

Leading the Way Together

April 15, 2025

The Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture and Food
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Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2

Sent Via Email: AF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Subject: Letter on Amending the ALR Use Regulation “50% Rule”

Dear Minister Popham,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with our board of directors and staff in Victoria earlier this month. We are following up from the discussion regarding our position on the political interest in amending the “50% rule” to support increased processing capacity. Following recent engagement with our members and board, we can confirm that BC Agriculture Council’s position - previously shared with Minister Alexis in 2023 — remains unchanged: **any amendments to the Agricultural Land Reserve Use Regulation requires meaningful and transparent consultation.** Furthermore, processing and packing needs have changed since this rule was created and the needs also vary significantly across regions – taking appropriate consultative measures would help ensure that the goals of the amendment align with positive outcomes for the sectors involved.

BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) recognizes that today’s political and economic climate, including trade disputes and tariff responses, has prompted recommendations from some corners of the business community. **However, we are concerned that some of these recommendations related to agriculture and processing are being put forward by a narrow set of interests that do not reflect the views or priorities of the broader agriculture sector.**

We recognize the importance of strengthening B.C.’s food processing capacity to support value-added agricultural products. Following thorough member consultation in 2024, BCAC’s members expressed support for maintaining the current rules governing processing within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Notably, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) approves approximately 90% of applications for processing facility permits, demonstrating that existing regulatory pathways are effectively enabling growth in this area.

Any proposed changes to the ALR must consider the extreme scarcity of B.C.’s productive farmland — an irreplaceable resource essential for both food security and economic resilience. In regions like the Lower Mainland, this land is under increasing pressure from population growth and development. **It is critical that efforts be made to address ongoing non-compliance within the ALR before pursuing any major regulatory changes.**

Since we marked the recent 50-year anniversary of the ALR in 2023, we would like to reiterate **our formal request that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food lead a review of the ALR Use Regulation in close collaboration with BCAC and its members.** This review can focus on ensuring that the ALR continues to support viable agricultural production and land stewardship for the next 50 years. A review with active collaboration from government and industry will develop the needed updates to the ALR Use Regulation by identifying not only improvements to rules for processing, but also farm retail sales, on-farm worker housing, events, filming, and more. **This will help ensure that the business competitiveness of B.C. farmers remains a central consideration and a top priority across all viable farmland.**

In closing, we emphasize that there are viable, balanced approaches to increasing value-added processing without compromising B.C.’s food security or farmland protection. These solutions must be informed by regional realities and commodity-specific considerations. BCAC stands ready to work collaboratively with government

and the broader agri-food sector to advance these opportunities and support the long-term resilience of B.C.'s agriculture industry.

Thank you again for your continued partnership and for considering the voices of B.C.'s farming and ranching community during this pivotal time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Woike', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Jennifer Woike
President, BC Agriculture Council

CC:

Michelle Koski, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food
Sam Godfrey, Chief of Staff to the Minister of Agriculture and Food