struggled with how decisions made at the regional level would be effective. It was suggested that perhaps any decision would need to be completely supported in order to be enforceable, or that incentives be provided for cooperation. Alternatively, a few participants said that the authority of the board should cease at implementation – this would be the responsibility of the provincial government. They saw this as shared governance and a means to reduce conflict between jurisdictions within a region.

A few groups envisioned one large provincial land-use planning board with a number of smaller regional boards operating under that. They saw the larger board as providing integration of all regional land-use concerns, standardization and consistency as well as protecting against fragmentation. This body could also serve as an appeal board. The GoA must establish regional authorities but the process should be collaborative and link local land-use planning to the provincial framework.

Some groups indicated a reluctance to return to the old regional planning commission model. They found this model too restrictive at the municipal level and said that it excluded adequate representation. They also said that it allowed larger urban centres to dominate regional planning. A few participants would like to see the planning commission system brought back but with a few changes to allow for better representation.

A few groups said that participation at the regional level should be mandatory; others said that it should be voluntary. A few would like regional representatives to be elected, while others prefer local appointments. Some groups said that it is important for any regional body to include all shareholders from all sectors: landowners, industry, and municipalities. A few participants said that membership at the regional level should be based on whether or not a particular project affects a particular landowner or municipality. The definition of "affected" would need to be clarified. A few participants would also like a mechanism to hold regional representatives accountable or a way to recall them if they are not

doing an adequate job. A few groups noted that any type of regional system would need access to information and financial resources in order to operate successfully.

A few groups indicated that it would be important for any regional land-use planning to be integrated with existing forestry and water management mechanisms (e.g. Water for Life). They wrestled with how this could be achieved; although they did not arrive at a consensus, a few participants thought that the idea of a regional roundtable process might work. A few groups agreed that agencies (like the EUB, NRCB, Sustainable Resource Development, DFMP, GDP, AOP, municipal private land, etc.) should be required to make their decisions consistent with the higher regional level plan, and not trump the parameters set by the LUF. There was also some frustration expressed about the lack of time to adequately address regional planning.

What should Municipalities be Responsible for?

Most groups discussed the role of municipalities and most agreed that municipalities should have primary responsibility for land-use planning decisions at the local level. They insisted that knowledge of local needs and conditions lies with local government. At the same time, most agreed that these local decisions must take place within the broader context of the provincial LUF. It was noted that many inter-municipal conflicts have occurred because of municipalities making land-use planning decisions in isolation and in their own interests without a broader context.

It was also noted that without the authority of the GoA, “appropriate” planning is not easy for local municipalities to do. If local developers and local landowners demand a particular land-use designation or project it is difficult for the municipal government to refuse them even if the designation or project are inappropriate because they will likely be removed from office if they do. Placing ultimate authority with the LUF resolves this difficulty and also ensures more consistency across the province. “Right now it’s all about approval, and to become more efficient at getting approvals out...this is not planning.” A few groups noted that municipalities are responsible for incorporating the LUF into their local planning documents, ensuring that the LUF is applied, providing local leadership within provincial guidelines, listening to their constituents, and providing ongoing feedback to the provincial government.



That being said, most groups expressed concerns about the ability of municipalities to carry out their responsibilities. One group said that current “definitions” or boundaries of municipalities are becoming questionable – the definition of what is rural and what is urban is increasingly unclear. This is contributing to conflict and misunderstanding between municipalities, as well as uncertainty for municipal decision-makers. Most groups said they did not have the proper tools and resources. Examples of tools or resources that are required include:

- A mechanism for inter-municipal cooperation.
- A mechanism for inter-municipal and inter-government communication, including a means for municipalities to provide feedback to the GoA.
- Planning expertise.
- A provincial land-use framework to guide decision-making.
- An even playing field – rural areas are at a disadvantage compared to urban areas; municipalities in the Green zone have more authority than those in the White zone.

- Funding, or funding sources.
- An updated Municipal Government Act – to reflect current realities and include more specific legislation for environmental protection.
- Authority to deal with interference from provincial boards.

Some groups said that municipalities are responsible to work together. They stated that there are areas of overlap that require inter-municipal cooperation and areas that are sometimes well beyond the expertise of local government. These areas include: ecosystem interaction, watersheds, intensive industry siting, oil and gas activity, forest management, intensive feedlot operations, and urban sprawl.

What Should Landowners be Responsible for?

Many groups said that the primary responsibility of landowners is land stewardship. A few insisted that landowners are also the primary stewards of the land, with the GoA playing a strong supporting role. As land stewards their responsibilities include:

- Knowing and obeying the rules.
- Some groups said landowners have an obligation to be involved with industry, municipalities and other landowners to actively look for innovative programs, practices and technologies that promote stewardship and good planning and to participate in them. It was noted that it is impossible to have no impact on the land, no matter what its use: ownership is intrinsic to responsibility.
- A few other groups argued that the only obligation of landowners is not to harm or negatively impact the future use of their land and that of their neighbours; otherwise they should be left alone – including having the right to refuse industry access to their land.
- Considering the environment when planning land use.
- Having responsibility for the day-to-day operation and management of their land.



In light of these responsibilities some groups said that landowners did not have the necessary information or power to carry them all out. They said landowners need:

- Better notice and more information about how they can participate in land-use planning and stewardship initiatives and programs.
- Better support from the provincial government for stewardship programs and incentives for being good stewards.
- More information from industry about subsurface activity, sale, negotiation and facilities like pipelines – one landowner said pipelines, wells and other such facilities must be registered with Alberta First Call so landowners have one place to call when concerns arise.
- Better definitions regarding what good stewardship and best practices mean.
- A meaningful voice in the resource development on their land or on neighbouring land.
- A meaningful forum to resolve landowner conflicts and make better decisions.
- Clarity about how to participate in the land-use planning process or if there is a way to participate.

What Should Industry (Land Users) be Responsible for?

A few groups said that industry qualified as land users. One assumption was that land users are more focused on short-term use of the land than landowners.

Many groups said that industry needs to be brought into the planning process at the regional and/or local level through a variety of ways:

- Need to be partners with all levels of government to provide full information about projects so municipalities can plan accordingly.
- Integrate their planning with other land users and landowners to minimize their footprint.
- Contribute to a land database for land-use planning.
- Partner with government and local municipalities to be part of the solution and determine best practices.
- Need to be responsible for obeying the rules, the same as everyone else.
- Need to share responsibility for land-use impacts with landowners and share stewardship of the land.
- Need to participate in developing the LUF.
- Use triple bottom line principle in their activities.
- Need to be better informed about needs and concerns of landowners and municipalities and work with them to resolve those concerns.
- Need to share in costs of infrastructure, services, housing that go along with their activity – a few suggested that municipalities should receive a share of industry royalties.
- Should be required to notify landowners when sub-surface rights are sold or being negotiated for sale.

What Should Land Users be Responsible for?

Outside of industry, some groups spoke of land users principally in terms of public land. They divided these land users into two categories. Primary users of public land were identified as recreational users. Secondly, the general public was seen to have some degree of responsibility for public lands since these lands are by definition owned by the public.

Land users are responsible to:

- Know and obey the rules.
- Be good stewards when they use the land by being aware of the impact they have on the land and acting responsibly.
- Teach others about stewardship.
- Recognize that they cannot have access to all public land.
- Actively seek out innovative technologies and ways to reduce negative impacts on the land they use.
- Hold the provincial government accountable for protecting public lands and decisions they make about public lands.



SESSION 6

– STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE PRIORITY OUTCOMES

For this session, facilitators asked groups to bring forward, flesh out and prioritize the high-level outcomes they identified as desirable for the LUF in Session 2. Next, facilitators asked the groups to develop possible strategies for achieving these outcomes.

Session Overview

Each group used slightly different language to describe their priority outcomes and strategies, but for the sake of clarity, similar ideas are merged and clustered under common themes. Public education, for example, was identified as both an outcome and as a strategy to achieve other outcomes; this summary categorizes it as a strategy. The outcome “The LUF protects key environmental assets” is an umbrella statement that includes “The quality of air, water and land is assured”. “Albertans live within the province’s natural carrying capacity” incorporates the assessment of cumulative effects on lands. And references to a healthy, sustainable economy and social fabric for the province are included under “The LUF ensures a healthy quality of life for Albertans”.

Some strategies (e.g. public education) are relevant to and appear under two or more outcomes.

While not every group identified priorities or specific strategies, it was nevertheless evident that environmental protection and sustainability ranked high, if not the highest, on everyone’s list of outcomes. This theme seemed to underlie the three most commonly-cited outcomes:

- 1) The LUF protects key environmental assets.
- 2) The LUF will ensure that Albertans live within the province’s natural carrying capacity.
- 3) The LUF promotes shared stewardship of the land.

Strategizing also took place for five other outcomes identified as high priorities by one or more groups:

- 4) The LUF helps promote integrated land-use planning between urban and rural jurisdictions.
- 5) The LUF ensures a healthy quality of life for Albertans.
- 6) The LUF clearly defines roles and responsibilities for all groups.
- 7) The LUF supports protection of agricultural lands.
- 8) The LUF ensures effective and timely reclamation of lands.

Insufficient time was available for groups to explore and strategize other outcomes during the session.

Outcome #1: The LUF protects key environmental assets.

In one way or another, every group asserted that protection of Alberta's natural environmental assets should be a core outcome of the LUF. A few groups described this as "The quality of air, water and land is assured" but others used phrases and terms such as:

- Alberta's biodiversity is preserved
- Healthy landscapes
- Natural capital

Strategy 1.1: Conduct a thorough inventory of all lands in the province.

Most groups felt a well-planned, comprehensive and accurate land inventory was an essential foundation for the LUF. Advanced planning should include development of a common template (e.g. GIS-based) for capturing, accessing and sharing the information. A few urged the GoA to initiate and complete the inventory within the next two to three years and one suggested that the GoA fund municipalities and land users to create an integrated inventory. Other suggestions for baseline information to be collected included: biodiversity studies by region; identification of ecosystems; surface and groundwater inventory; lands defined by soil types, arability, fragmentation, and road densities; and the equivalent of the USA's Natural Resources Conservation Services, which reports every five years.

Strategy 1.2: Establish measurable objectives for environmental protection.

Several groups called for the GoA to establish overall, measurable objectives (a few used the term "high-level objectives") for protection of agricultural lands, wetlands, native prairies, nest cover and protected areas. Other objectives, though difficult to quantify, should relate to quality of air, water and land, as well as wildlife. For the latter, the AUM (animal-unit-month) model – defining the total hectares per year of allowable land development - was suggested.

Strategy 1.3: Monitor achievement of objectives on a regional level.

More than one group said the GoA should work with regions to monitor and annually report on environmental indicators and progress on objectives. Regular monitoring and reporting would help jurisdictions evaluate and adjust policies in order to stay on track. Similarly, objectives may need to be adjusted in response to emerging information, such as climate change impacts.

Strategy 1.4: Support integrated land management projects.

One group stated that the recommendations of the "integrated land management project" should be incorporated into the new LUF and expanded to include private land. Integrated land management was seen as a key means for minimizing the footprint on and impacts to land.

Strategy 1.5: Educate the public about the role and importance of land to their quality of life.

Public education was seen as fundamental to the success of the LUF; if the LUF is to be supportable, people must understand its value and purpose. Suggested education mechanisms and content included:

- Using multi-stakeholder input to develop curricula for schools and for government, landowners, industry and the general public.
- Educating Albertans about the importance and value of biodiversity.

- Supporting the development and work of land trusts (these were noted for their ability to attract and write conservation easements).
- Working with non-government organizations (such as Ducks Unlimited) to leverage the value of their efforts.
- Public access to information about the LUF – perhaps an information phone line where people can talk to an informed individual.

Strategy 1.6: Develop and implement a range of effective tools for protecting environmental assets.

A range of tools was suggested:

- Policies to reduce the economy's dependence on non-renewable resources.
- Commitment of land to renewable resource management, especially forests.
- Incentives to encourage research and development of “renewables” (fund through revenues from non-renewable resource extraction).
- Clarification of rules regarding access to parks, protected areas and public lands.
- Strengthening and broadening the applicability of the Heritage Rangeland Act.
- Holding landowners, government and industry to the same standard.
- Establishing a policy to reclaim cut lines on Crown Land so they do not open up forests to unintended uses.

Outcome #2: The LUF will ensure that Albertans live within the province's natural carrying capacity.

This outcome, from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Round Table on the Environment and Economy, resonated with most groups. But a few thought that the province has already reached the tipping point where growth is outpacing natural systems' ability to recover. More than a few people used the term “respect for the land” to convey the sense that Albertans must attend to the land's needs now.

Strategy 2.1: Define and determine the parameters of “natural carrying capacity”.

Participants noted that science, local knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge need to be combined with multi-stakeholder input to determine what constitutes the biological or natural “carrying capacity” or sustainable threshold of various Alberta landscapes. More than one group said the science, tools and data that support decision-making need improvement. One suggested that the GoA review models currently in place that are successfully balancing “market forces and regulatory systems”.

Strategy 2.2: Incorporate and monitor the cumulative effects of land uses on natural carrying capacity.

Once “carrying capacity” is understood, limits and achievable¹ targets must be established which account for the cumulative effects of all uses of the land – both renewable and non-renewable resource uses. Policies should be established that require regulatory agencies to consider cumulative effects when approving new developments. One group suggested using specific areas to test the effectiveness of policies for maintaining biodiversity, for revenue sharing, and more – the results of this research would

¹Not everyone agreed with the use of the term “achievable targets”

guide province-wide implementation. Ongoing monitoring will be required with a stable source of funding (this could be incentives, not necessarily money) and results communicated to decision-makers and the public to assure sustainability. “Life cycle” or “full loop” accounting, cost-benefit analysis, and land-use projection models were suggested as possible tools.

Strategy 2.3: Develop public awareness and education programs.

More than one group reflected that Albertans need to understand how and why their actions affect the carrying capacity of the land and why it is important to live within that capacity. Crucial information includes the impacts of growth. Education was also seen as immersing people of all ages in an environmental ethic, including innovations for protecting the environment. For another group, education was seen as fundamental for assuring stakeholder buy-in (all levels of government, landowners, land users) to the LUF, which would facilitate commitment to protection of and respect for Alberta’s natural assets.

Outcome #3: The LUF promotes shared stewardship of the land.

Shared stewardship and responsibility for Alberta’s land was a recurring theme throughout the Red Deer Forum, and aligned with the above outcome, also taken from the 1991 Report of the Alberta Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. Yet many participants acknowledge shared stewardship would require a major shift in Albertans’ core values or paradigm. Suggested strategies for doing this included:

Strategy 3.1: Establish a stewardship plan within the LUF.

A stewardship plan should take national and international commitments into account, update Alberta Reports and Recommendation, and legislate the Alberta Conservation Strategy and the Alberta Sustainable Development Strategy. It should also link with other provincial stewardship groups and adopt best practices for all land usage.

Strategy 3.2: Clearly define roles and responsibilities for stewardship.

The LUF should explicate who is responsible for what aspect of land stewardship – all levels of government, industry, First Nations, Métis communities, farmers and ranchers, and recreational users.

Strategy 3.3: Develop incentives for stewardship.

Those who hold responsibility for sustainability must also be resourced and supported in fulfilling their responsibilities. For example, government needs to remove barriers and/or provide incentives for achievement of higher levels of environmental performance – incentives such as:

- A program for rewarding best management practices in agriculture, forestry and energy.
- Incentives to encourage landowners to reclaim lands and for industry to reclaim more quickly.
- Transfer of Development Credits, Purchase of Development Credits.
- Zoning tools.
- Tax incentives.
- Green space development, smart growth, water conservation, eco-certification.

Outcome #4: The LUF helps promote integrated land-use planning between urban and rural jurisdictions.

At least half of the groups saw the LUF as playing a role in defining and clarifying the roles, boundaries and relationships between urban and rural areas – relationships seen as presently characterized by considerable conflict.

Strategy 4.1: Define urban and rural boundaries.

A few groups said it was imperative to contain sprawl and reduce land impacts and conflicts by having clear demarcations between urban and rural land uses. One group cautioned that boundaries may need to shift over time.

Strategy 4.2: Develop regional growth management plans.

Similarly, groups called for proactive planning to manage urban growth, citing the inter-municipal development plans as an example. Participants cited several factors that should be incorporated in regional growth management plans: incentives for densification; strategies for managing the urban/rural fringe, including protection of best agricultural land; and policies for non-automobile transportation in smaller urban centres.

Strategy 4.3: Develop regional cost/revenue-sharing plans.

Municipal government representatives (and others) were especially concerned that they be provided with adequate resources to implement the LUF. Participants described the needed resources as: sharing of revenues and service costs between municipalities in a region (on a formula basis); financial help to address servicing costs created by the “Alberta Advantage”; and indirect, non-monetary assistance such as incentives, policies and programs that encourage efficient, cost-effective growth. Two models were proposed: a) education taxes are directed toward regional authorities and the GoA funds education (with no reduction in existing grants); and b) education and property taxes on new growth are directed to regional authorities.

Strategy 4.4: Provide a clearly defined process for conflict resolution.

Anticipating potential conflicts between desired land uses, a few groups said the LUF must explicitly define a conflict resolution process, likely at the provincial or regional level (through a regional-planning agency). This would supplant adversarial court action or EUB-style review (the latter seen as lacking in balance) and recognize the need for all parties to make trade-offs. Trade-offs might include providing land in one area to offset land use in another. The need was noted for funding to support the process.



Outcome #5: The LUF ensures a healthy quality of life for Albertans.

Participants indicated that the LUF needs to take an integrated, holistic approach to what constitutes a healthy quality of life for Albertans, i.e. not only sustainable land uses but also a healthy citizenry and sustainable economy. Healthy communities were defined as those providing good quality infrastructure (e.g. roads, housing, clean water supply) and services (e.g., social, health and education).

Strategy 5.1: Complete an assessment of existing socioeconomic conditions for each region in Alberta.

This assessment would help identify baseline conditions and areas needing improvement in what one group characterized as the “quadruple bottom line” – cultural, environmental, economic and social. Other groups used terms such as the “triple bottom line” referenced in the Forum manual, “full-cost accounting”, and “Genuine Progress Indicators”.

Strategy 5.2: Develop policies to preserve and/or improve Albertans’ quality of life.

At least one group said research is needed to develop effective policies for assuring human, social and economic health. Another said that good guidelines for local land-use and social planning will protect the “larger social interests”. The need for funding emerged again, in this case so that regions can provide needed social infrastructure and services.

Strategy 5.3: Develop indicators and monitor social, economic and cultural outcomes.

Some participants said it is important that the LUF provide quality of life and economic indicators, as well as a framework for monitoring and reporting on those indicators.

Outcome #6: The LUF clearly defines roles and responsibilities for all groups.

Many participants spoke about the need for a clear governance framework for the LUF with commensurate resources for those assigned implementation responsibilities. This outcome was raised in some form in every group.

Strategy 6.1: Examine other models and examples to develop best governance practices.

Many people commented that Alberta can learn from other jurisdictions that have developed land-use frameworks and we should seek to learn from their experiences.

Strategy 6.2: Establish an entity that will hold overall responsibility for the LUF.

Participants generated several ideas for what this entity might look like:

- A multi-stakeholder advisory committee with representatives from the provincial and municipal governments, industry, First Nations and Métis communities, and non-government organizations, and so on.

- A “super-ministry” of government that would have jurisdiction over a number of areas (e.g. a “Ministry of Land-use” – one group called for immediate creation of such a ministry).
- A cross-ministerial body that would involve a number of different ministries.

Participants noted that whatever form the overarching LUF entity takes, it is important that a prior, careful review be conducted to integrate existing government initiatives (all levels of government) as well as enabling legislation, regulations and enforcement mechanisms. In addition, many emphasized that while the overall guiding body should provide consistency in LUF policy and implementation, there is also a need for flexibility at the regional level and retention of appropriate authority for municipalities. A governance/decision-making context is required to ensure that input from various stakeholders is integrated into land-use decisions.

Strategy 6.3: Build an effective, user-friendly information management system for the LUF.

Participants believed that decision-makers must have comprehensive, accurate, detailed and useable information in order to implement a LUF. Specifically noted was a comprehensive, accessible and provincially-integrated GIS information system.

Outcome #7: The LUF supports protection of agricultural lands.

One group identified protection of agricultural lands as one of its top five priorities and proposed a number of strategies.

Strategy 7.1: Develop a common definition of “agricultural land”.

Such a definition would include a description of such lands (i.e. do they include small acreages and lease allotments?) as well as a classification of lands suitable for agricultural use. This would require a comprehensive inventory, including classification of soils, from prime through lesser quality agricultural lands.

Strategy 7.2: Encourage landowners to practice conservation and environmental sustainable land uses.

The LUF needs to acknowledge and support the role that individual landowners play in sustaining Alberta’s land base and watersheds. The groups’ ideas on how the LUF can provide this support included:

- Support for research on and education about the impacts of various land uses (e.g. agriculture, grazing).
- Cash or tax-break incentives for conservation activities.
- Development and education on best practices, especially for riparian areas and watersheds.
- Enforcement of key practices.

Strategy 7.3: Develop PLU designations.

Regional land-use plans should include agriculture as one of the PLU designations and assure protection of best agricultural land for that purpose.

Outcome #8: The LUF ensures effective and timely reclamation of lands.

A priority LUF outcome for one group focused on the issue of land reclamation. Participants said that reclamation has not kept apace, and the LUF needs to assure that it does.

Strategy 8.1: Establish standardized provincial requirements for reclamation.

The notion here was that all land users and owners should be held to consistent standards for reclamation, e.g. individual landowners and industry alike. At the same time, standards may be adaptable to specific land uses, e.g. those for mine reclamation may differ from others.

Strategy 8.2: Develop an inventory and track lands not yet reclaimed and make them a priority for reclamation.

This group noted that the LUF should require industry to reclaim used lands in a timely manner. A system should be established to register, inventory and track reclamation of lands used for wells, pipelines and roads. Accounts might be established so that the government could hold funds in trust until companies completed reclamation to a satisfactory standard.





SESSION 7

– OPEN SESSION: ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

This session allowed participants to identify additional topics that they wished to explore in the final breakout group. Drawing from the “parking lot” list from each group, facilitators compiled a comprehensive list of suggested topics from the flip charts for review on the final day of the Forum. Participants were asked to review the topics and use dots to indicate the topics that they considered most relevant. From this, eight key topics emerged. Because *Managing Growth by Setting Targets* and *The Land-use Framework Process* received a significant proportion of the votes, there were two breakout groups for each of these topics. Each facilitator was assigned a topic and participants were encouraged to attend the session of their choice.

The following is a summary overview of the discussions from each of the session breakout groups.

Education and Communication

All of the participants in this group believed that a long-term education/communication process is critical for moving the LUF forward. According to participants, this process should involve two major components: i) the government and stakeholders informing the public about existing and potential land-use issues; and ii) the public sharing its expertise and values with respect to land-use management. Some of the participants felt strongly that the LUF process must not appear to be a government exercise with a predetermined outcome. Instead, Albertans must feel that the LUF reflects their own values and decisions with respect to long-term land-use management. Therefore, session participants thought it important to reach Albertans at an individual level to expose them to common values related to sustaining the land. It was suggested that only then could Albertans debate the land-use trade-offs that they are willing to make. A few participants noted that it is important for Albertans to realize that this strategy addresses long-term sustainability of land and water resources and that, in some cases, individuals may have to see beyond their own immediate goals.

A few of the participants thought that modeling and imagery would be extremely effective in illustrating the future implications of land-use choices. It was pointed out that there are many existing organizations with expertise and information that could be used to educate the public and inform the LUF development process. A specific example cited was the Conservation Environment Authority.

Consultation that respects First Nations and Métis values, governance and traditional land uses was viewed as necessary. Specifically, the group discussed developing a special process tailored to suit the communication needs of the First Nations and Métis, that is, a respectful, long-term process that would occur between governments.

Research Required to Support the Land-use Framework

Participants agreed that a coordinated and centralized research program is integral to the long-term success of the LUF. The group asserted that a comprehensive research program is required so that all land-use decision-making is informed by evidence-based and traditional knowledge (i.e. experience and historic knowledge regarding particular areas of land) as well as based on sound science.

Participants said that a research program should develop a knowledge base and seek to understand the impacts of various land uses. According to the group, this could be facilitated through best practices research and should employ a range of management tools such as monitoring, forecasting, and multiple land-use models.

Some in the group believed that a centralized knowledge database should be established and should include, but not be limited to, the mechanisms required to achieve the goals of the LUF. Some suggestions for content included: an inventory of the land base (e.g. baseline data, future uses) that is monitored and maintained; environmental, social (i.e. human) and economic data; decision support systems (i.e. simulation models); and regionally specific data.

Some suggested that a research program to support the LUF should begin with an assessment of the information needs of all stakeholders who require knowledge to make land management decisions (e.g. all levels of government, stakeholders, landowners, public). The aim would be to determine what is required to support decision-making, particularly as it relates to trade-offs (e.g. land-use models, simulation models).

Some participants discussed short-term research requirements – “what needs to be done now”. Examples of these include:

- Conducting a comprehensive data inventory.
- Scoping of data needed (i.e. what layers?, what exists?).
- Identifying a data management process/ land information management.
- Identifying an approach to incorporating existing datasets.
- Determining how to make the data readily accessible and user friendly.
- Developing dataset standards to facilitate easy access.

Land-use Framework Process I

The primary focus of the discussion was about how to move the LUF process forward from the Forum. Some participants talked about the need to engage the provincial government to advance the process. There was a general sentiment that greater political involvement is required – that the Minister needs to champion this initiative. A few wanted a committee of the eight Ministers involved in the initiative to meet face-to-face with representatives from the Forum to hear their concerns. Others suggested a workshop for all MLAs to present issues and encourage buy-in. Establishing a multi-stakeholder committee to meet with representatives of the government on an ongoing basis was seen by some as a means of ensuring progress – of holding the government’s “feet to the fire”.

The importance of having a multi-stakeholder consultation process was raised, particularly in the context of encouraging broad level buy-in. Some noted that the overall outcomes of the LUF would be improved with wide scale ownership. Openness and transparency were seen as key elements for ensuring the success of the LUF. It was noted that organizations such as the Clean Air Strategic Alliance have achieved this goal by posting minutes on a website.

Virtually all of the participants agreed that a multi-stakeholder committee should be responsible for conducting regional level planning and that regional guidelines should be aligned with provincial land-use policies. Some suggested that, depending on the scale of the land-use issue, there should be flexibility with regard to who makes decisions.

All of the participants agreed that the LUF should include both long-term and short-term outcomes as well as implementation strategies. Some suggested that the government's timeline for developing and implementing the LUF is unrealistic. However, there was general agreement that the process must not compromise the development of long-term outcomes by focusing on urgent issues. An example of a long-term outcome included setting up a regional-planning framework, while examples of urgent issues included: urban growth, rural residential development, and landowners' concerns about sour gas wells pipelines and power lines.

Participants frequently mentioned the need for adequate provincial resources to support the LUF process. A few participants called for increased political will and leadership from the Premier and Cabinet, and for the LUF to be supported by legislation.

Environmental Goods and Services

The group determined that the actual focus of its discussion was ecological goods and services, of which environmental goods and services are a subset. Ecological goods and services were defined as the elements of nature that aid or increase mankind's well being (e.g. air, water and land). Generally, participants noted that ecological goods and services represent a flow, wherein natural resources and their benefits are not isolated to one area but transcend and connect to many other regions. River systems providing water, habitat, and irrigation were cited as examples.

All participants suggested that, because the broader population is benefiting, the stewards of ecological goods and services (e.g. landowners, farmers) should be compensated for their losses resulting from their conservation efforts. Revisions to the taxation system were most commonly named as an approach for providing incentives and compensation. Specific examples of specific approaches provided include: intergenerational transfers, tax credits, per acre/per annum payments, capital gains credits, refundable tax credits, payments for setbacks from water sources, and green cover programs for establishing grasses on land.

Prior to initiating incentive or compensation programs, the group generally agreed that more information is required. Examples of specific requirements mentioned included:

- An inventory and prioritization of critical habitat in the province.
- A valuation process to determine the priorities, coordination and integration of government agencies.
- A review of existing policies to ensure that ecological goods and services fit in.
- An approach to balancing private property rights with obligations related to environmental goods and services.

Managing Growth by Setting Targets*

The group generally defined growth as variables affecting the size of the human footprint on the landscape (e.g. infrastructure). Some indicated that other disturbances (e.g. air and water pollution), the rate of growth, and the cumulative nature of effects are also as important factors. Participants generally

agreed that the provincial government needs to set both targets and limits to manage growth effectively. A few participants repeated the idea of a regional plan that is guided by an overarching provincial plan, however, there was little consensus regarding the division of responsibilities between the provincial and regional levels.

During the discussion, participants noted that effort is required to define and agree on terminology (i.e. targets, thresholds, limits). For the purpose of the discussion, it was generally agreed that targets are measurable and aligned with objectives and outcomes. Limits were seen to be economic, social and environmental in nature and aimed at addressing the root causes of issues related to growth. A few participants felt that limits refer to capacity, that is, after a chosen point change is no longer acceptable. All of the participants agreed that choosing this point would involve combining technical information with decisions based on values. Participants specifically noted that science and values drive both targets and limits.

The group suggested that a range of preliminary investigation is required prior to the development of targets and limits including:

- An inventory/capacity assessment for natural resources.
- Growth projection scenarios based on the business plans of provincial departments and municipal governments.
- An analysis of existing legislation and policies to determine what is currently possible and what is required in the future.

Public engagement was also viewed as an important component of the process, particularly in the context of determining values, setting priorities, and disseminating information. In addition, the groups raised the issue of the development of a diverse stakeholder working group to conduct the technical work required for the definition of targets and limits. They noted that for this to be successful, high-level political buy-in and financial support would be required.

** Although two breakout groups were scheduled for “Managing Growth by Setting Targets”, the groups combined and a single session was conducted.*

Lack of Land Data and Coordinated Mapping

Participants in this group had a strong interest in seeing the development of a land and resource information system that offers the comprehensive information required to make better land-use decisions. Some suggested that it is a key building block and that the LUF cannot proceed without it. Most agreed that it is a provincial responsibility to collect, coordinate, update and share land-use information – the GoA should demonstrate leadership and drive this process.

Participants envisioned the system as multi-layered and accessible. Examples of information system content included: multi-layered mapping, information on current land uses (both surface and subsurface), and commitments for the land that had been made. The group agreed that data collected by industry and other organizations (e.g. Trail Net Society) should also be incorporated into the system. They added that the technology exists to create the system; however, funding strategies need to be developed (e.g. cost sharing with industry or a user-pay system). Potential users identified by the group included: industry, municipalities, landowners, agencies and government departments.

Participants cited a range of benefits to the development of the system, including: reduced duplication, savings in both time and money, increased access to information, enhanced decision-making, and

improved coordination. At the same time, the group discussed some potential challenges, for example: coordination of the system, keeping the data up to date, the tendency of some departments to hoard information and the ongoing expense.

In summary, participants said that there is a need for a blueprint of a cost-effective, appropriately-scaled system that is accessible, accurate and timely for the public, industry and government.

Land-use Stewardship

The group's discussion initially focused on the meaning of land-use stewardship. Some key phrases that emerged from the discussion included: "notions of caring for and protecting the land", and "carrying capacity of the land".

The group felt that the idea of accountability was important and after some discussion the participants agreed that we are all accountable as individuals. Participants noted that a responsible land ethic needs to be developed in Alberta through education and communication. The notion of respect for the land was raised, particularly as it relates to the contradiction between individual landowner stewardship efforts and damage resulting from other activities on their land (e.g. resource development, recreation) (i.e. the provision of stewardship while others are benefiting). From this, there was a suggestion that landowners should be compensated for good stewardship. Examples of approaches to landowner compensation, included: incentives, and a share in the economic benefits derived from the activity on the land.

Participants suggested that the LUF could contribute to stewardship in three areas: i) enforcement; ii) regulation; and iii) communication and education. The group provided specific examples of stewardship strategies that should be incorporated into the LUF, namely:

- Develop a penalty system for people who are not being good stewards.
- Create more consistent rules and regulations to govern the activities of all the different user groups.
- Reduce conflict between user groups and landowners and between different user groups – recognize that there are different points of view with respect to land use by encouraging dialogue.
- Create a land-use plan.
- Create more areas specifically designated for recreation users.
- Define stewardship and define the roles and responsibilities of stewards.
- Provide education and information for all stakeholders.
- Increase public understanding of land-use privilege versus land-use right and encourage a responsible land ethic among all Albertans.

Land-use Framework Process II

General feedback about the Red Deer Forum indicated dissatisfaction with the compressed timeline and the pace of the sessions. Participants felt that there was too much content and not enough time to discuss topics. Concern was raised about the quality and consistency of the recording methods and the data obtained. This was linked to several questions about the integrity of the final report. Some participants commented that there was insufficient background material and a lack of connection between the documents and sessions. The absence of vital stakeholders such as youth, seniors and First Nations was noted as problematic. In contrast, a few other participants were satisfied with the diverse range of

participants at the Forum and viewed it as an opportunity to create awareness and bring issues to the table.

The group provided a range of suggestions for moving the LUF process forward, examples include:

- Testing and validating of the notes/report prior to rolling out to the community.
- Receiving input from stakeholders that were not at the table.
- Ensuring that the GoA makes the LUF a long-term priority (e.g. base in law, tangible steps)
- Conducting a legal analysis of the strategies.
- Integrating the planning process with other processes/planning exercises (e.g. Water for Life), connected to other documents.
- Identifying obstacles to moving forward.
- Conducting a best practices review, exploring other models.
- Aligning the framework with public input.
- Developing a total inventory, map thresholds and undertaking trend modeling.

Further discussion centred on including more stakeholders as the process advances. Specifically, efforts need to be made to gain contact with stakeholders judged to be missing from the process (e.g. minority populations, seniors and youth). There was a suggestion that the representation at the Forum was skewed to rural and agricultural and that urban centers needed more representation, especially the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Participants specifically noted the need to engage First Nations and Métis settlement peoples on their own terms.

Shared Collective Governance

All participants agreed that an overarching provincial framework should be developed with local planning and implementation. This would help maintain municipal autonomy within the larger regional and provincial scale. In other words, decentralizing could occur to capitalize on expertise that exists at the local level. Most agreed that the LUF requires clear articulation of who will implement and enforce the framework. Participants suggested this be undertaken in consultation with all stakeholders (i.e. clear, transparent citizen input). Furthermore, a body should be created that the public can hold accountable for achieving the outcomes contained in the LUF; that is, two-way accountability between the implementer (government departments or agencies) and policy-makers is important.

There was strong agreement that the LUF should be a legal framework, providing direction for stakeholders. Participants felt an integrated master plan based on inventory and involving all interests across all levels (particularly individuals on the land) was essential. All participants agreed that the GoA should collect, coordinate, monitor, adjust and fund intelligence. All agreed that shared, integrated, and joint information gathering leads to consistency, clarity, transparency, effective communication, and availability of information.

Diverging opinions emerged regarding what constitutes “a regional plan” and “regional planning”. The group suggested that these terms must be clarified and defined in order to develop a regional concept within the LUF.



APPENDIX II

Stakeholder Web-Based Feedback Survey Results





Appendix II

- Stakeholder Web-Based Feedback Survey Results

As mentioned at the outset of this Report, one of the principal challenges for the GoA was to ensure that the Final Summary Report accurately captured the views of participants at the Forum. To confirm that the Summary Report represents the overall findings from the Red Deer Forum, the GoA conducted a web-based feedback survey that allowed all stakeholders participating in the Red Deer Forum the opportunity to identify any major errors or omissions in the Draft Summary Report. The Praxis Group/Canada West Foundation used the respondents' comments directed at the content of the Report to fill any remaining gaps in the text of the Report. Below are all the comments received from the respondents to the feedback survey.

Comments Received

"The document reflects what I heard and experienced at the session. Bouquets to Praxis and CWF for their ability to synthesize the varied and opinionated discussion into a concise accurate summary. I am sure the dominant expression will be to ask where to go from here. (Re: Roll-up Summary)

"The formatting of the report makes it more difficult to read. I really prefer left justified over both. The difference in spacing makes it harder (slower) to read. Also couldn't the watermark be a lot lighter. You'd still know it was a draft but it would be a lot easier to read. --I'll have more substantive comments after I have had a chance to review the whole document." (Re: Roll-up Summary)

"Generally speaking I feel this section captures the essence of the consultation. --I think that the inventory speaks not only to the land use resources but also to the land use decision inventory, which will in fact be much larger in impact since some approvals have not as yet been undertaken but have approval in place. Including these decisions will show a far larger impact than what currently exists on the ground. --Thanks for your efforts and I certainly am interested in the topic and look forward to this process proceeding. I would be interested to remain involved in this process." (Re: Roll-up Summary)

"Long term vision yes, but also more immediate attention to current issues and conflicts. Setting the vision against levels of human health, environmental health (biodiversity, soil, water, air, etc.) and economic health all of which have indicators that can be measured. This would go some distance to bringing the balance in question into a more common measurement unlike where we are today." (Re: Session 1)

"There was discussion around not only healthy environment and healthy economy but also HEALTHY ALBERTANS (human health) as well." (Re: Session 2)

"Overall, well-captured. I can't emphasize enough the importance of the inventory of current and approved yet undeveloped land use decisions. Also the indicators need to be developed so that we can measure success or problem areas important to all three pillars discussed." (Re: Session 3)

"A very good synopsis of what was covered. One thought--managing or slowing growth. Although this is clearly an issue today and likely a catalyst for why LUF is needed quickly - I believe it is framed incorrectly as it makes LUF look anti-development. Perhaps a better wording might describe it as follows: 'Everything we do and value (economically, socially and ecologically) takes space - thus any discussion, which LUF is contemplating that addresses (sets limits, zones, etc) the "who, what, where, when" of land use options by default will influence the economy. It is not a question of whether it should or not - it just does.' Presumably LUF will be designed to be enduring i.e., it is evergreen and will go beyond immediate issues of which the heated economy is currently just one. In the future, say in 10 or 20 years from now if the economy needs a boost because of an economic slow down, LUF must be capable of making the required changes to land use decisions that might encourage economic development." (Re: Roll-up Summary)

"Hello: -- I attended from The City of Calgary. The following comments are my own; The City of Calgary is not providing a formal response. --I congratulate the organizers for this important forum about the future of our province. I concur that a provincial vision is needed along with strong leadership for a set of governing principles. However, the list of principles is too broad resulting in a potential LUF that is all things to all people - little more than we have today. Trade-offs need to be articulated in a clear, transparent system of land use priorities. The large cities were not well represented at the forum, resulting in little text in the summary around the importance of urban growth management. A LUF needs to be about more than integrating rural and urban land use or mitigating intermunicipal conflicts. It has to address the Calgary - Edmonton corridor as the distinct economic engine it is. Two-thirds of the province's population lives in this corridor. The LUF must recognize the importance of protecting areas for urban growth in this area. It can't just deal with local conflicts (Outcome #4). --Thank you for the opportunity to attend the forum and provide comments on the summary. I look forward to next steps." (Re: Roll-up Summary)



"Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the Draft Summary. In general, the consultants have done a good job in reporting the various opinions and positions presented in Red Deer, as well as noting the criticisms on the process. As a participant from a major urban municipality, I find the major urban perspective to be missing. Indeed the land use functions within the urban jurisdictions are viewed as a 'black box' except to note the friction between some rural and urban jurisdictions. The importance of the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor as a major user of land and focus of growth has not been adequately addressed. Outcome #4 "the LUF helps promote integrated land use planning between urban and rural jurisdictions" is a good first step but does not recognize the importance and impacts of the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor which accommodates the majority of the Province's population. The use of the Outcomes of the 1991 Roundtable on the Environment and Economy as a starting point for discussion and subsequent general endorsement shortchanges both the participants and the outcomes of this very important LUF exercise. I still find this to be a major flaw in the process and would have liked the opportunity for all LUF participants to articulate their own outcomes based on their positions/ experience/views in 2006! I look forward to the next step in the process and thank you for the opportunity to participate. I provide these comments solely from my perspective as a participant. City of Edmonton, Planning and Development Department. (Re: Roll-up Summary)

"Under the heading of Integrated Land Use refer to the other ongoing provincial initiatives relating to air and water being CASA and the Water For Life Strategy. -- Under Regional Diversity, many people suggested a "watershed" basis for regional zones. I was very surprised to see no reference to this in your report." (Re: Session 1)

"Interestingly, there are 9 references to water (quality/quantity) but only one vague reference to the Water For Life strategy. If the Land Use Framework is going to integrate land, water and air, then it has to figure out a way to integrate this initiative with other ONGOING initiatives, such as the Water For Life which encompasses land and water as well." (Re: Session 2)

"Again, there were several references to water in this document. If the LUF is dealing with water, there has to be a decision as to how the LUF is going to work with the existing Water For Life strategy." (Re: Session 4)

"Although water and watershed is referenced, there is no reference to the existing provincially designated governance structure in place already dealing with land and water, that being the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils." (Re: Session 5)

"With the number of references to water and watershed in the document, there needs to be clarity as to whether the LUF is going to address land and water. If it does, what happens to the Water For Life strategy already going on. State of the watershed reports are already being undertaken for each watershed. Doing it again under the LUF would only be duplication. Why not integrate these two initiatives?" (Re: Session 6)

"With the diversity of comments and issues, I think the report has done a reasonable job in trying to reflect what was said by the participants. --However, the one aspect that was repeated over and over again, was the need for integration of land, air and water. Although the report refers to this need, it does not properly identify that there are ongoing parallel initiatives already in existence being Water For Life and the Clean Air Strategy. At a minimum, I believe there should be a fifth bullet on page 2 (first page of text) indicating this requirement of the LUF to integrate land, air and water through the integration of the ongoing provincial initiatives (WFL and CASA). --Page 4 should also specify WFL and CASA as they are well established initiatives that are already dealing with land, water and air." (Re: Roll-up Summary)



“You have done a very laudable job in pulling together a reasonably coherent package from the voluminous and diverse discussions/commentaries at the LUF Cross-sector Forum in Red Deer.” With regard to “page 2 (Vision): Good summary of consensus on the need for a 'land ethic' that reflects Albertan's core values related to the need to 'respect and care for the land'. Unfortunately, the Forum provided insufficient opportunity to really flush out what those 'core values' are that Albertans feel most strongly about. This issue of 'core values' related to land in a broader holistic context, needs substantive discussion within the follow-up public consultation process. Core values haven't had adequate treatment as yet.” (Re: Roll-up Summary)

Regarding “page 4 & 5 (bullets): I would have included a bullet around the idea that we should 'recognize land carrying capacities and the need to consider limits (or thresholds) to land use activities'.” Further on “page 5 (bottom - outcomes vs process focussed LUF): LUF has to incorporate meaningful outcomes (preferably measurable), as a basis for addressing more specific planning and decision-making processes. LUF could focus just on 'outcomes' (desired destinations) or 'outcomes and high-level processes' (strategic directions/road map), but it can't just be a process-focussed document and have any chance of long-term success.” As regards “Outcome #3: I would add a bullet that reads, 'clarifying core land values that need to be reflected in good land stewardship'.” In terms of “page 13, Education and Communication: A key point that was missed in the 'Education and Communication' summary on page 74, and that should also be reflected here, is that 'short-term' education and communication is needed to support the public consultation phase of LUF development. For there to be 'meaningful public consultation' on the development of LUF there must be a reasonable basic level of awareness and understanding of the many and diverse underlying issues related to LUF on topics such as 'cumulative effects', 'rural/urban conflicts', 'land health', 'ecological integrity/biodiversity maintenance', 'regional planning', etc, etc. Keep in mind that many of the participants in the broader public consultation phase will not have the same level of knowledge and understanding of these issues that your invited sector reps have. The public consultation phase will require information resources and sufficient time to effectively communicate with the public-at-large as a basis for engaging them in meaningful discussions at community-level workshops and as part of other consultations mechanisms.” (Re: Roll-up Summary)

In terms of “page16, 4th bullet: Clarifying the LUF initiative's relationship to other provincial policy initiatives is of paramount importance. Based on the sector-level consultations to date, the GoA has to bite the bullet and decide what these relationships are going to be. Is LUF going to be a 'land' policy on par with 'Water for Life' or not? Are there other existing provincial policies (i.e. Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management) that provide primary direction for development of LUF and, if so, what are they? What is the hierarchy of existing provincial policy related to sustainable resource development, environmental management, and land use, and where does LUF fit in to this hierarchy, along with other policies such as 'Water for Life' and 'Taking Action on Climate', etc. Where does the proposed 'Alberta Biodiversity Strategy' and the 'Integrated Land Management Program' fit into this hierarchy of provincial policy. In the absence of clarification of these policy relationships, there will be much unproductive discussion around vision, outcomes, strategies, etc. for development of a provincial LUF. The Red Deer Forum did not provide adequate policy context for the discussions that took place and this resulted in a lot of frustration on the part of participants. Finally, there is reference in the draft summary report on discussions related to the need for regional planning and decision-making mechanisms. However, my overall impression is that this need/issue does not get the profile that it deserves in this report, given what I heard at the Forum. I heard over and over again that we are really failing in our ability to deal with cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral issues that, for the most part, are issues that need to be resolved at broader regional/landscape-level scales. This issue comes to the fore particularly as a need related to cumulative effects assessment and management.” (Re: Roll-up Summary)