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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2020AGRI0026-001178  
June 26, 2020

Ministry of Agriculture

### **ALR revitalization reduces costs, makes life better for farmers**

VICTORIA – Updates to Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act regulations will make it more affordable for multi-generational farmers on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to apply to build housing that meets their needs.

The updates will also make it easier for farmers on the ALR to maintain and build roads that help them grow the food British Columbians rely on.

“B.C.’s farming families work hard to put food on our tables, and these changes will help reduce the expense and anxiety of maintaining an extended-family lifestyle on the farm.” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. “It takes a lot of people to run a large farm. Having parents, in-laws and siblings on site helps many B.C. farms produce the food we need more efficiently. Our government will continue to make life better for these hard-working farming families.”

Fees for non-adhering residential-use applications will be reduced from \$1,500 to \$900. The 40% reduction in the application fees to build additional housing follows feedback from local governments and farmers and others living in the ALR.

“West Kelowna’s agricultural land base and the ALR are vital components to the fabric of our community,” said Gord Milsom, mayor, West Kelowna. “The proposed changes to the ALC fee structure will support our farmers by reducing costs to build housing and will further recognize the role local governments have in evaluating applications. By making applications more accessible and assisting local governments with processing, we can continue to work collectively to protect our food-producing land base and support jobs in the agricultural industry. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively regarding changes introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture and the ALC with our residents, business owners and agricultural operators.”

Each application will continue to be reviewed by the ALC to ensure it is consistent with its mandate to preserve farmland and encourage agriculture. In recognition of the work local governments and First Nations contribute to the process, the portion of the fees they receive when a non-adhering residential-use application requires its review will increase by 50%, from \$300 to \$450.

Additional amendments to the regulations make it easier for farmers on large land parcels in the ALR to maintain roads on their properties. This is done by increasing the amount of soil removal or fill placement permitted for annual farm-road maintenance without requiring permission from the ALC. The change provides farmers with large properties a little more leeway to maintain their farms and will also reduce the workload for ALC staff.

“These changes help farmers in the ALR maintain the farm roads we need and use to get our equipment and machinery to and from the fields, and to get the food we produce on the farm to the marketplace and to people who enjoy it,” said Jeffrey Spitters, Oranya Farms. “As organic farmers, we take pride in the sustainable practices, philosophy and materials we follow in raising our poultry, and the responsible use of fill to keep farm roads smooth and serviceable makes a real difference in our daily work on the farm, and our jobs producing food for our communities.”

The changes to the Agricultural Land Commission Act were requested by B.C. farmers, the ALC and local governments. They will be effective Sept. 30, 2020, to allow local governments and the ALC sufficient time to prepare for the amended regulations.

**Learn More:**

Agricultural Land Reserve and Agricultural Land Commission: <https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca>

B.C. crop and farm statistics: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/statistics>

A backgrounder follows.

**Contact:**

Ministry of Agriculture  
Government Communications and Public  
Engagement  
250 356-1674

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## BACKGROUND

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### **ALR, ALC and changes to regulations**

#### **The changes to fill regulations:**

- increase the amount of soil removal or fill placement that can be used for annual farm road maintenance to 50 cubic metres per 100 metres of existing road length from 50 cubic metres per farm operation.
- allow the use of recycled concrete aggregate and recycled asphalt pavement as fill for roads and parking areas on the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in certain circumstances.

#### **Miscellaneous changes:**

- bring legislation into force through another amendment, enabling remediation order notes to be registered on a property's title, so prospective buyers of the land are aware of them.

#### **ALR**

- The ALR includes 46,159 square kilometres of B.C. that is preserved for agricultural use. This area is equivalent to 5% of B.C.'s total land base.
- Prior to the establishment of the ALR in 1973, thousands of hectares of farmland were being lost to development every year.

#### **Agricultural Land Commission (ALC)**

- The ALC is an independent, administrative tribunal. The ALC makes land-use decisions within the ALR based on provincial legislation, the Agricultural Land Commission Act and the associated regulations.
- It bases its decisions on its mandate of preserving agricultural land and encouraging farming and ranching in British Columbia.
- It looks at many factors when carrying out its mandate. Each application has its own set of circumstances and is considered on its own merits.

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