

# B.C. Land Use Planning for Agriculture

Peace River Regional District Board Presentation  
May 30, 2024



Ministry of  
Agriculture  
and Food

## Today's Presentation

- Why Agriculture?
- Pressure on B.C.'s Farmland (6 big points)
- Tools in the Toolbox
- Key Messages
- Key Actions
- Discussion/Questions



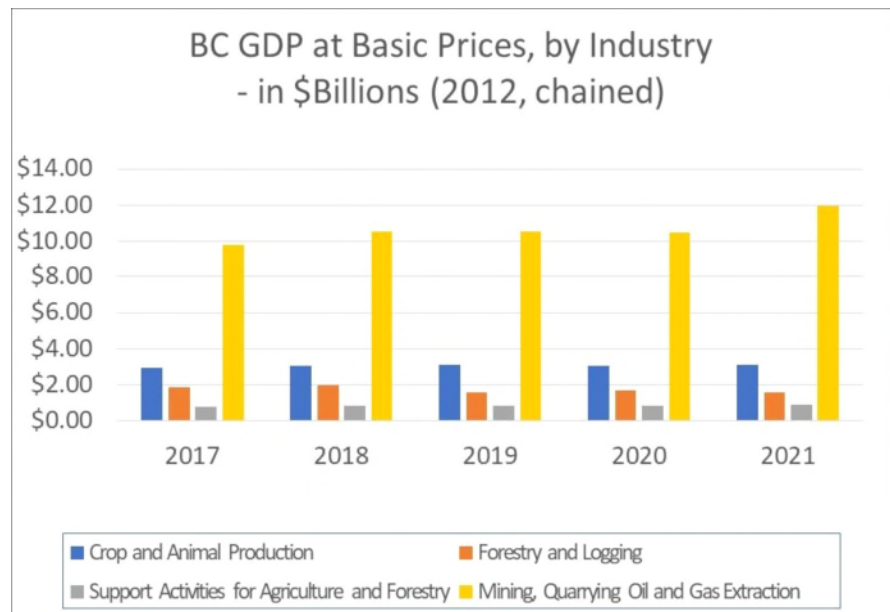
# Why Agriculture?

- Agriculture = significant contributor to BC's economy and the sector is growing;
  - *BC Farm Cash Receipts increased from \$4.03B in 2020 to \$4.37B in 2021.*
- Agriculture support B.C. jobs and family businesses;
  - *In 2020, 30,000 people were employed in primary agriculture across BC.*
- Food security is more important than ever, especially in our climate crisis;
  - *The UN reports that the global food crisis is only getting worse due to many factors*



## Supporting Agriculture in Your Community

- The agriculture industry holds its own, and it's a stable.
- In comparison to other major sectors, it can also be surprising:
- Primary agriculture, which also supports B.C.'s Food and Beverage Processing sector, has sales of \$11B per year in B.C. (2020);
- *This sector is likely happening in your community. And if it isn't, why not?*





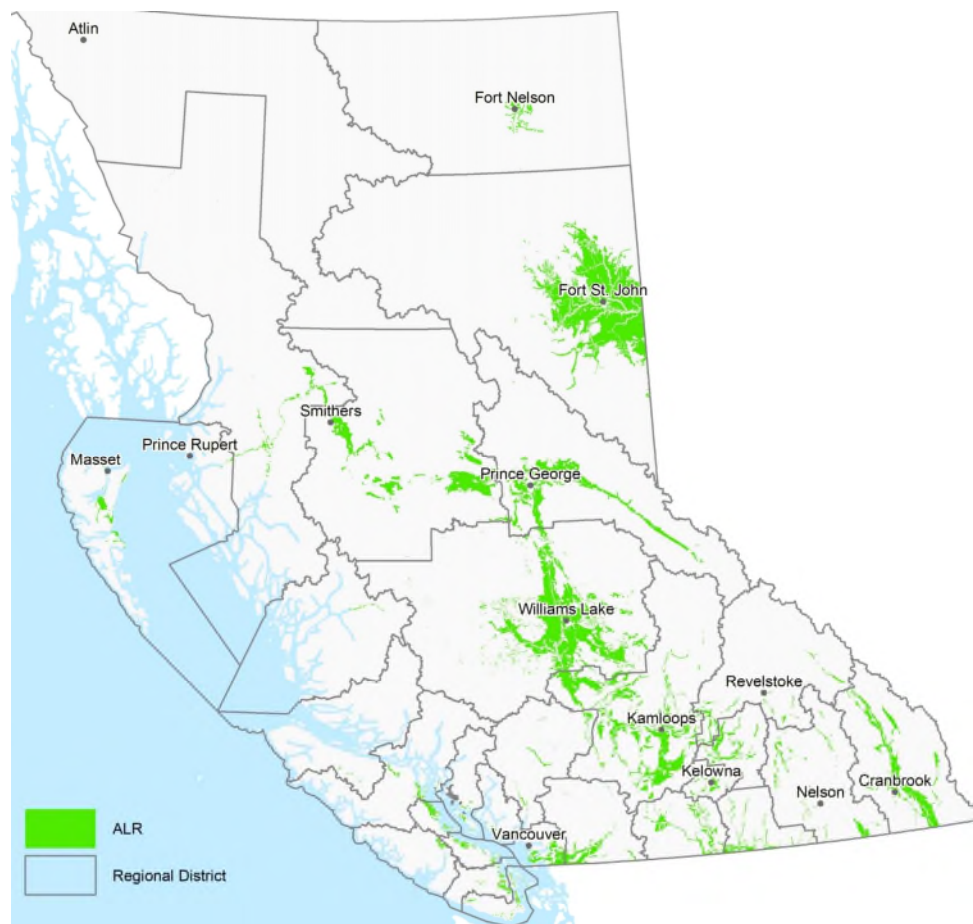
# Pressures on the ALR and Farming

- Arable land in B.C. is very limited and under great pressure
- Some pressures facing the ALR and farming industry include:
  - Limited arable land;
  - Cost of ALR land;
  - Urbanization;
  - Housing;
  - Demographics;
  - Lack of industrial land.

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## Pressure 1: Limited Arable Land

- B.C.'s agriculture's land base includes:
- The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)
  - ~5 percent of B.C.'s land base;
  - a mix of agricultural capability;
  - ~54 percent crown land.
  - ~7 percent not available for farming.
- Remaining 95% does not have the same regulatory protections – although there is some non-ALR farmland.



\*2023 FCC Farmland Values Report.  
<https://assets.ctfassets.net/mmpt/4yas01373c4b8paci1qjbfecvkvbrmu/15c9184d9b99436bc7dada6626a3be686/2023-farmland-values-report-e.pdf>



# Pressure 2: Cost of Agricultural Land

- Cost of farmland in B.C. continues to rise\*;
- Increased by 8.0% in 2022 (18.1% increase in 2021 and an 8.0% increase in 2020);
- Agricultural land values are the highest in Canada;
- South Coast = \$139,000/acre;
- Ontario ranges from \$4k – \$28k ;
- Largest increase in Kootenays = 33.6% growth;
- Peace-Northern region = 8.4% growth;
- Increased demand and limited supply.



# Pressure 3: Urbanization

- B.C.'s population is growing;
- Urban infrastructure follows as more people move to the province;
- 3 areas have been identified as significant "high-growth" regions:
  - Lower Mainland
  - Okanagan Valley
  - Southern Vancouver Island
- This is also where 80% of B.C.'s total Farm Receipts are generated.



## Pressure 4: Housing Demands

- Everyone knows...high prices that keep going higher;
- Both to purchase a home and rentals;
- B.C. = most unaffordable province for housing;
- Not just a Lower Mainland problem anymore;
- More people looking at ALR to solve housing crisis.

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## Pressure 4: Housing Demands

- It's called the Agricultural Land RESERVE;
- ALR is not the solution to B.C.'s housing crisis;
- ALR is not the solution to local government planning on housing;
- More people living the ALR = more headaches;
  - Increased traffic/people driving farther distances;
  - People unfamiliar with farming = more complaints;
  - More strain on infrastructure.

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## Pressure 5: Demographics

- Average age of farmers in Canada keeps increasing:
  - 1996 = 48.4 (B.C. = 49.8)
  - 2006 = 52.0 (B.C. = 53.6)
  - 2021 = 56.0 (B.C. = 57.8)
- Fewer young people in B.C. getting into farming:
  - 2011 = 2,400 under 35
  - 2021 = 1,210 under 35
- BC = highest proportion of female farmers in Canada



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## Pressure 6: Lack of Industrial Land

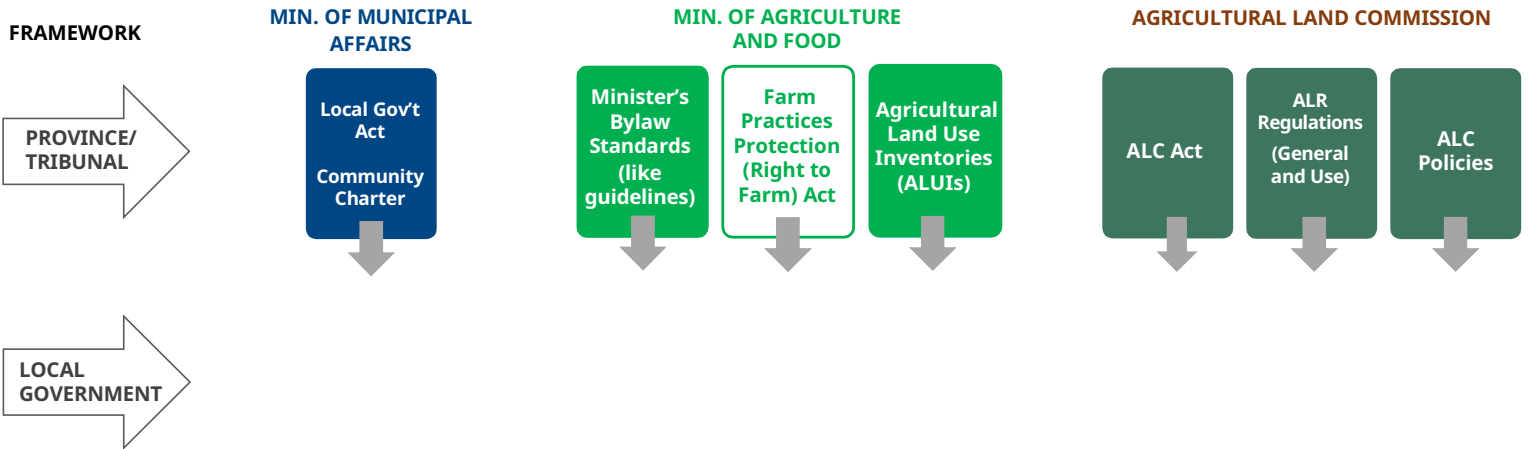
- Critical shortage of industrial land in Metro Vancouver;
- Recent pricing has jumped 17.5% in 2021 to \$7.1 million/acre!
- Redeveloping industrial land is:
  - Incredibly profitable for developers
  - Generates tons of new taxes for local governments;
- Industrial lands offer opportunities.



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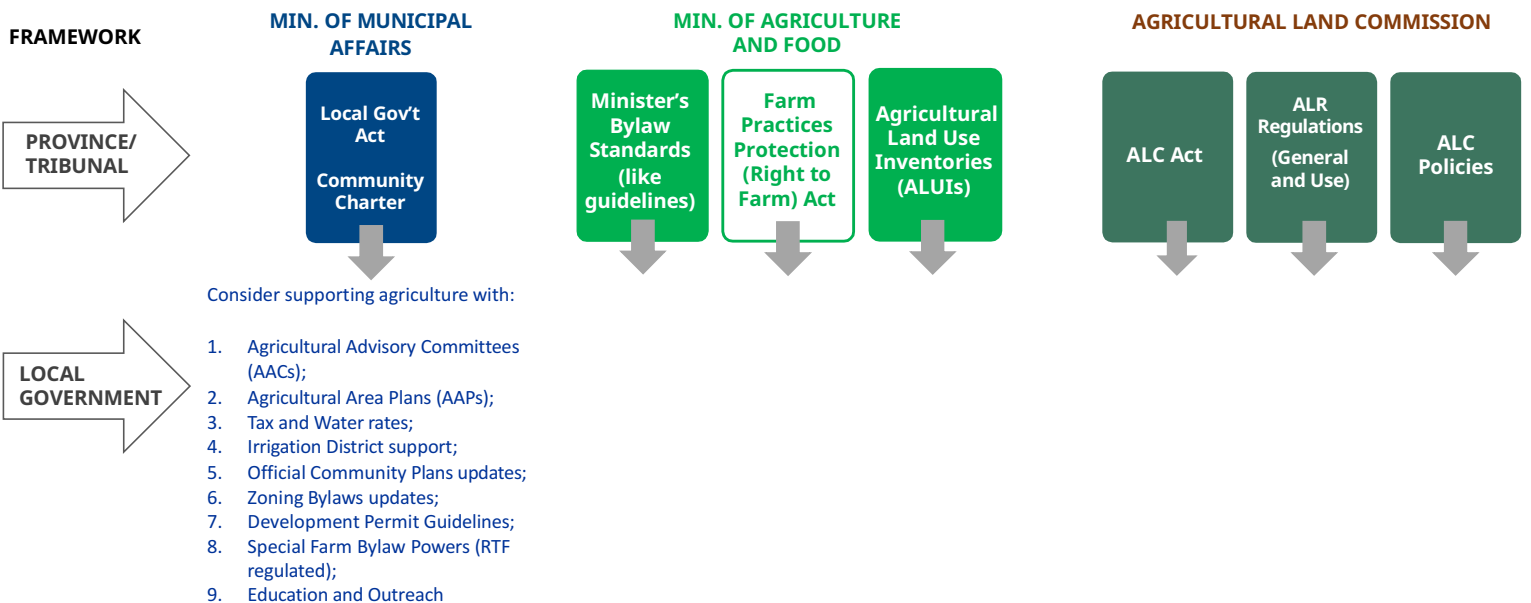
# Tools in the Toolbox

*How local governments can help B.C. agriculture through land use planning*



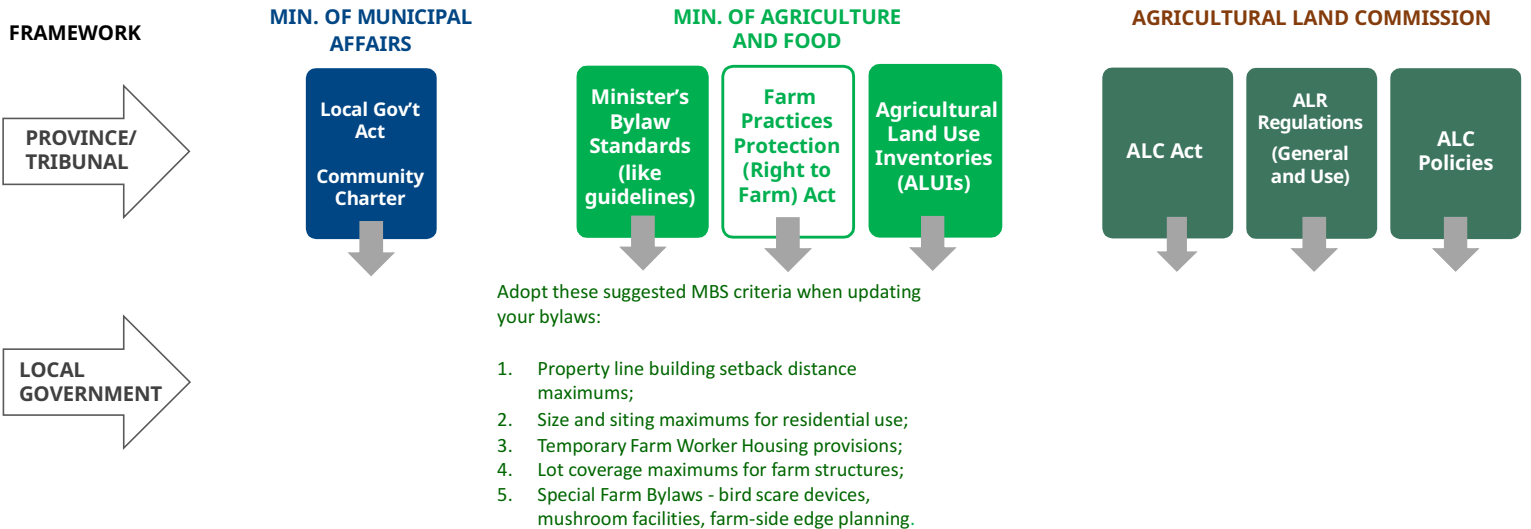
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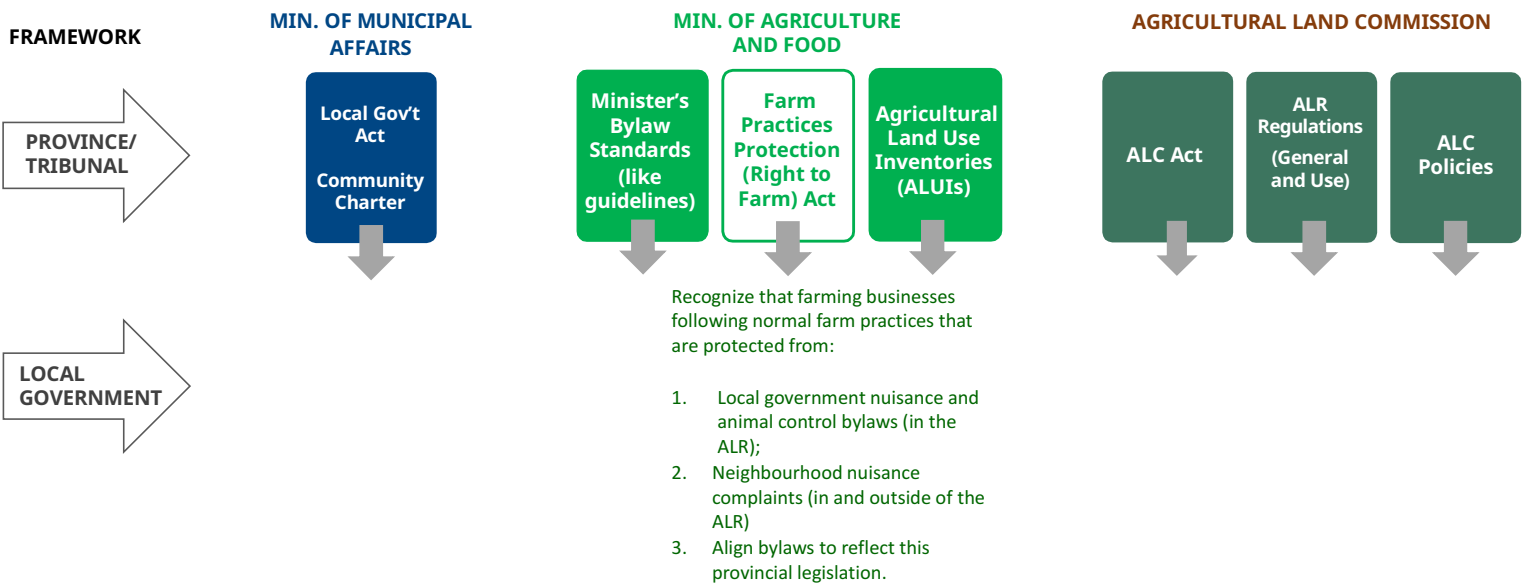
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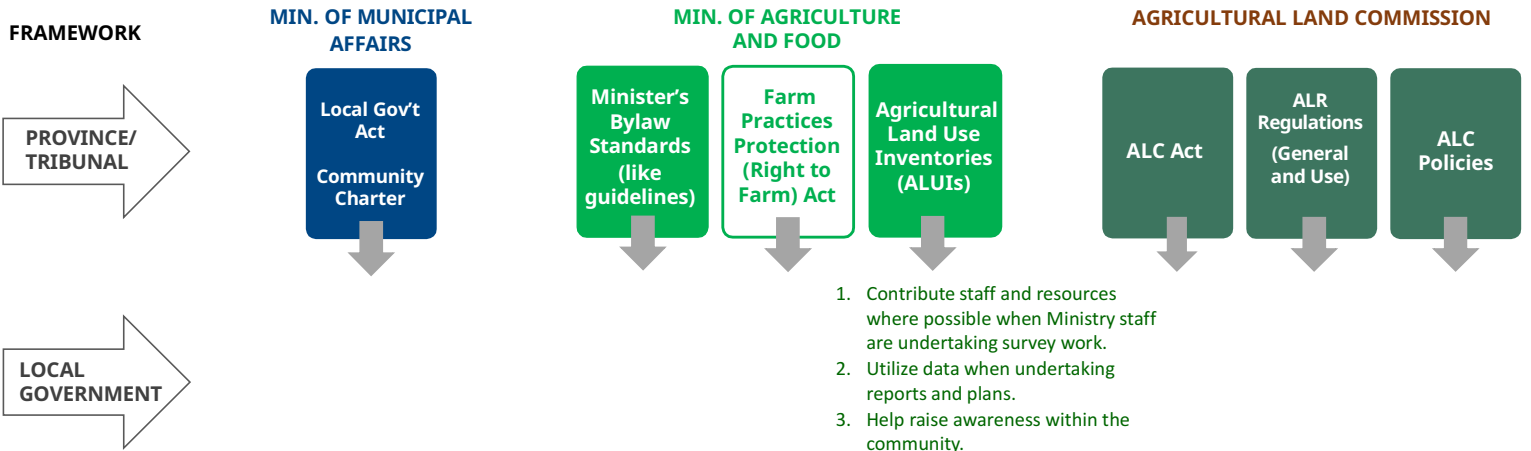
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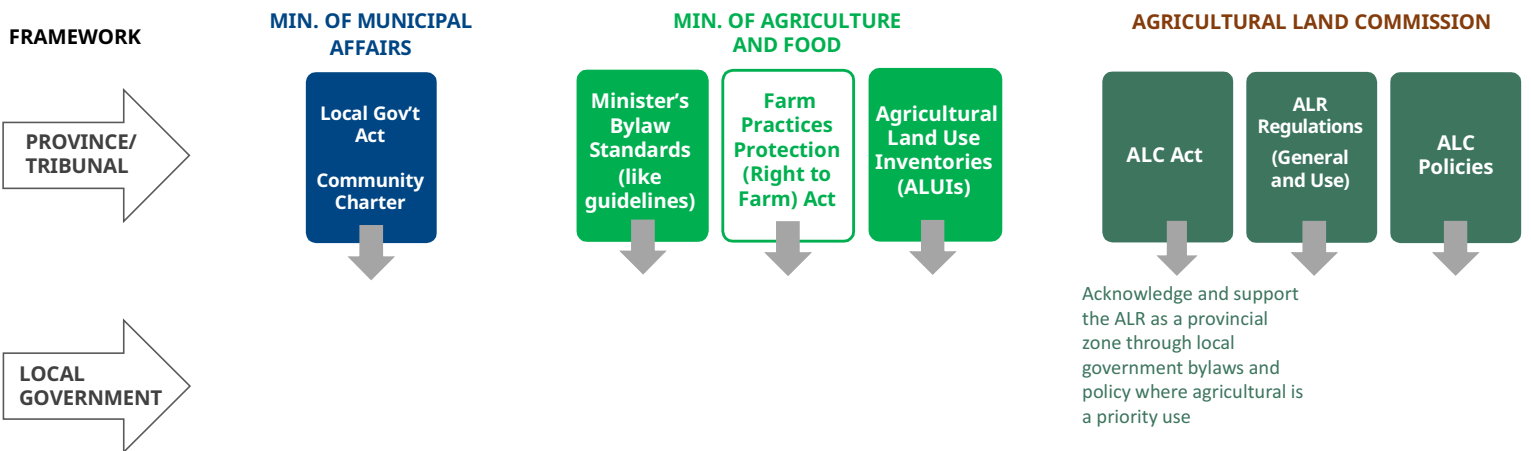
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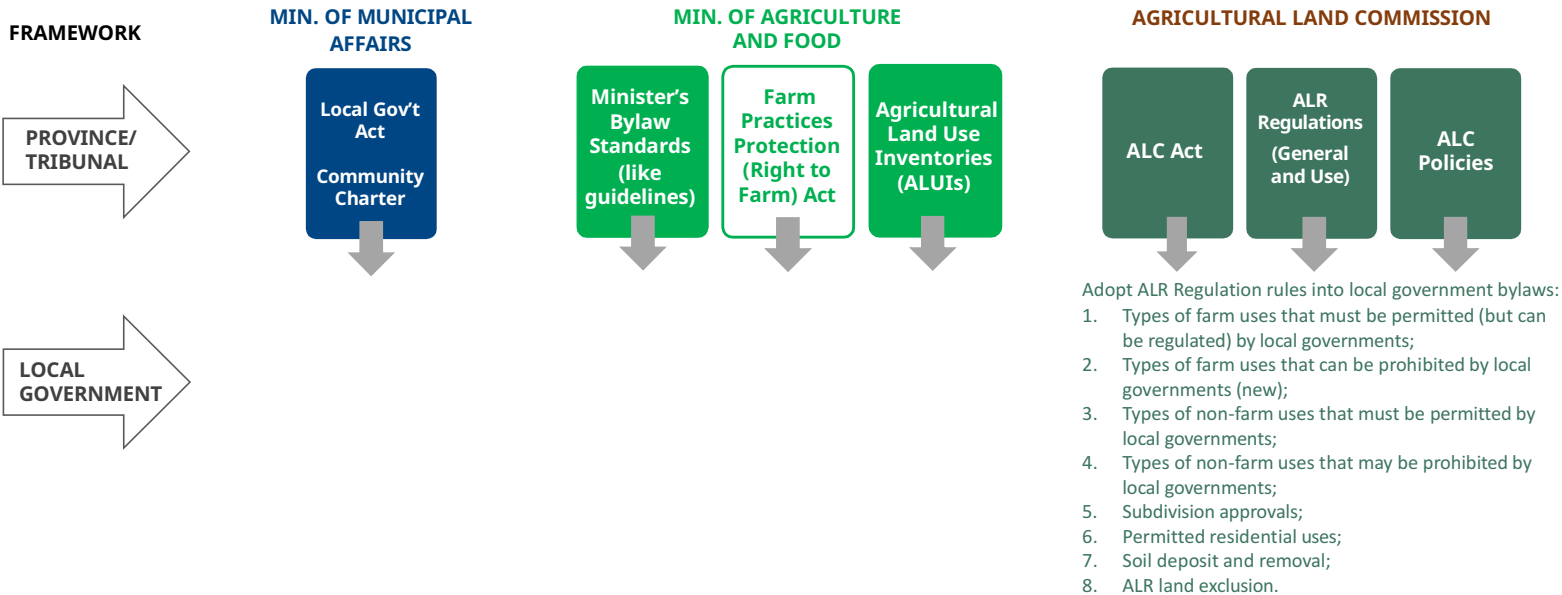
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# Tools in the Toolbox

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How local governments can help B.C. agriculture through land use planning





## Ag Advisory Committees

- Appointed by Council or Regional Board
- Operates under Council or Board's Terms of Reference (TOR)
- Advisory, not decision making
- Day-to-Day & Broader Issues.
- Typically, a Select or Standing Committee

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## AACs – the work

- **Day-to-day (re-active) roles**
  - Zoning Amendments & ALR applications
  - Comment on urban edge development
- **Long range (pro-active) roles**
  - Developing agri-tourism policy
  - Create awareness (e.g. farm tours)
  - Agricultural Area Planning
  - Study impact of recreation on agriculture

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## Key Messages

- Competing demands for limited agricultural land are growing;
- Challenges for farmers are growing;
- Ensuring greater food security requires having the land base available to support the sector;
- Protecting this provincial asset requires a provincial – and local government - effort.
- Local government elected officials can and do make a difference to support farmland, farmers and B.C.'s agricultural sectors.

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## Key Actions

- Help B.C. farmers succeed by reducing their burdens within your control;
- Help create stronger buffers between farmland and other uses. Good fences really do make good neighbours;
- Coordinate with your local governments neighbours to enact bylaws impacting agriculture that are consistent, fair and easy to understand;
- Recognize non-farm uses are having a cumulative affect on the ALR.

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# Questions?

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