

August 25th, 2026

Hon. Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture and Food
Victoria, BC

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

Subject: Support for Proposed Regulatory Amendments to Expand Food Processing in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)

Dear Minister Popham,

On behalf of the **Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and our approximately 850 member businesses**, I am writing to express our strong support for the Province of British Columbia's proposed regulatory amendments to expand food-processing opportunities within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

The Abbotsford Chamber strongly supports the direction of the proposed framework and encourages the Province to move forward with the amendments as drafted. In particular, we support the proposed 5% minimum threshold for provincially grown or raised primary products and the ability to establish food-processing facilities on eligible lower-capability ALR lands and already-serviced parcels.

This represents an important opportunity to unlock investment, strengthen B.C.'s food security, support farmers and build a more resilient and competitive agri-food economy.

This issue is particularly important to Abbotsford. As Canada's agricultural capital, our community is home to one of B.C.'s most significant and diverse agricultural economies, supported by a substantial network of food processors, manufacturers, distributors, technology companies and other businesses connected to the agri-food value chain. The strength of this ecosystem depends not only on our ability to produce food, but on our ability to process, store, distribute and add value to that production here in British Columbia.

The BC Chamber of Commerce network recognized this opportunity through its policy adopted in June 2026, *"Eliminating the 50-50 Rule to Strengthen Food Security and Agrifood Processing in B.C."* The policy identified the existing 50-50 requirement as a significant barrier to scaling agri-food processing and attracting investment, particularly where processors need to operate year-round despite the seasonal nature of B.C. agricultural production.

This challenge has become increasingly urgent. Trade uncertainty, shifting global supply chains, climate-related disruptions, rising costs and geopolitical instability are placing greater pressure on businesses and food systems. At the same time, B.C. has an opportunity to strengthen domestic production, diversify markets and retain more of the economic value generated by our agricultural sector here at home.

The Province's proposed framework is an important response to that challenge and aligns with the ambitions outlined in Look West, including the objective of increasing B.C.'s agricultural exports by 25% over the next decade.

In particular, enabling food-processing facilities on appropriate lower-capability ALR land can help address one of the fundamental constraints facing investment in this sector: access to suitable land at a scale and cost that allows businesses to compete. The proposed framework could unlock an estimated 500–1,000 hectares of opportunity for food processing and Made-in-B.C. production, while continuing to preserve higher-quality agricultural soils for primary production.

We see several significant opportunities:

- **Unlocking Investment and Economic Growth:** Modernizing the regulatory framework will provide greater certainty for businesses considering investment in B.C.'s food-processing and agri-food sectors. Greater processing capacity will help retain investment, jobs and more of the economic value generated by B.C. agriculture within the province.
- **Protecting Prime Agricultural Land:** Allowing appropriate food-processing facilities on lower-capability ALR soils and eligible serviced parcels creates opportunities for value-added activity while preserving prime agricultural land for active production. This provides a practical balance between protecting the agricultural land base and enabling a competitive modern agri-food economy.
- **Strengthening Food Security and Regional Supply Chains:** Expanding domestic processing capacity will strengthen B.C.'s ability to respond to supply-chain disruptions and maintain access to essential food products. Encouraging B.C.-grown and B.C.-raised inputs provides an important local market for farmers while giving processors the flexibility required to operate year-round. Supporting infrastructure, including regional cold storage, can further reduce transportation distances, bottlenecks and food waste.
- **Improving B.C.'s Competitiveness:** B.C. competes directly with jurisdictions such as Alberta and Washington State for agricultural and food-processing investment, where land availability, costs and regulatory environments can be more favourable. Creating clearer and more practical pathways for processing on eligible ALR land will help B.C. attract capital, retain businesses, support family farms and grow its value-added agri-food economy.

In Abbotsford, these challenges are particularly acute. Local producers and agri-food entrepreneurs face high industrial land costs alongside the seasonal realities of agricultural production. Enabling strategically located food-processing facilities can help keep more value-added revenue, investment and skilled agri-food jobs within our regional economy while creating stronger and more reliable markets for B.C. farmers.

For Abbotsford, this is not a choice between protecting farmland and supporting food processing. We need to do both. Protecting our highest-quality agricultural land for production while enabling appropriate processing on lower-capability and serviced ALR lands will strengthen the entire agricultural value chain.

The proposed changes also position B.C. to capture opportunities associated with trade diversification. B.C. cannot meaningfully increase agricultural exports or reduce its dependence on a single international market without the capacity to process and add value to what our farmers produce.

We recognize that regulatory modernization must include appropriate safeguards to protect agricultural land, discourage speculative activity and consider local infrastructure and community impacts. However, these safeguards should be implemented in a manner that



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provides businesses with a clear, predictable and timely pathway to investment and does not introduce new regulatory barriers that undermine the purpose of the reforms.

The Abbotsford Chamber therefore strongly supports the Province's proposed amendments and encourages the government to proceed with implementation. The proposal represents an important opportunity to provide the regulatory certainty businesses need to invest, expand B.C.'s food-processing capacity and strengthen the province's economic and food-system resilience.

The BC Chamber network has articulated the need for modernization. The Province has now put forward a framework that can begin to deliver it. We encourage the government to seize this opportunity and move forward.

Thank you for your leadership on this important economic development and food-security priority. The Abbotsford Chamber looks forward to continuing to work with the Province to strengthen agriculture, agri-food processing, investment and economic resilience in Abbotsford and across British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Alex Mitchell
CEO

Sam Varing
Board President

Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce

cc: Hon. David Eby, Premier of British Columbia;

cc: Hon. Brenda Bailey, Minister of Jobs and Economic Growth