



# Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission

## What We Heard Report

*Public Engagement*

*February 05, 2018 – April 30, 2018*

*Prepared for*

**B.C. Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee for  
Revitalizing the Agricultural Land Reserve and the Agricultural Land Commission**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2018, the Honourable Lana Popham, British Columbia Minister of Agriculture, established an independent advisory committee (the Committee) to provide the Province with strategic advice and policy guidance to revitalize the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). From February through April of 2018, the Committee hosted a series of consultations with agriculture stakeholders and public engagement across the Province. This included:

- Holding in-person stakeholder consultations in nine B.C. communities;
- Inviting written email and mail submissions from the agriculture sector and the public; and
- Launching an online public survey where more than two thousand British Columbians provided input.

The following report presents a summary of the results from these engagement activities. The purpose is to share what the Committee heard broadly from British Columbians, and provide follow-up to the Committee's February 2018 public [Discussion Paper](#).

Overall, findings from stakeholder consultations and public engagement supported a much stronger approach to protecting and preserving the ALR for agricultural purposes. There were concerns expressed that ongoing use and removal of ALR lands for development and non-agricultural purposes, including housing, have challenged the resilience of both the ALR and ALC. A majority of participants were receptive to limiting non-farm uses of ALR land to land uses that do not permanently degrade the soil and land surface. Participants of the stakeholder consultations were supportive of some flexibility, where non-farm uses help support farm activities and agricultural production. Similarly, participants generally supported additional uses of the ALR provided those uses were connected to agricultural production. Participants who submitted written responses would like to see greater clarity regarding what land use activities are permitted and prohibited, while community consultation participants wanted to see non-farm and accessory farm uses restricted to non-arable lands.

To support a stronger approach to protecting and preserving the ALR and reduce instances of unauthorized uses of ALR land, participants were very receptive to raising awareness and more stringent enforcement, such as an increased number of enforcement officers and prosecutions. On that note, the majority of participants also suggested that the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and Regulation should provide clearer definitions of what constitutes permissible and prohibited activities in the ALR. Participants share an appetite for greater ALC independence or ability to work in conjunction with the provincial and local governments to control non-farm uses in the ALR, including but not limited to residential uses. The majority of participants suggested that less political influence would help to ensure more stable ALC governance into the future.

Moving forward, the Committee will use the input it received during the engagement process to help develop recommendations for Government's consideration. The Committee will carefully consider the breadth of input received from farming and ranching communities, interested and passionate citizens, and other key agriculture and ALR stakeholders, in developing its recommendations. The Committee's recommendations may include changes to the current regulatory, legislative, and administrative framework to revitalize the ALR and the ALC.

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## 1. CONNECTING WITH BRITISH COLUMBIANS

### 1.1. Background

The British Columbia (B.C.) Ministry of Agriculture has a broad range of responsibilities including support for the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) in its efforts to preserve agricultural land and encourage farming of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) throughout B.C.

The ALR is a provincial zone that encompasses approximately 5% of the provincial land base including both Crown lands and privately owned lands.<sup>1</sup> The ALR was established in the early 1970s to recognize and preserve the limited agricultural land resource available in B.C. and to respond to B.C.'s declining supply of farmable land.

The ALC is an independent administrative tribunal, governed by the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (the Act).<sup>2</sup> The ALC's mandate includes:

- Preserving agricultural land;
- Encouraging farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and
- Encouraging local governments, First Nations, and the provincial government to enable and accommodate agricultural land for farm use in their plans, bylaws and policies.<sup>3</sup>

The Honourable Lana Popham, B.C. Minister of Agriculture, was mandated the task of revitalizing the ALR and ALC.<sup>4</sup> To this end, the Minister established an independent advisory committee (the Committee) to develop recommendations for legislative, regulatory, and/or administrative changes that would: improve the purposes of the ALR and ALC; identify issues, goals, and objectives to help strengthen the ALR and ALC in pursuing these purposes;<sup>and</sup> to present a strategy for achieving these goals.<sup>5</sup>

The Committee's findings to date have led to three broad objectives where the ALR is concerned:

- Preserving the ALR's productive capacity;
- Encouraging farming of ALR land; and
- Strengthening the governance of the ALR and ALC to:
  - Increase public confidence; and
  - Ensure land-use regulation and decisions preserve agricultural land and encourage farming and ranching in the ALR.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Government of British Columbia, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee, 2018a, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (2014). About the ALC. Retrieved July 19, 2018 from the ALC website: [www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alc/content/about-the-alc](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alc/content/about-the-alc)

<sup>4</sup> Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee, 2018a, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee, 2018a, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> Minister of Agriculture's Advisory Committee, 2018a, p.2.

## 1.2. Why did we engage with British Columbians?

Broad public and stakeholder engagement on the revitalization of the ALR and ALC was a key interest of the Minister of Agriculture. The Committee was committed to hearing the perspectives of key stakeholders (for example, landowners, farmers, ranchers, and local governments) and members of the general public that are concerned or could be affected by changes in ALR and ALC policies. Prior to making any policy recommendations to the Minister, the Committee led a series of public engagement initiatives to help inform these recommendations.

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of what the Committee heard from British Columbians, including input from farmers and ranchers, the general public, and regional communities, and to serve as a follow-up to the Committee's February 2018 public [Discussion Paper](#).

## 1.3. What was discussed?

The consultation sessions focussed on the following themes and issues:

- A defensible and defended ALR
- ALR resilience
- Stable governance
- The effectiveness of dividing the ALR into Zones 1 and 2
- Interpretation and implementation of the Act and the Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (the Regulation)
- Food security and B.C.'s agricultural production for domestic consumption and export
- Residential uses in the ALR
- Farm processing and sales of farm products in the ALR
- Unauthorized uses of ALR land
- Non-farm uses and resource extraction in the ALR

## 1.4. How did British Columbians participate?

The Committee provided British Columbians with the following mechanisms to provide input:

- An online survey.** More than 2,300 British Columbians completed an online survey that asked participants to provide their perspectives on each of the main issues. Participants included:
  - Agricultural sector specialists (for example, agrologists)
  - Agricultural interest and farm land preservation groups
  - Agricultural producers, processors, and industry groups
  - Government representatives (local, First Nations, and elected officials)
  - General public (who made up approximately one half of the online survey participants)

- **Email and mail submissions.** The Committee invited B.C. residents to provide written comments about the issues presented in the Discussion Paper. Over 280 written submissions were submitted by representatives of various groups, including the general public, various agricultural industries, and farming and community organizations across the province.<sup>7</sup>
  
- **Community stakeholder consultations.** To understand perspectives on key issues of interest, the Committee provided the [Discussion Paper](#) to stakeholders prior to the engagement activities to inform and to stimulate conversation. The paper was not intended to shape opinions on specific issues. The Committee led consultations with stakeholders in nine farming and ranching communities:
  - Abbotsford
  - Cranbrook
  - Fort St. John
  - Kelowna
  - Kamloops
  - Nanaimo
  - Prince George
  - Quesnel
  - Richmond

The Committee would like to thank all participants for their input. Through these various forms of engagement, the Committee has strengthened its understanding of how British Columbians would like to see the issues that currently affect the ALR and ALC addressed. The remaining sections of this report summarize the feedback on issues provided by British Columbians through each engagement mechanism.

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<sup>7</sup> 264 email submissions and 17 mail submissions

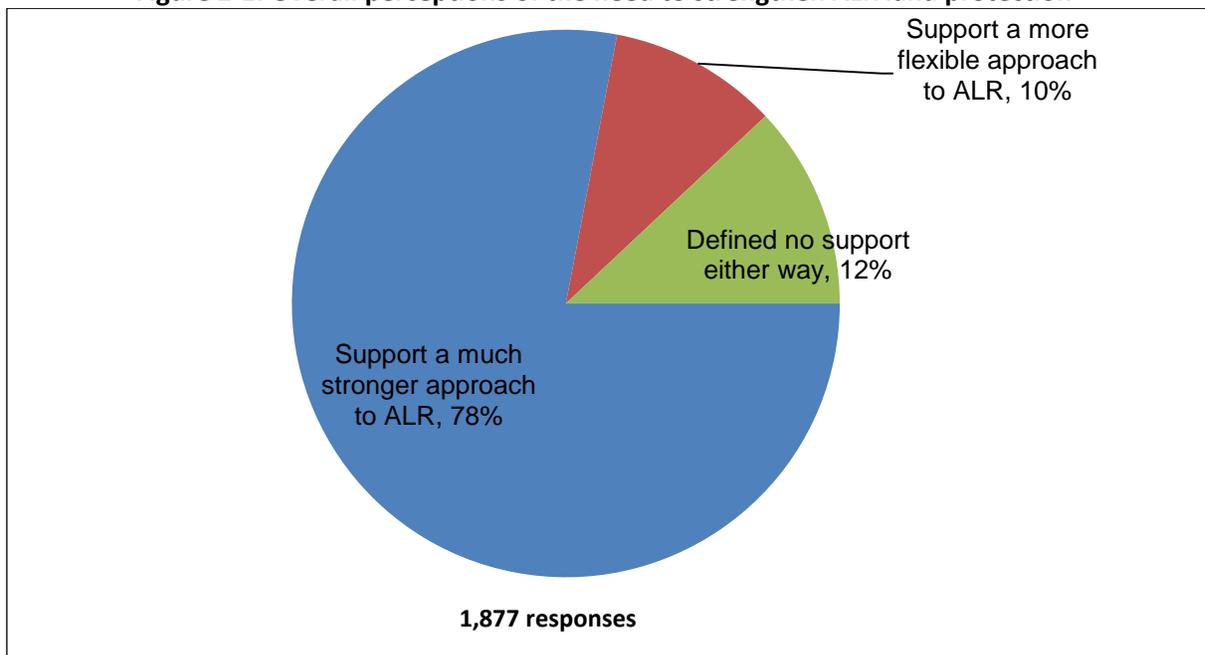
## 2. A DEFENSIBLE AND DEFENDED ALR

The ALR boundary has experienced near constant change over 45 years through boundary reviews, government land use planning, and almost 50,000 individual applications. As a result, the ALR boundary has been viewed as “temporary and adjustable.” Given this view, there have been pressures to develop the ALR for a wide range of purposes. To shed light on the overall perspectives surrounding these issues, participants were asked to comment on the extent to which the ALR should be retained in its current state.

### 2.1. Participants want a stronger approach to preserving the ALR

The majority (78%) of online survey participants supported a much stronger approach to the ALR. In other words, they were strongly in favour of policies and priorities that would minimize (or eliminate altogether) development and removal of land from the ALR (see Figure 2-1). Online survey participants indicated that boundary reviews and non-farm activities (for example, the development of large homes) should be limited, and enforcement and monitoring should be enhanced.

**Figure 2-1: Overall perceptions of the need to strengthen ALR land protection**



Similar results were found across written submissions and the nine community stakeholder consultations. A topic discussed at length across surveys, written submissions, and consultations was ALC boundary reviews of the ALR. The purpose of ALR boundary reviews is to fully assess what portions of land are and are not “appropriately designated as ALR land” and suitable for agricultural use.<sup>8</sup> Some participants felt that more rigorous boundary reviews will help ensure a more defensible and defended ALR.

<sup>8</sup> Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), 2018: [www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alc/content/applications-and-decisions/search-for-applications-and-decisions/boundary-reviews](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alc/content/applications-and-decisions/search-for-applications-and-decisions/boundary-reviews)

Land speculation (in other words, private investors buying farmable land for financial gain) was also widely discussed at the community stakeholder consultations. The overall sentiment was that speculation puts pressure on farmable land within the ALR and should not occur within the ALR boundary: “the key is to focus on what benefits farmers.”

*Deter speculation and foreign ownership on our valuable food land. High costs of farmland are one of the largest barriers to next generations of farmers. Speculation makes farms unaffordable.*

**-Kelowna Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## **2.2. Barriers to a defensible and defended ALR**

When asked to comment on ensuring a defensible and defended ALR, survey participants largely cited reducing flexibility around ALR boundaries, closing loopholes that allow ALR lands to support large homes and non-farm activities, and providing sufficient enforcement and monitoring to ensure ALR lands are being used for agriculture.

Participants who provided written submissions and participated in community stakeholder consultations largely commented that ALR guidelines are not comprehensive enough in how and why ALR lands are considered for exclusion from the ALR.<sup>9</sup>

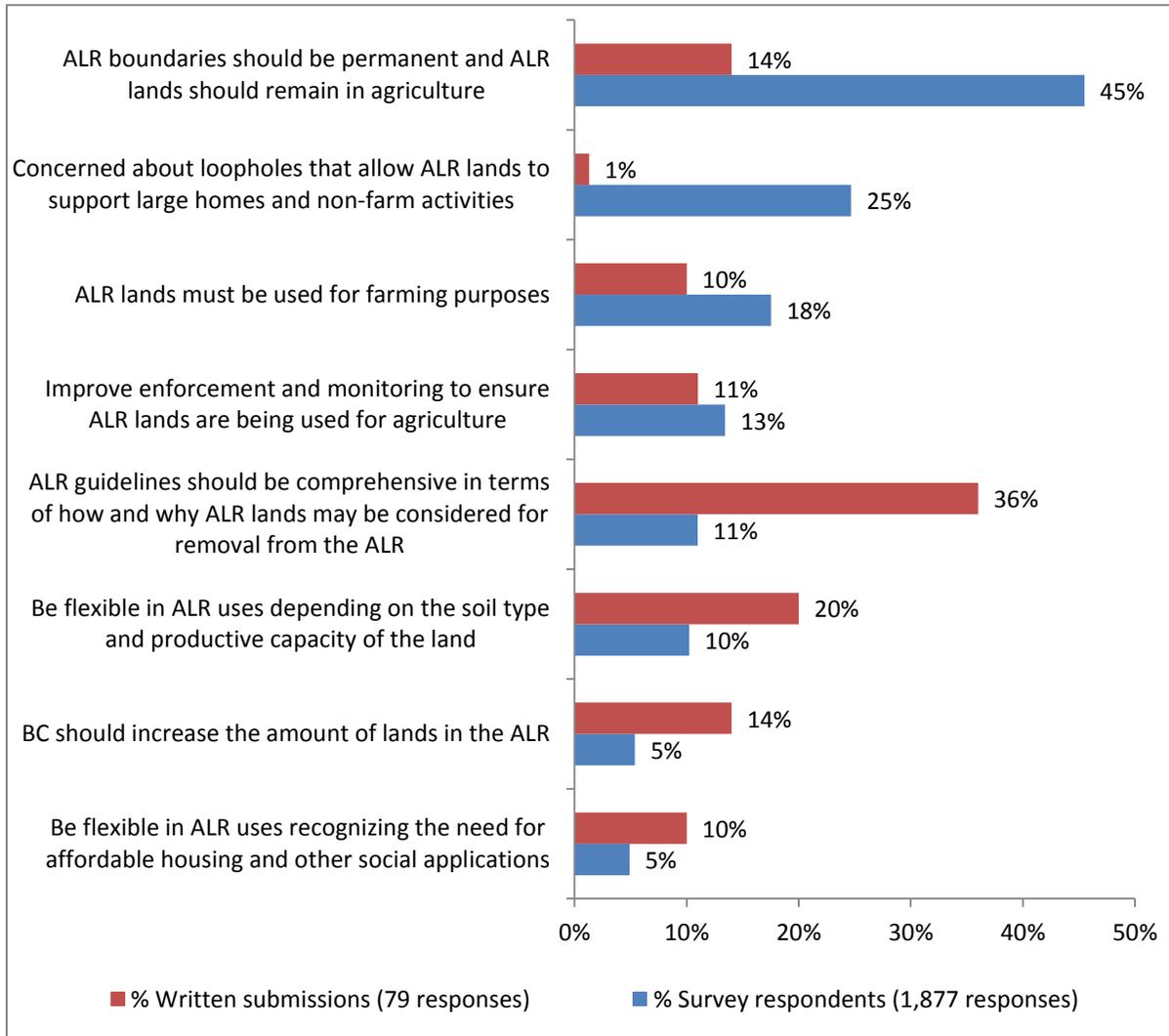
Participants across all engagement initiatives were supportive of strengthening ALR land protection, and limiting speculation and the use of arable ALR lands for urban development (see Figure 2-2).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that the large difference in participant numbers across the three engagement methods makes comparison between these groups difficult.

<sup>10</sup> 1,877 survey participants and 105 written responses for Issue 1

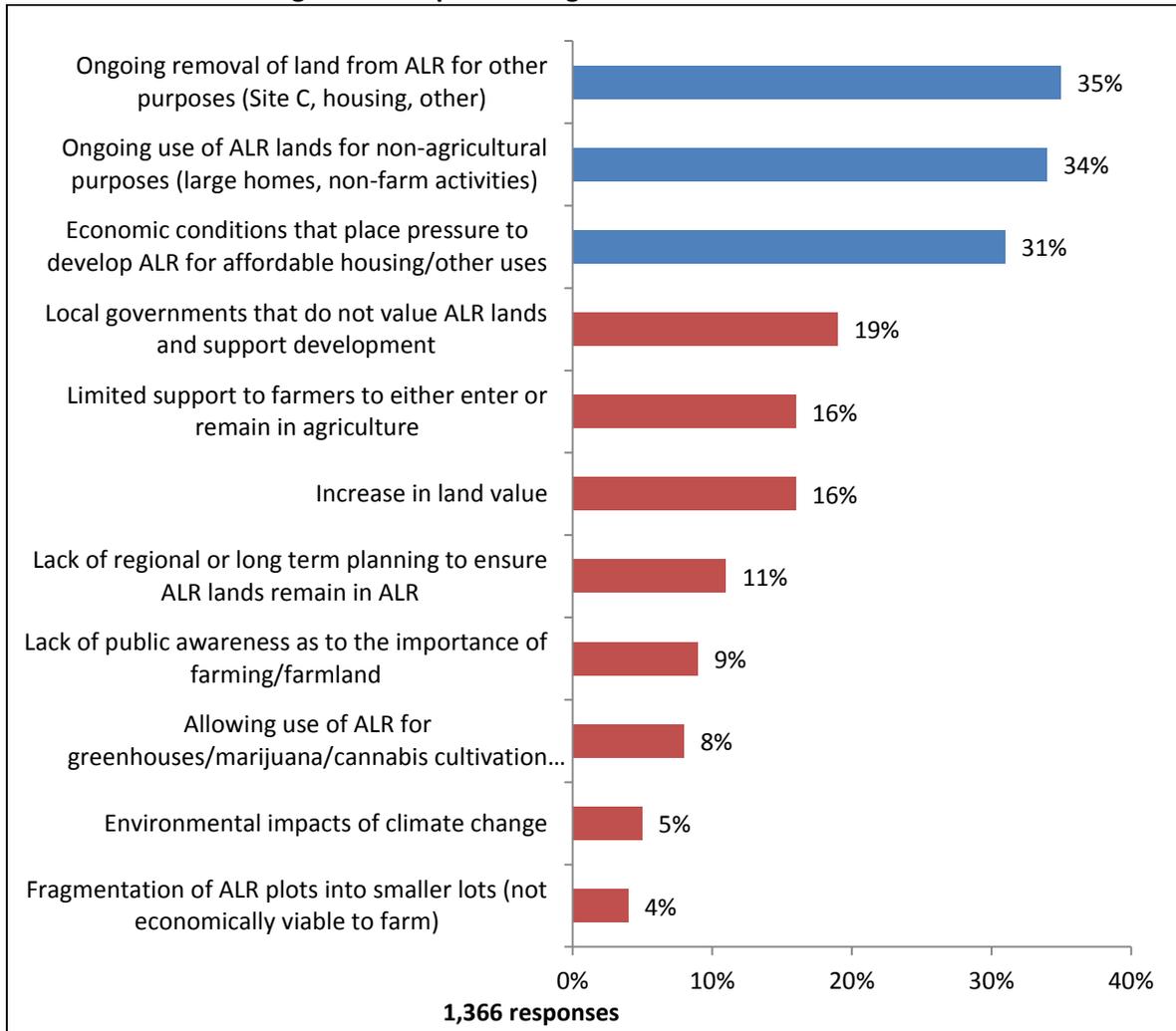
**Figure 2-2: Major issues identified by participants to having a defensible and defended ALR**



### 3. ALR RESILIENCE

Participants were asked about challenges to ALR and ALC resilience into the future. Resilience, here, is the ability of the ALR, ALC, and agriculture in B.C. to resist the pressure for non-agricultural uses and maintain farming stability for future generations. The top **three** challenges to resilience noted by survey participants<sup>11</sup> included removal of ALR land for other non-agricultural purposes, use of ALR land for non-agricultural purposes, and economic conditions that put ALR land under pressure for other uses (for instance, housing developments) (See Figure 3-1). Those who provided written responses also felt that a lack of support to farmers and ranchers and a general lack of regional, long term planning were threats to ALR and ALC resilience. These are discussed in more detail below.

**Figure 3-1: Top 3 challenges to ALR and ALC resilience<sup>12</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> Note: it was difficult to rank issues based on written submissions and regional consultations due to a relatively low number of responses, therefore these ranks are based on survey responses only.

<sup>12</sup> Note: 1,366 survey participants provided comments for this question. Percentages may sum to more than 100% since multiple responses were accepted.

### 3.1. Ongoing removal of land from ALR for development

The most frequently cited challenge to ALR and ALC resilience was the removal of ALR land for non-agricultural uses. Most participants cited industrial uses such as the Site C dam, pipeline projects and other development uses, and felt these permanently destroy arable land within the ALR and should not be permitted.

*“All good farmland should be vigorously protected from speculation and mega projects, like Site C which will flood some of B.C.’s most fertile farmland forever.”*

–General Public, Online Survey Participant

### 3.2. Ongoing use of ALR lands for non-agricultural purposes

The second most frequently cited challenge among survey participants was residential development in the ALR, particularly by landowners who contribute little to no agricultural output. In particular, survey participants cited “mega homes” (i.e., large luxury homes) as a concern, and, in some cases, vacation rental residences for tourists. This was also the most frequently cited issue among those who provided written responses.<sup>13</sup>

*“Development that ruins the land forever must not be allowed to happen.”*

– Farmer/rancher, Island Region, Online Survey Participant

### 3.3. Economic conditions that create pressure to develop ALR land

The third most frequently cited issue among survey participants was that of economic pressure for urbanization within the ALR. Many felt that the “tax breaks” afforded to landowners in the ALR encourage non-agricultural uses for the purpose of incurring higher profits than is possible through farming alone. Often included in these responses were concerns regarding foreign speculation.

*“Unrestricted land speculation from the real estate industry, non-farm uses, and the continued encroachment onto farm land - especially [with] allowing commercial wedding businesses on farmland - result in people buying farmland for the sole purpose of establishing a commercial non-farm business with the cheapest and quickest token agricultural activity to gain farm class.”*

– Local government official, South Coast, Online Survey Participant

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<sup>13</sup> Although the on-going use of ALR lands for non-agricultural purposes

#### 4. STABLE GOVERNANCE

Changes in government direction (for example, following a change in provincial government administration) and legislation appear to easily lead to changes in [ALC governance](#) and decision making processes. Additionally, outside influences often threaten the ALC's independence, thereby negatively impacting the strength of the ALR and ALC. Given these threats, participants were asked to comment on how to maintain ALC stability into the future.

The majority of participants felt that less political influence would ensure stable ALC governance. Specifically, participants felt the Act establishing the ALC should be strengthened, while the ability of political parties to enact changes should be reduced. Many participants also felt that the ALC should be arm's length from government and free of politically driven appointments. Participants also advocated for greater stability and transparency in appointments. Although less commonly cited, a number of participants felt the ALC should be given additional powers related to enforcement and compliance (see Figure 4-1).

***“The ALC must remain independent of partisan politics, and any current government should consult with the ALC before making any changes to the allowable uses of ALR farm land... The decision of the ALC should be final.”***

**- Farmland preservation group, Online Survey Participant**

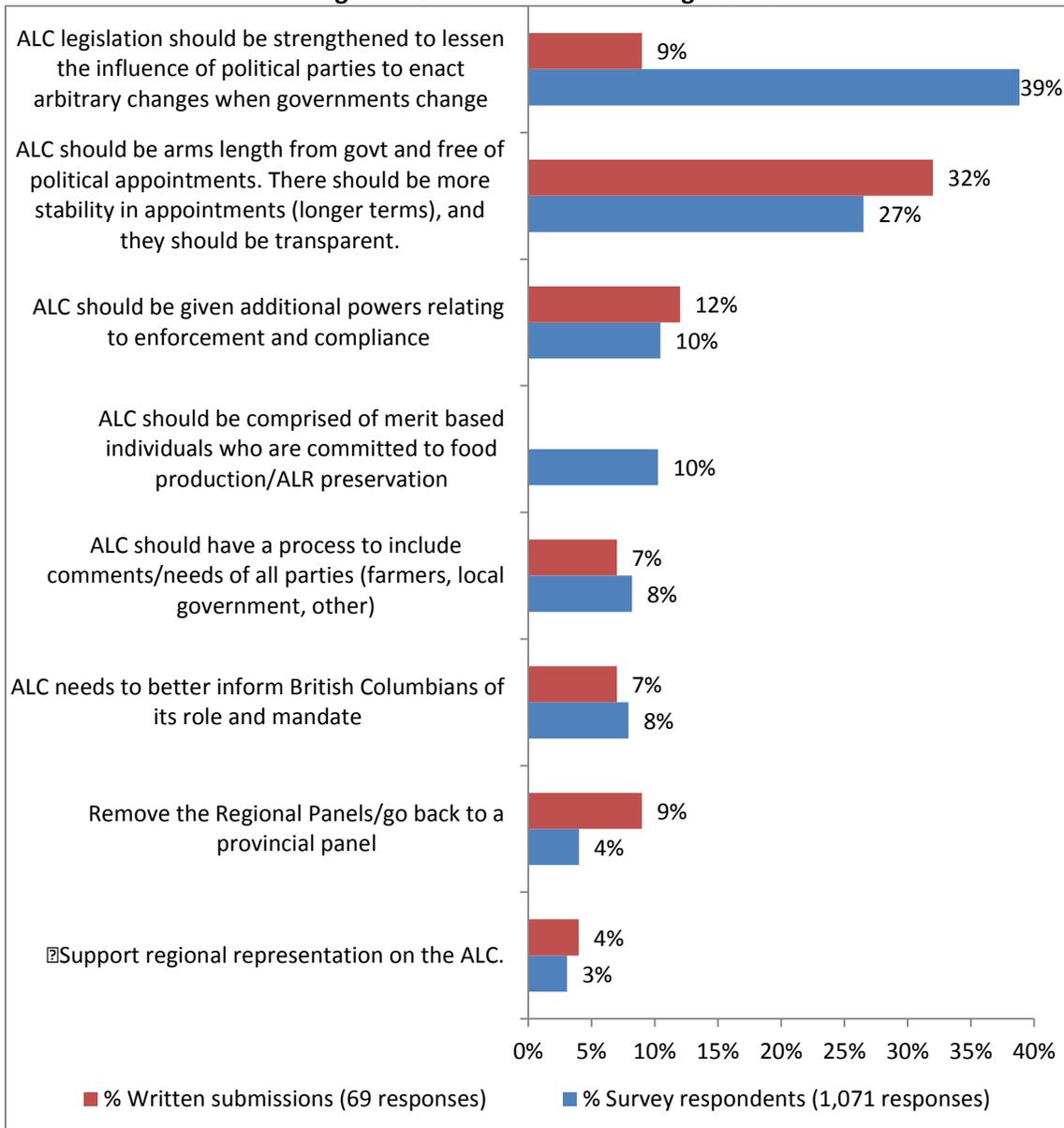
Participants in community stakeholder consultations largely advocated for strong regional perspectives in ALR governance and noted that the ALC should be comprised of individuals who:

- Are committed to protecting the ALR;
- Will encourage farming; and
- Can work with local governments towards preservation efforts.

***There should be a regional approach to all aspects of the ALR, particularly non-productive farmland.***

**- Cranbrook Community Stakeholder Consultation**

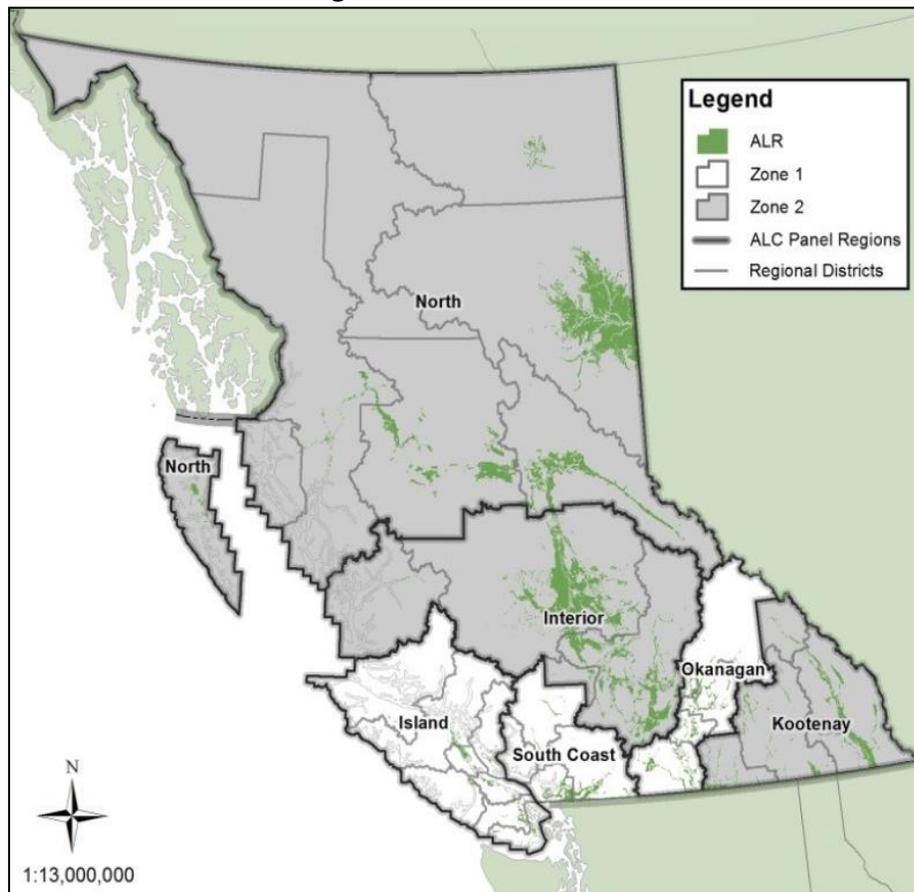
**Figure 4-1: Comments on stable governance**



## 5. EFFECTIVENESS OF DIVIDING THE ALR INTO ZONES 1 AND 2

In 2014, amendments to the Act under Bill 24 included the division of the ALR into **Zone 1** (Vancouver Island, South Coast, and Okanagan Panel regions) and **Zone 2** (Interior, Kootenay, and North Panel regions) (see Figure 5-1).

Figure 5-1: B.C. ALR Zones



Decisions regarding land use in Zone 1 aligned with the ALC’s mandate, emphasize farming and preservation of farmland, and include the following considerations:

- Preserving agricultural land;
- Encouraging farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and
- Encouraging local governments, First Nations, and other agencies to enable farm use and uses compatible with agriculture in the plans, bylaws and policies.<sup>14</sup>

Decisions regarding land use in Zone 2 go beyond farming and additionally consider:

- The agricultural purposes of the ALC; and

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Agriculture’s Advisory Committee, 2018b, p.5

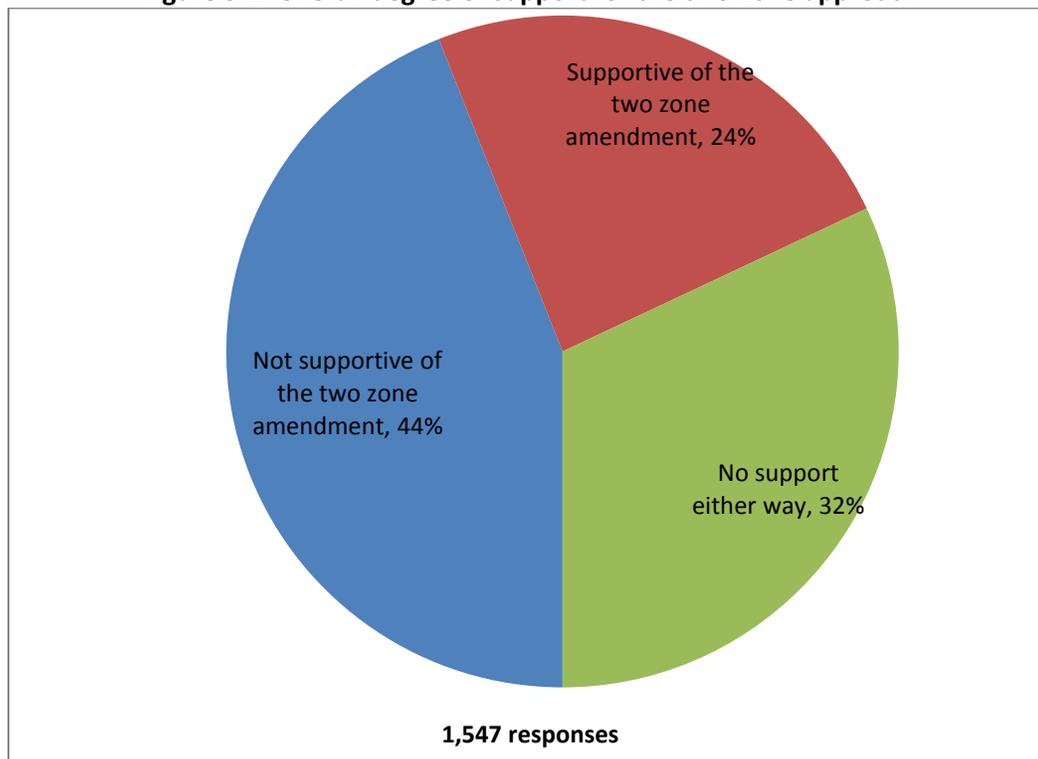
- Economic, cultural and social values, and regional and community planning objections.<sup>15</sup>

The Regulation was also amended to allow additional land uses in the ALR including leases for retired farmers and ranchers and additional family dwellings, if certain conditions have been met (such as size of property). Given that the Provincial ALR is now divided into two zones with two different decision models regarding land use, participants were asked to provide their opinion on this two-zone approach.

### 5.1. Participants advocated for one zone in the ALR

There was less support for a two-zone approach than for a consistent approach across the province among participants of the survey, written submissions, and regional consultations (see Figure 5-2 for the overall support among survey participants).

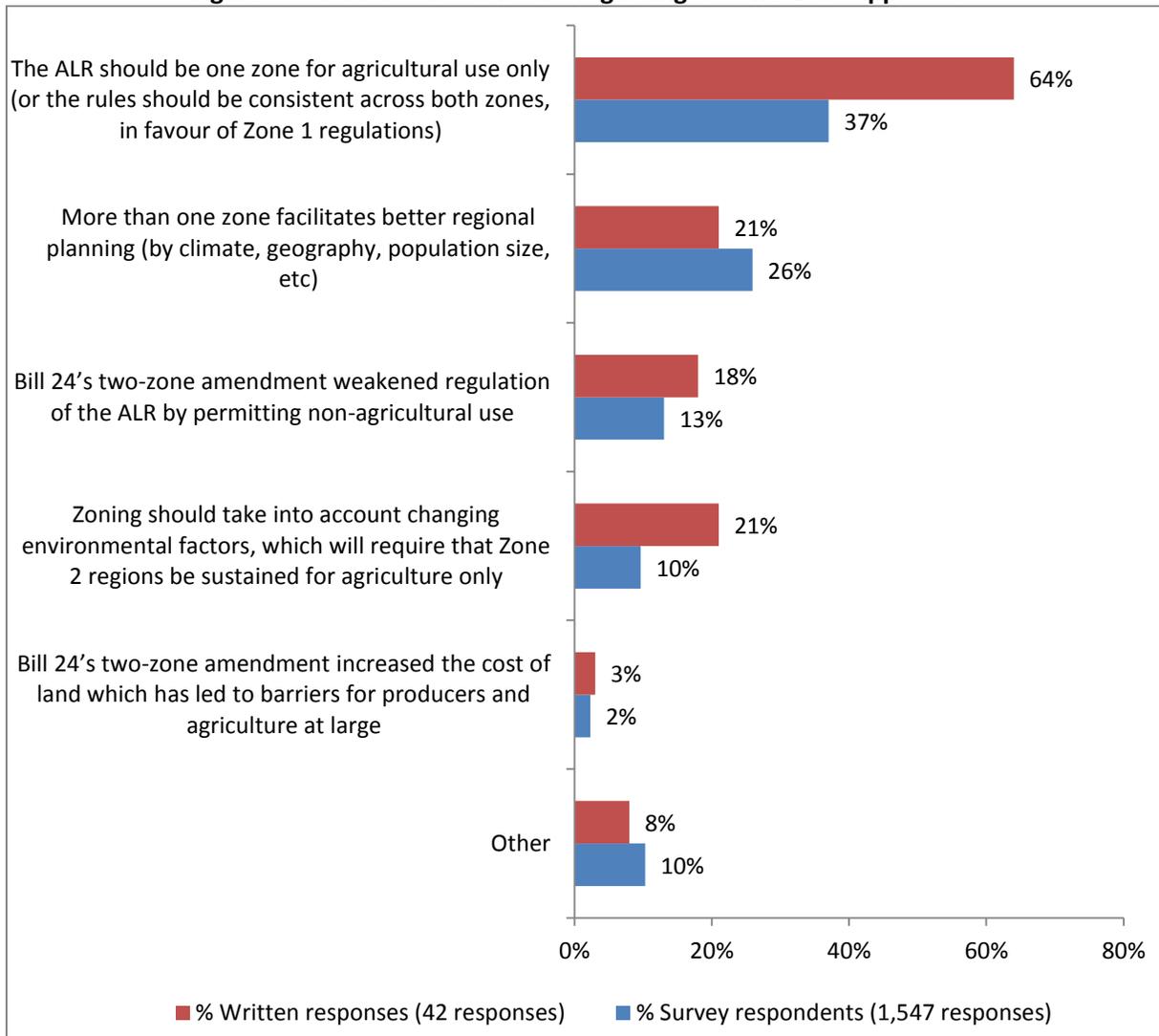
**Figure 5-2: Overall degree of support for the two-zone approach**



While most participants across engagement initiatives felt that the ALR should not be divided, some indicated that at least the rules should be consistent across both zones in favour of Zone 1 considerations (see Figure 5.3). Some participants felt that because the two zones can vary in terms of climate, geography, and population size, more than one zone facilitates regional planning. This caveat was important to those who participated in the Cranbrook regional consultation, which yielded a mixed level of support for the two-zone approach. Survey and written responses regarding the efficacy of Zones 1 and 2 are summarized in Figure 5-3.

<sup>15</sup> ibid

**Figure 5-3: Additional comments regarding the two-zone approach**



## 5.2. Concerns over climate change

Some participants raised climate change as an important factor in considering the zones. The Northern regions (Zone 2) will be in high demand for farming purposes as temperatures rise, and should be sustained for agriculture. In other words, increasing urban development in these areas may permanently destroy arable land and therefore threaten agricultural production in the future.

***With climate change, land in Zone 2 will become more valuable and pressure from residential demands will increase. We need to think about future, not just the present.***

**- Quesnel Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## 6. INTERPRETATION/IMPLEMENTATION OF ALR REGULATIONS

One of the issues with the regulations governing the ALR is that they are ‘permissive.’ In other words, these regulations provide a list of activities that are allowed within the ALR that do not require ALC approval, but do not provide a list of activities that are prohibited. This leaves room for interpretation by land owners, farmers and ranchers, as well as the general public. Further compounding this issue is that the ALC cannot determine when permitted activities are taking place, or when or how permitted activities are being misinterpreted. Given these issues, participants were asked how the ALR regulations can be improved in terms of their clarity and consistency.

Survey responses, written submissions, and community stakeholder consultations all yielded similar results with regard to the interpretation and implementation of ALR regulations.

### 6.1. A greater need for clearer definitions of permitted and prohibited activities

A greater need for clearer definitions of permitted and prohibited activities were the most frequent responses across all engagement initiatives. Most participants, particularly those who provided written responses (see Figure 6-1), felt that ALC policy can be ambiguous in terms of activities that are permitted and prohibited, and that clearer language is necessary for regulatory enforcement in the ALR.

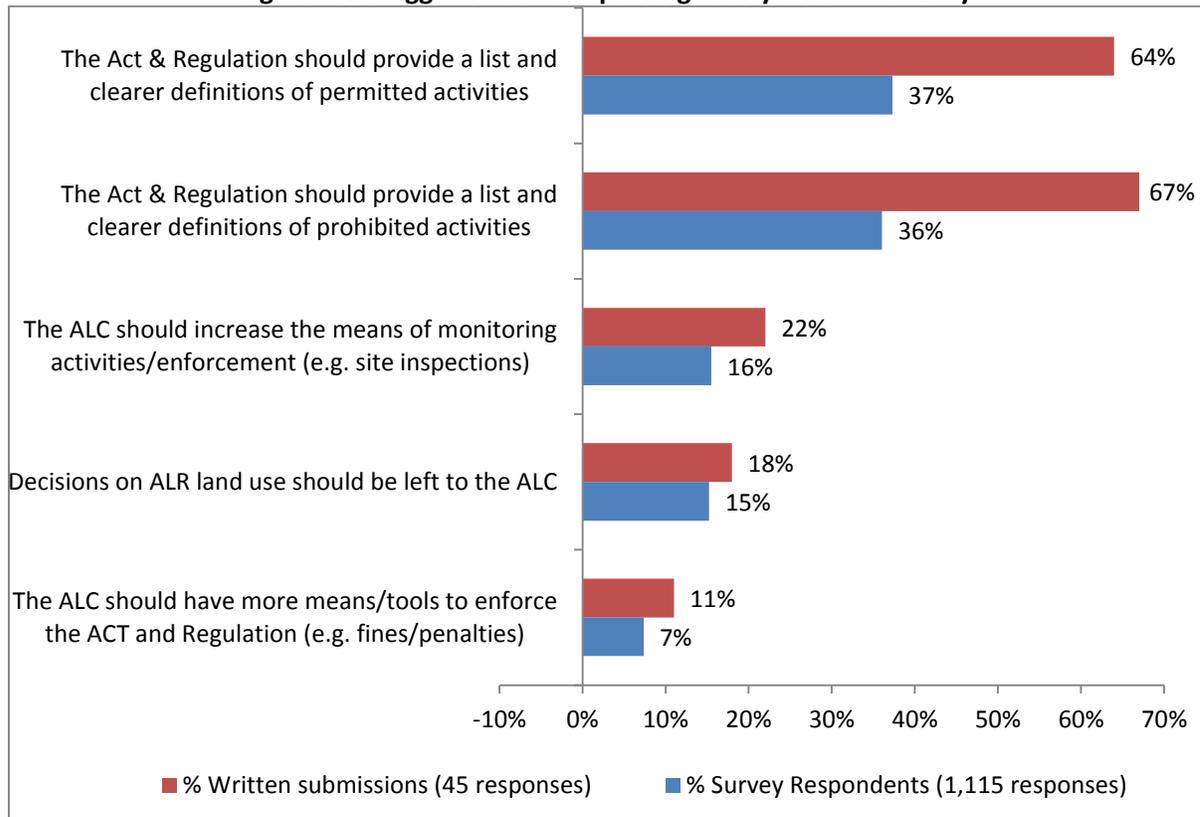
*Where ambiguity exists in ALC regulation, the default position is that the ALC staff will interpret the nuances of the policy. Many local governments throughout the province have already made interpretations of ALC policy.*

*- Written Submission*

### 6.2. A greater need for ALR monitoring and enforcement

Many participants also commented that ALR monitoring and enforcement need to be increased to ensure only permitted activities are taking place within the ALR. Participants were more in favour of proactive regulatory mechanisms (e.g. site inspections) that would ensure prohibited activities were not taking place at all than they were of reactive regulatory mechanisms (e.g. fines and penalties). Though to a lesser extent, many participants also felt that decisions on ALR land use should be left to the ALC (see Figure 6-1).

**Figure 6-1: Suggestions for improving clarity and consistency**



## 7. FOOD SECURITY AND B.C.'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

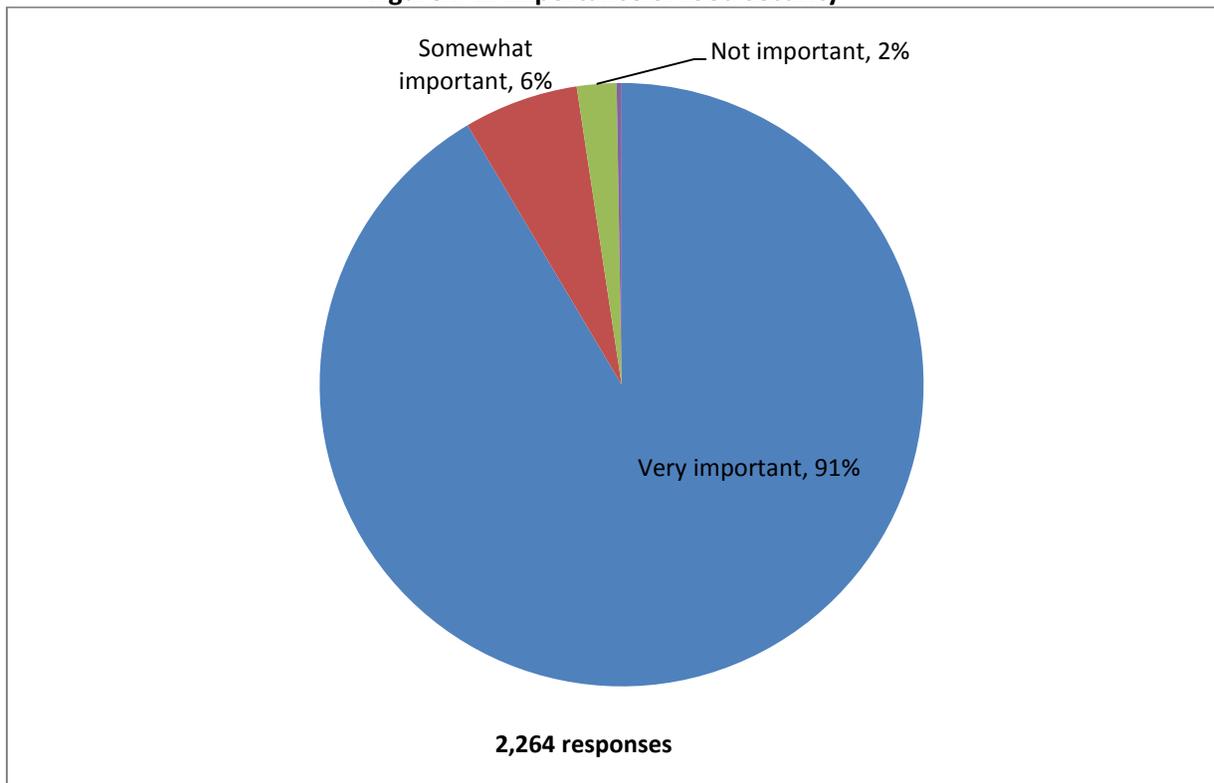
The issue of food security, in particular food source and quality, permeates public discourse in B.C. along with concerns regarding the ALR's ability to accommodate food production for local consumption and export. However, discussions regarding competing land uses (e.g. for export and trade) often overlook the pivotal role of agriculture in B.C.'s economy. To understand how people respond to these issues, and to understand how much importance they place on food security and B.C.'s role in exporting agricultural goods, participants were asked the following questions:

- How important is the province's ability to produce and provide food to the residents of B.C.?
- How important is the province's ability to produce and provide food for export?
- Do you have any additional comments about food security and B.C.'s agricultural contribution?

### 7.1. Food security is of high importance to participants

When asked to rate the importance of B.C.'s ability to produce and provide food to its residents, almost all online survey participants rated it as very important (91%) (see Figure 7-1).<sup>16</sup>

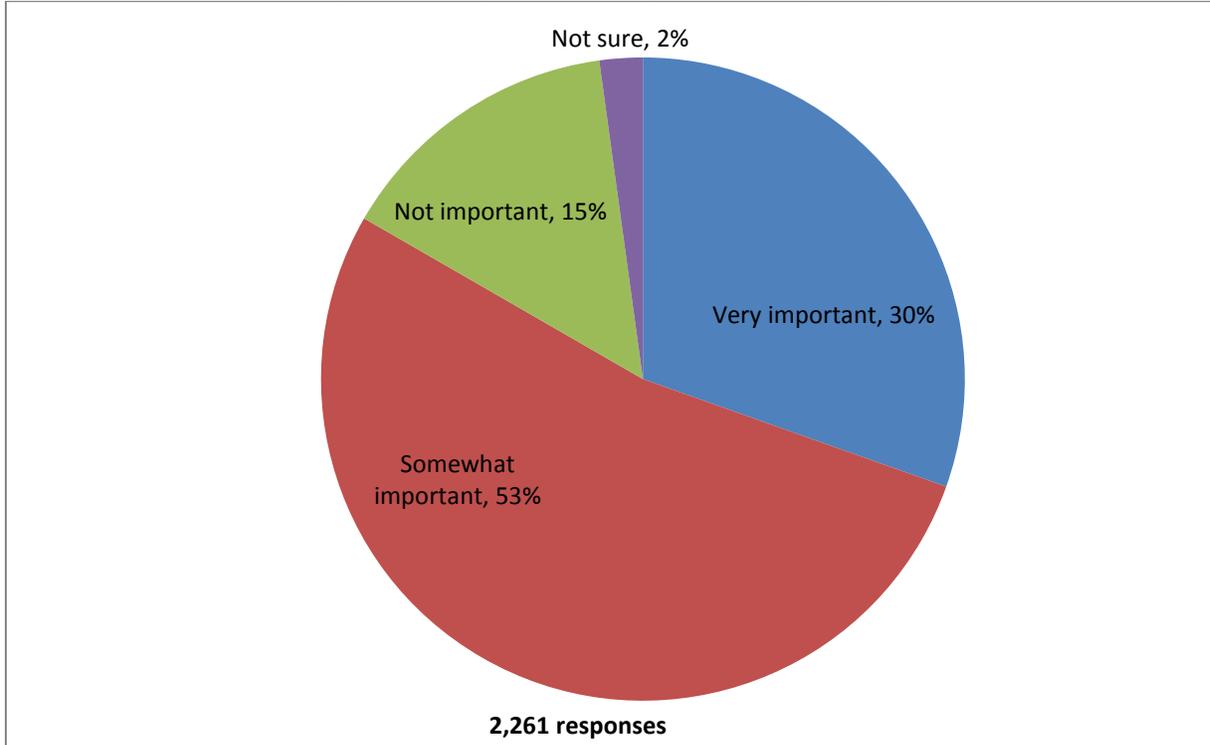
**Figure 7-1: Importance of food security**



<sup>16</sup> Very few participants were not sure about their responses (<1% for food security), therefore their responses were excluded from the Figure.

On the question of agricultural exporting, less than a third of online survey participants felt that it was very important (30%) (see Figure 7-2).

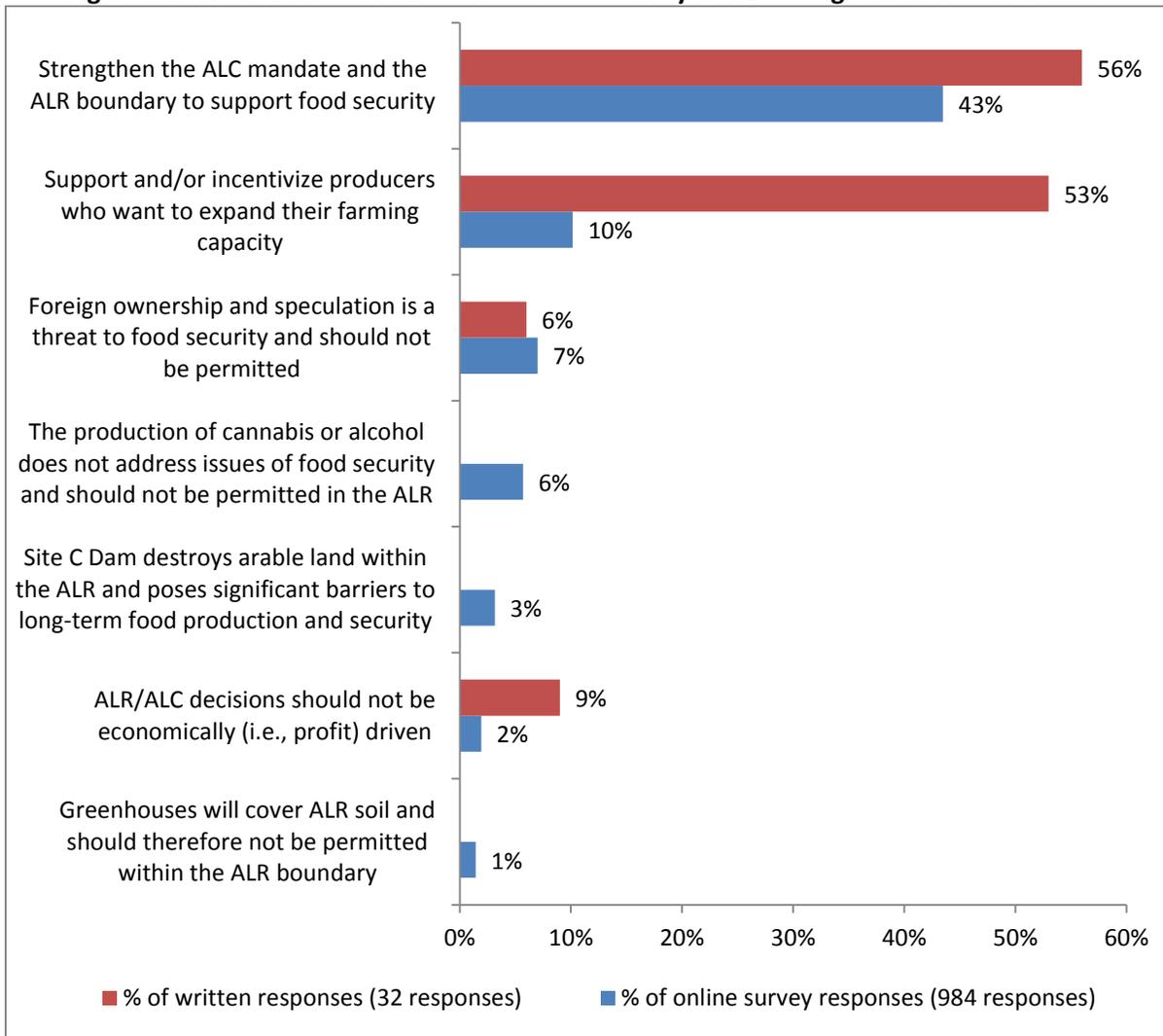
**Figure 7-2: Importance of agricultural exporting**



## 7.2. Participants want a stronger ALC mandate and ALR boundary

The most frequent comment made by participants of both written submissions and online surveys regarding the issue of food security and agricultural exporting was with respect to the ALC mandate and ALR boundary needing to be strengthened to protect food security. Additionally, participants providing written submissions also voiced interests in seeing the ALC’s mandate expand to provide increased support and incentives to producers who want to expand their farming capacity (see Figure 7-3).

**Figure 7-3: Additional comments about food security and B.C.'s agricultural contribution**



Participants of community stakeholder consultations also supported strengthening the ALC mandate and ALR boundary to support food security, and support/incentives for producers who want to expand their farming capacity.

*Canada is known for its safe food. There are many innovative ways to develop export markets, if we have affordable lands to grow products and access to agricultural water.*

**-Quesnel Community stakeholder Consultation**

## 8. RESIDENTIAL USES IN THE ALR

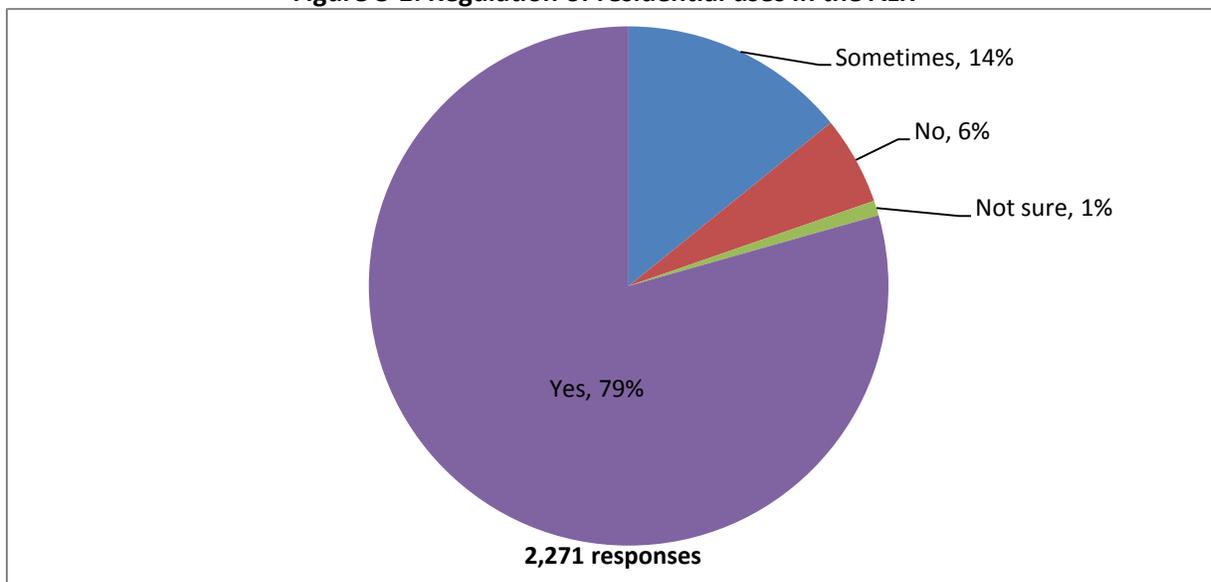
Residential development in the ALR ranges from primary residences, additional dwellings and farm worker housing to “mega homes” and “lifestyle estates.” In some cases, additional dwellings are necessary to maintain agricultural operations (e.g. farm worker housing). In other cases, there is concern they are occupying increasingly large tracts of arable land without contributing to agricultural output, such as with lifestyle estates. Another concern is increased residential property values in the ALR as a result of lifestyle estates, which create financial barriers and limit access to land for some agricultural producers. To this end, the Committee’s public engagement included questions to understand perspectives on regulation and governance over residential uses in the ALR:

- Should residential uses in the ALR (such as number, size, and siting) be regulated?
- Who should regulate residential land uses in the ALR?
- Do you have any additional comments about residential uses in the ALR?

### 8.1. Participants want strong regulation of residential uses in the ALR

When asked whether residential uses in the ALR (such as number, size and siting) should be regulated, a large majority (almost 80%) of online survey participants were in support of stronger regulation. Some online survey participants (14%) felt that residential uses in the ALR should only be regulated sometimes, and a few (6%) felt that they should not be regulated at all (see Figure 8-1).

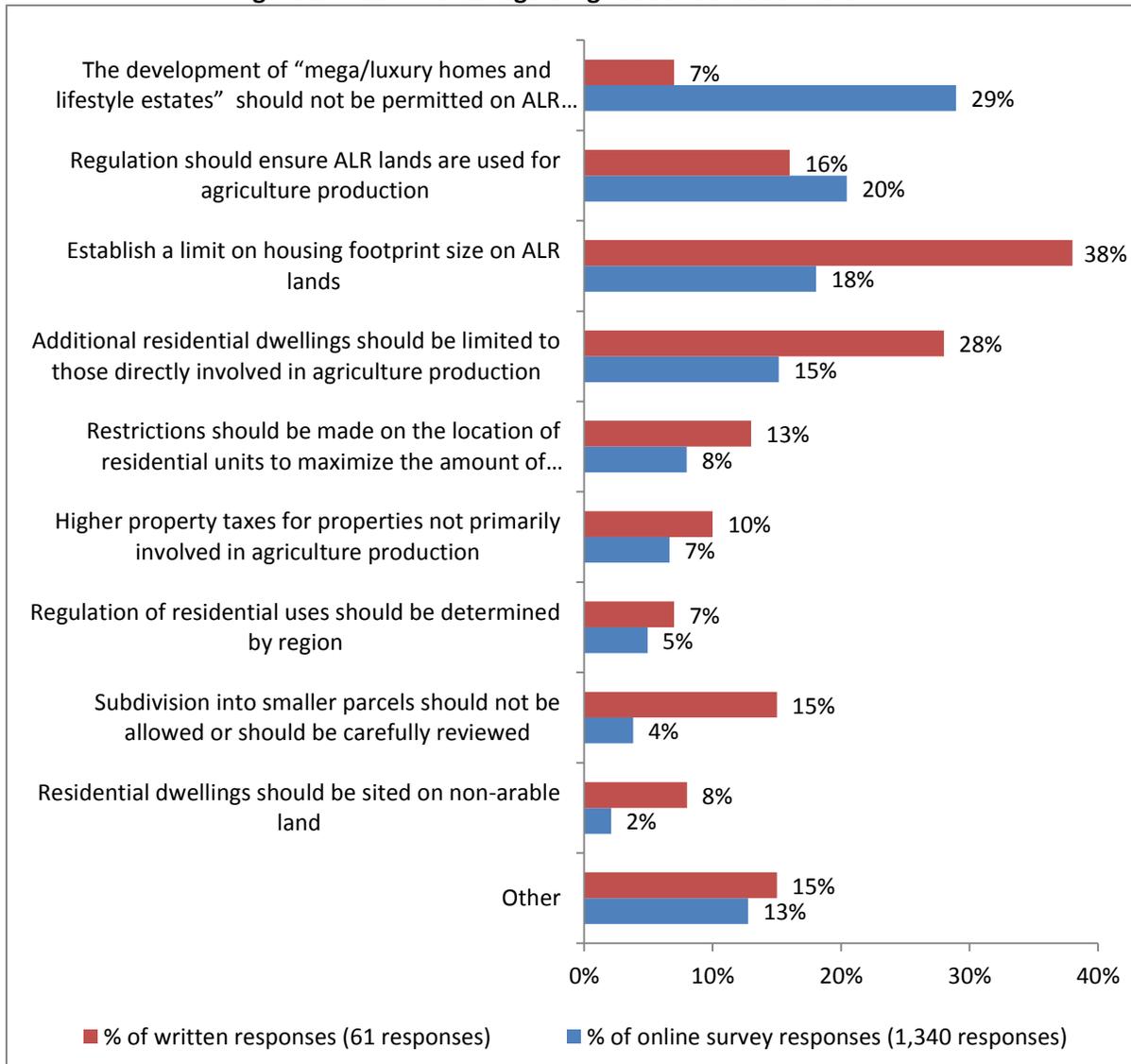
**Figure 8-1: Regulation of residential uses in the ALR**



When asked for further comment on regulation of residence size, siting and numbers, almost a third of all online survey participants (29%) did not want “mega homes” and “lifestyles estates” permitted in the ALR. Similarly, 20% of online survey participants supported regulation to ensure ALR lands are used for agricultural production, 18% supported establishing limits on housing footprints in the ALR, and 15% supported any additional residential dwellings in the ALR be limited to those directly involved in agricultural production.

Participants providing written submissions supported the establishment of size limits on housing footprints in the ALR (38%) and limiting additional residential dwellings to those directly involved in agricultural production (28%) (see Figure 8-2).

**Figure 8-2: Comments regarding residential uses in the ALR**



Community stakeholder consultation participants supported limiting additional residential dwellings to those directly involved in agricultural production and restricting the subdivision of the ALR into smaller parcels.

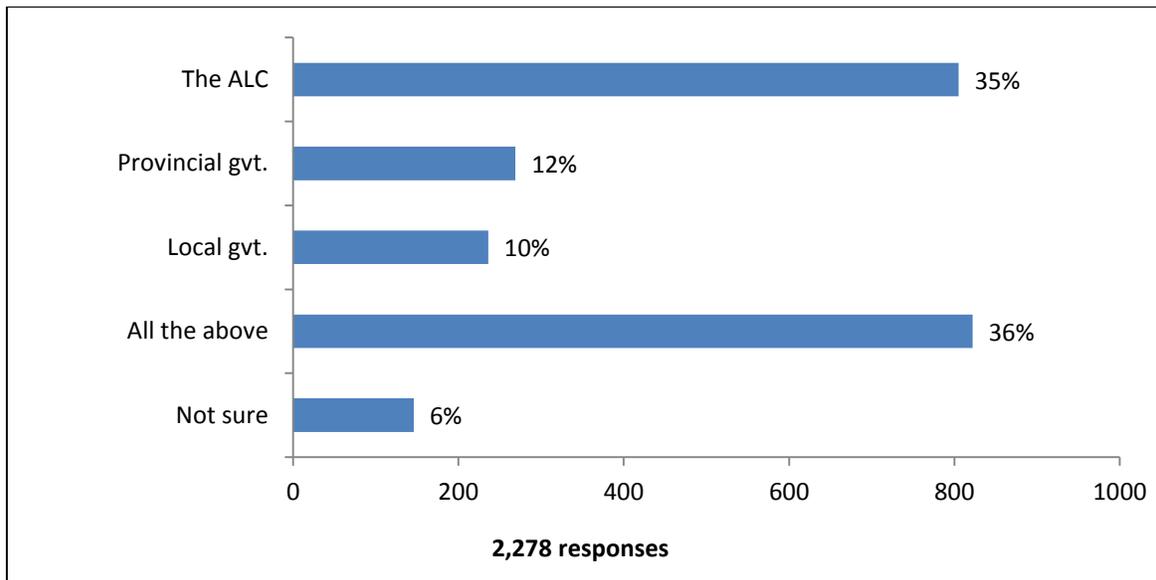
*Not enough housing. ALC restrictions on farm worker housing needs a review. Look at creative planning tools for the home plate – make sure workable land is not unduly alienated.*

**-Nanaimo Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## 8.2. A strong ALC regulatory role in ALR residential uses

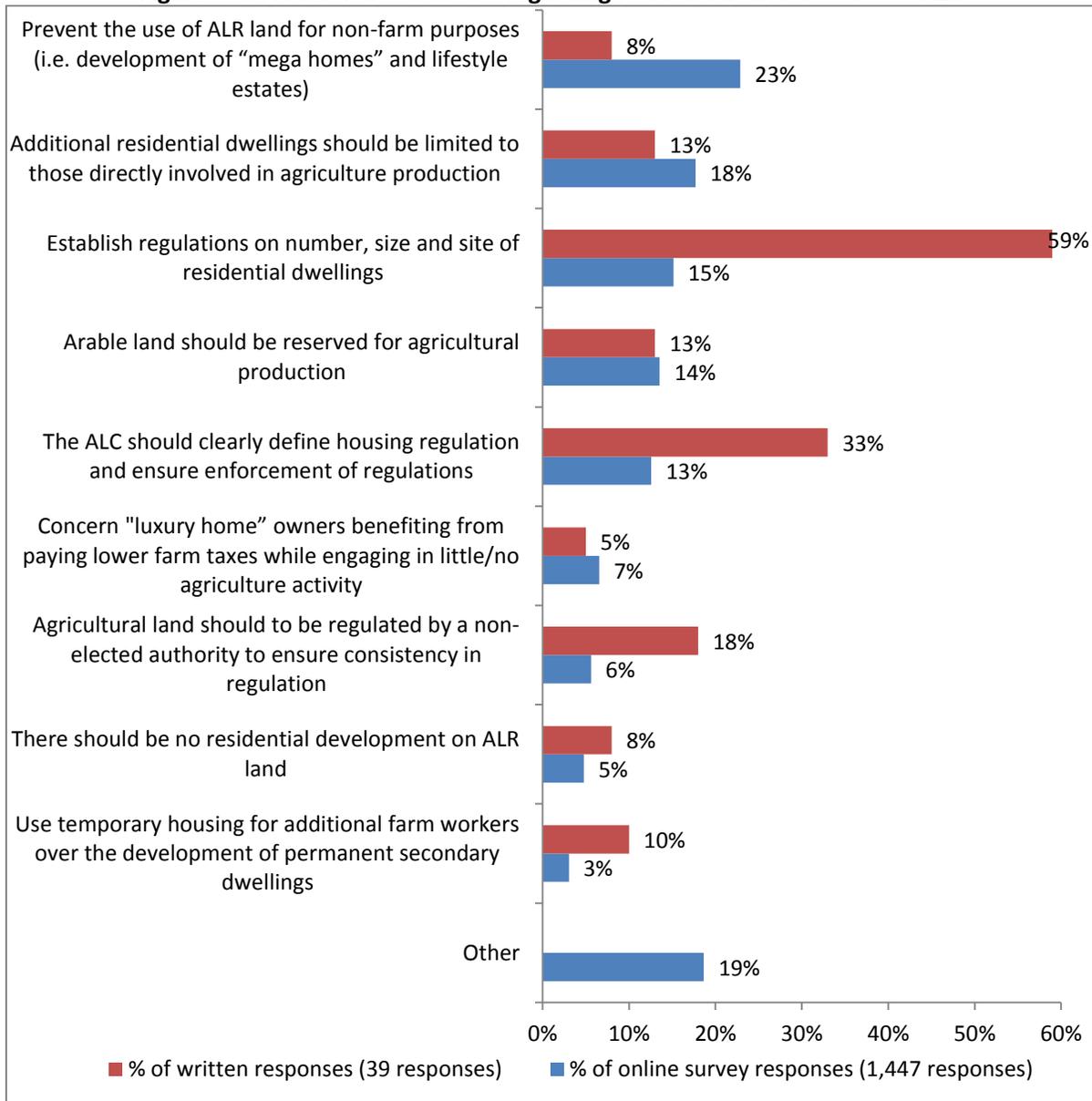
More than a third of online survey participants felt that the ALC and provincial and local governments should all be responsible for the regulation of residential uses in the ALR (36%). An almost equal number of online survey participants felt that regulation should fall under the ALC only (35%), followed by provincial (12%) and local (10%) governments. Overall, it appears most online survey participants feel the ALC should regulate residential uses in the ALR, and this should occur in conjunction with local and provincial governments (see Figure 8-3).

**Figure 8-3: Who should regulate residential uses in the ALR**



Participants who submitted written responses were in favour of regulating the number, size, and siting of residential dwellings on the ALR (59%) and for the ALC to more clearly define housing regulations and better ensure regulations are enforced (33%) (see Figure 8-4).

**Figure 8-4: Additional comments regarding residential land uses in the ALR**



Participants of the community stakeholder consultations were also strongly supportive of establishing regulations on the number, size, and siting of residential dwellings in the ALR, and greater ALC definition around housing regulations and steps to ensure regulations are enforced.

***Whatever the maximum house size is what they will build. The Province needs to solve this problem. Standardized house sizes should be administered by ALC, not up to each individual city to implement.***

**-Abbotsford Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## 9. FARM PROCESSING AND SALES OF FARM PRODUCTS IN THE ALR

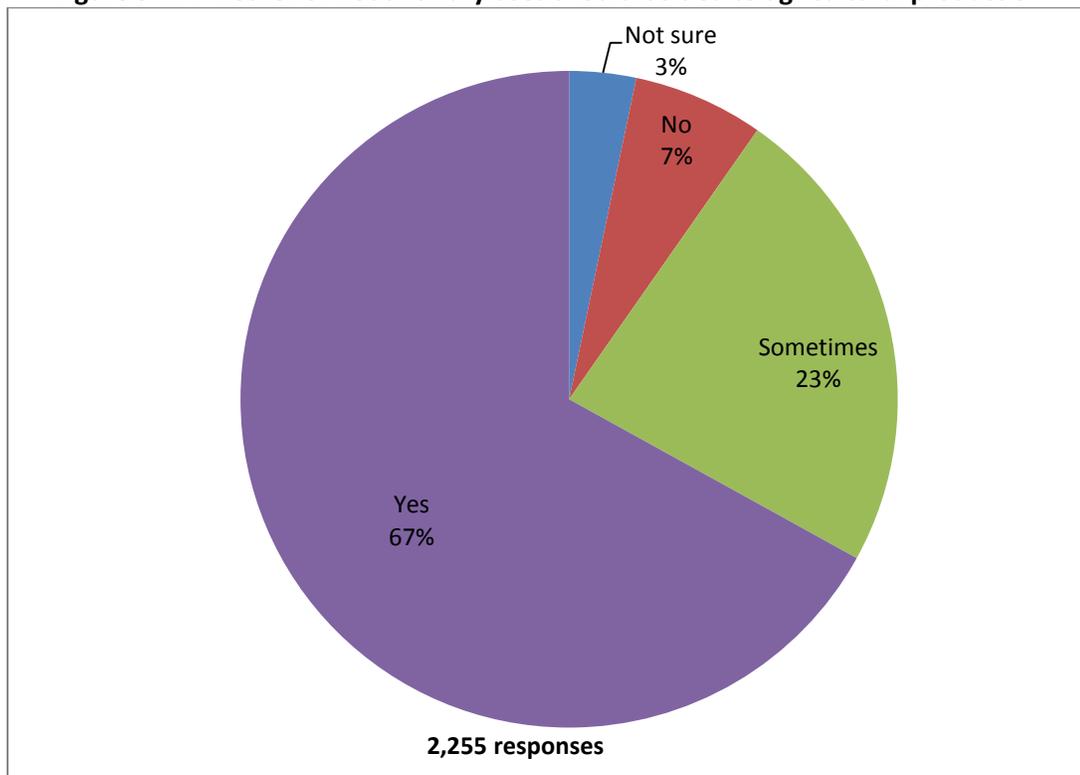
Under the Regulation, ALR landowners are able to process and sell products associated with their farm or a registered co-operative of processing and retail facilities (e.g. farm stands, wineries). These facilities may incorporate other ancillary uses such as event spaces (e.g. for weddings, tourists), galleries, and parking lots. There are concerns about the extent to which these facilities occupy arable land without contributing agricultural output. Additionally, concerns have also been raised in regard to the purchasing of ALR land for “other ancillary permitted uses” and a very limited number of farm products for sale.<sup>17</sup> With this in mind, participants were asked the following questions:

- Should ancillary uses on the parcel be tied to agricultural production?
- Do you have any additional comments about farm processing and sales in the ALR?

### 9.1. Participants feel ancillary uses in the ALR should be tied to agricultural production

The majority (67%) of online survey participants felt that ancillary uses on the parcel should be tied to agricultural production in the ALR, while 23% felt that they should only sometimes be tied to agricultural production. Few (7%) felt that ancillary uses should not be tied to production (see Figure 9-1).

**Figure 9-1: Whether or not ancillary uses should be tied to agricultural production**

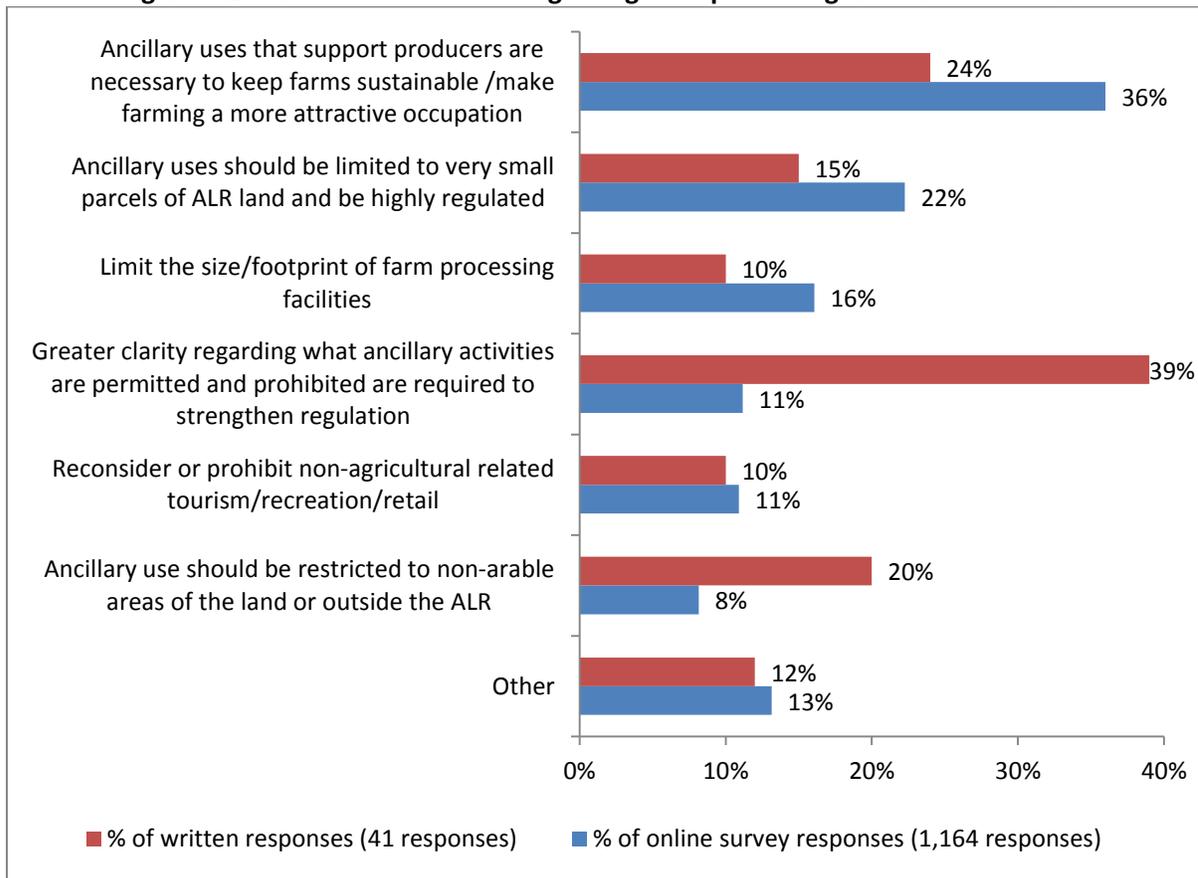


<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Agriculture’s Advisory Committee, 2018b, p.7

## 9.2. Participants generally support ancillary uses that support farmers

When asked to comment on farm processing and sales in the ALR, some participants supported ancillary uses of ALR land with over a third of online respondents and a quarter of written submissions noting ancillary uses that support producers are necessary to keep farms sustainable and to make farming a more attractive occupation. Almost a quarter of online survey participants indicated ancillary uses should be limited to small parcels of ALR land and their applications should be highly regulated, while 39% of participants who submitted written responses felt greater clarity was needed on which ancillary activities are permitted and prohibited to strengthen regulation (see Figure 9-2).

**Figure 9-2: Additional comments regarding farm processing and sales in the ALR**



Some community stakeholder consultation participants were receptive to ancillary uses as necessary for sustainability of farming, but with limitations. Notably, community stakeholder consultation participants suggested that ancillary uses should be restricted to non-arable lands.

**In rural zones, allow agricultural uses but limit the retail sale aspect to a certain amount.**

**-Prince George Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## 10. UNAUTHORIZED USES OF ALR LAND

ALC compliance and enforcement officers handle up to 400 files annually related to “complaints, investigations, or actions on unauthorized uses”. These unauthorized uses of ALR land include:

- Illegal filling (e.g. “dumping soil, construction waste, and concrete”);
- Commercial uses (e.g. recreational vehicle storage); and
- Residential uses (e.g. additional dwellings).

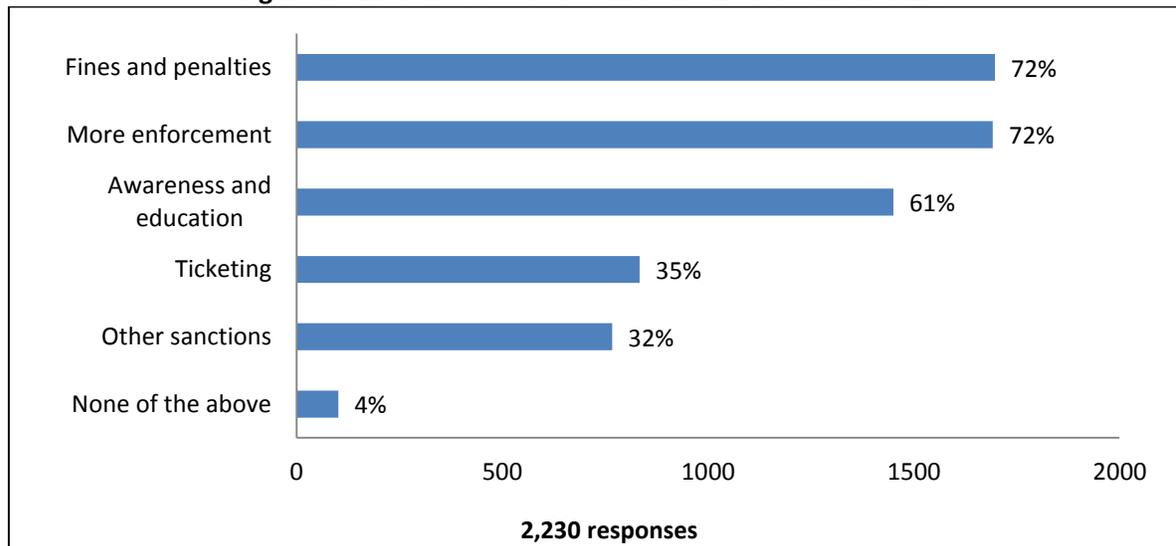
Many of these activities destroy ALR land and sometimes this damage is permanent. With this in mind, the engagement activities asked participants the following questions:

- What do you think would decrease the instances of unauthorized use in the ALR?
- Do you have any additional comments on unauthorized uses in the ALR?

### 10.1. Participants want stricter enforcement to decrease unauthorized uses in the ALR<sup>18</sup>

Among the sanctions that could reduce instances of unauthorized use in the ALR, online survey participants selected fines and penalties (72%), more enforcement (72%), and awareness and education (61%) more frequently than ticketing (35%) or other sanctions not listed (32%). In other words, according to online survey participants, both proactive (e.g. awareness and education) and reactive (e.g. fines and penalties) regulatory mechanisms are required to reduce unauthorized land uses in the ALR (see Figure 10-1).

**Figure 10-1: How to decrease unauthorized use in the ALR<sup>19</sup>**



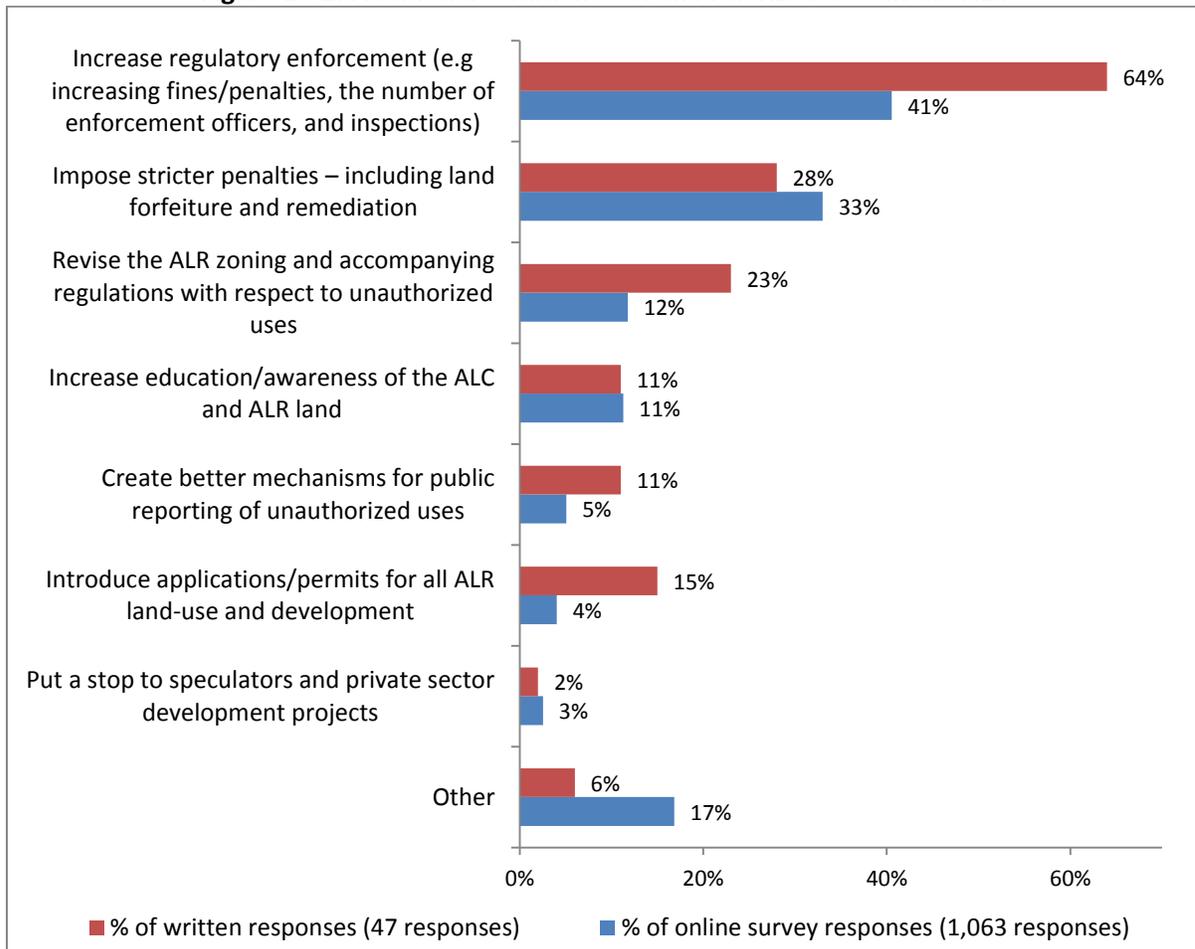
<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that the responses to unauthorized uses of ALR land advocate for more reactive approaches than they do for residential and ancillary uses (see sections 7 and 8). This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that residential and ancillary uses are more permissible in the ALR.

<sup>19</sup> Note: Frequencies are greater than the total number of participants since multiple responses were selected. Percentages reported correspond to the number of participants who selected the option.

## 10.2. Participants support increased regulatory enforcement and stricter penalties

When asked to comment on unauthorized uses in the ALR, participants who submitted written responses (64%) and online survey participants (41%) indicated that increasing regulatory enforcement would be welcome, including increasing fines/penalties, the number of enforcement officers, and inspections, among other things. Additionally, 28% of written responses and 33% of online survey participants suggested that imposing stricter penalties would help in reducing unauthorized uses of ALR land, such as land forfeitures and/or remediation (see Figure 10-2).

**Figure 10-2: Additional comments on unauthorized uses in the ALR**



Participants of the community stakeholder consultations primarily commented on the need to increase regulatory enforcement in the ALR as a means of reducing unauthorized uses. The community stakeholder consultations also touched on revising the ALR zoning and its accompanying regulations as a means of addressing unauthorized uses.

***Local enforcement resources are beneficial – need systematic and consistent enforcement on illegal uses. Reinforce that illegal uses will not be tolerated.***

**-Kelowna Community Stakeholder Consultation**

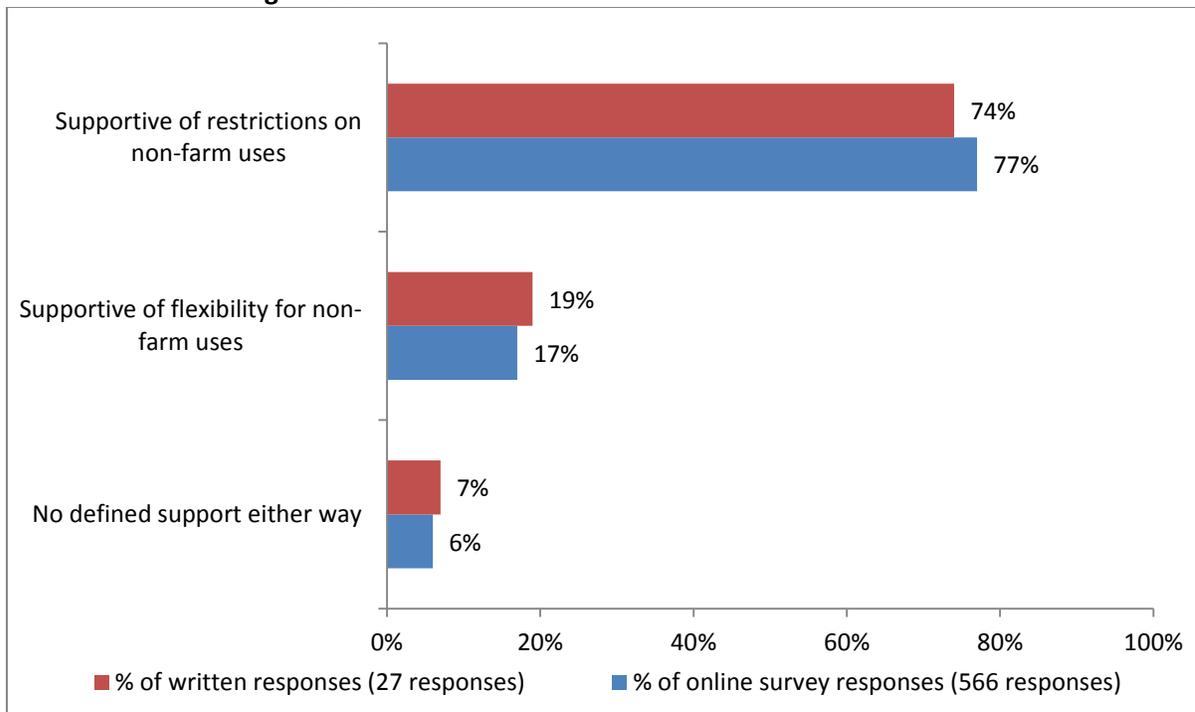
## 11. NON-FARM USES AND RESOURCE EXTRACTION IN THE ALR

Activities other than production and processing, “from agri-tourism and agri-tourism accommodation to resource extraction” (e.g. oil, gas, and aggregate) can take place within the ALR.<sup>20</sup> The negative impacts of these activities on arable land – and increasing scope and scale of production – are a significant cause for concern. To this end, engagement asked participants to comment on non-farm uses and resource extraction.

### 11.1. Participants support restrictions on non-farm uses

Overall, participants of the online survey and written submissions strongly supported restricting non-farm uses over supporting flexible uses in the ALR. (see Figure 11-1).

**Figure 11-1: Attitudes toward restrictions on non-farm uses**



Participants of community stakeholder consultations were more open to flexibility around non-farm uses than survey respondents, with about half supporting flexibility and the other half supporting restrictions. For those supportive of restrictions on non-farm uses, the impact of non-farm uses in reducing the land available for farming and agricultural production was a key concern.

***Discourage non-farm usage. It mainly supports unsuccessful farmers and keeps farmland out of production.***

**-Richmond Community Stakeholder Consultation**

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Agriculture’s Advisory Committee, 2018b, p.9

For those community stakeholder consultation participants supportive of flexibility for non-farm uses, a key driver was non-farm uses enabling producers to supplement their income, particularly in cases where the land is non-arable or when agricultural production alone is insufficient to support the producer.

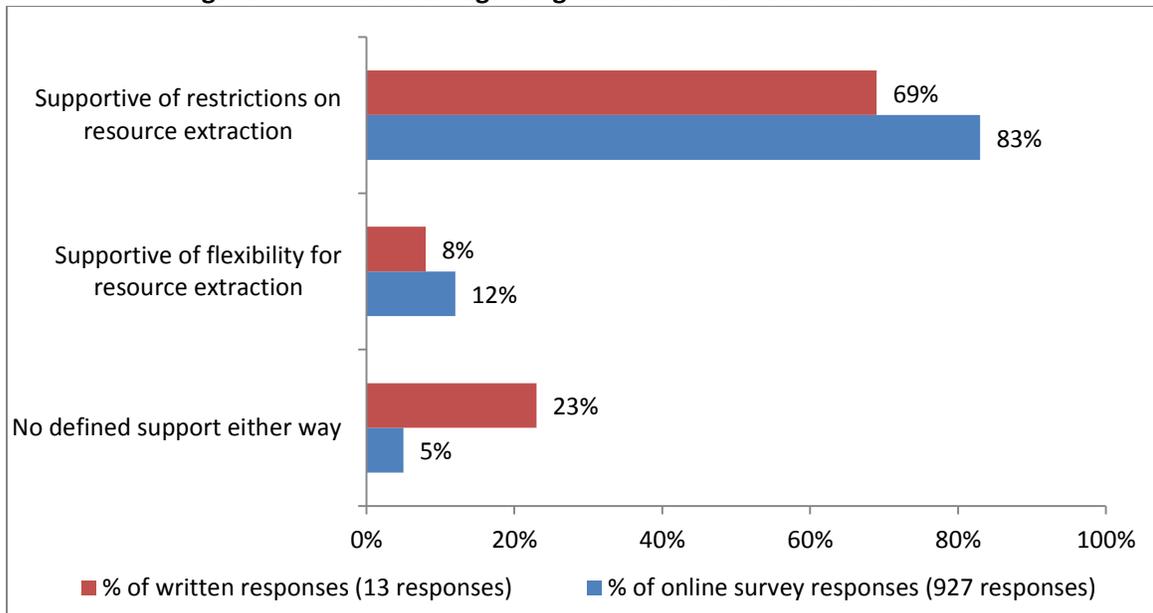
*Encouragement for flexibility around non-farm uses on ALR land: In this geographic area, the vast majority of these applications are related to supplementing income. But must ensure no large, long-term negative impacts to farm and surroundings.*

-Prince George Community Stakeholder Consultation

### 11.2. Participants support restrictions on resource extraction

Online survey participants and participants who submitted written responses were supportive of restricting resource extraction. Only a small percentage of participants were supportive of creating flexibility for resource extraction (see Figure 11-2).

**Figure 11-2: Attitudes regarding restrictions on resource extraction**



Participants of the community stakeholder consultations were supportive of restricting resource extraction in the ALR. Many of the responses from stakeholder consultations pointed to the long-term (and often negative) effects oil and gas extraction has had on the ALR.

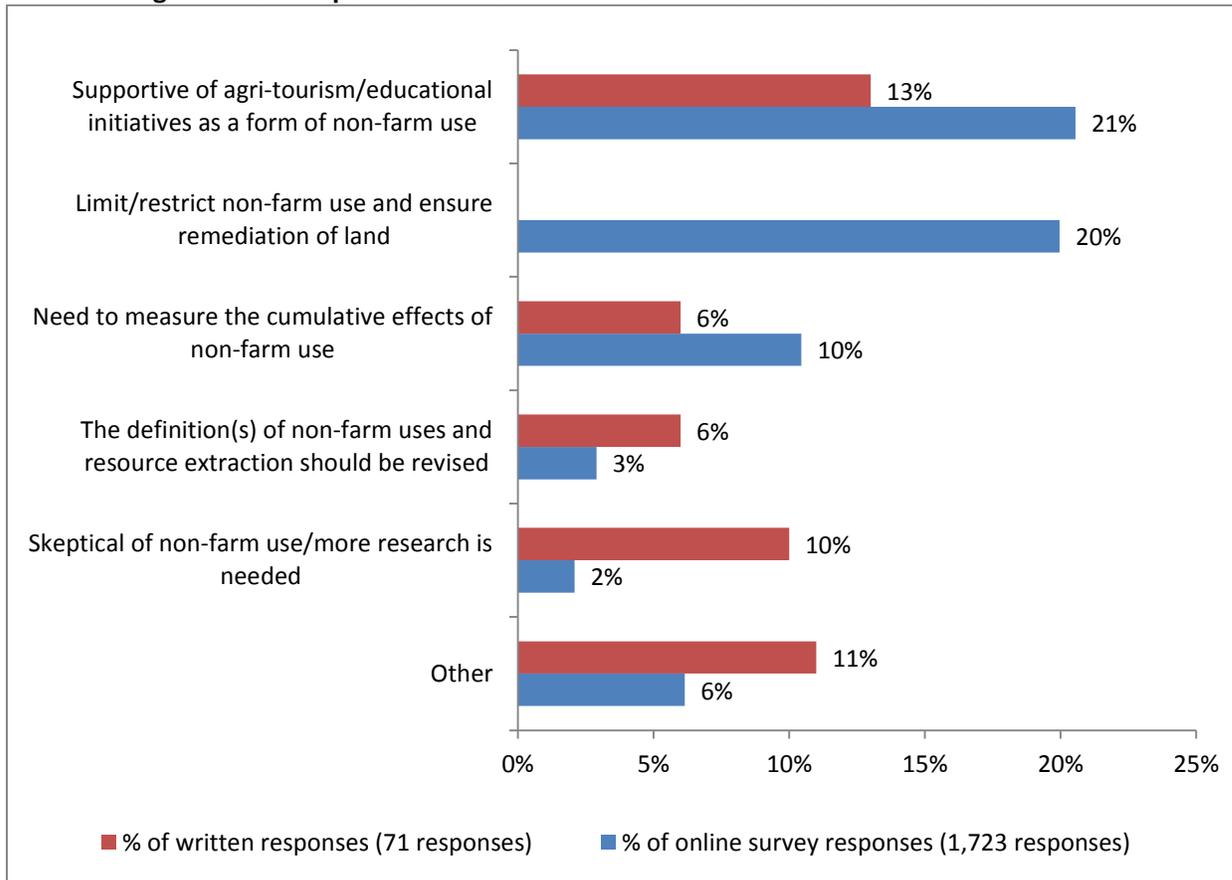
*Reclamation is an issue. Need to hold oil and gas to a stricter standard. Land is never fully productive again.*

-Fort St. John Community Stakeholder Consultation

When asked to comment on non-farm uses and resource extraction in the ALR, online survey participants and participants who submitted written responses tended to be supportive of non-farm use in the form of agri-tourism and educational initiatives. Beyond agri-tourism, online survey participants felt that non-farm use should be limited or restricted and should only occur in cases where the land can be remediated (20%).

Written responses expressed skepticism of non-farm uses and felt that more research is needed (10%). Some online survey participants (10%) and written responses (6%) additionally suggested that more effort needs to be made to measure the cumulative effects of non-farm use (see Figure 11-3).

**Figure 11-3: Perspectives on non-farm uses and resource extraction in the ALR**



Participants of community stakeholder consultations were strongly supportive of limiting or restricting non-farm uses and ensuring that, in cases where non-farm uses are allowed, remediation of the land is possible.

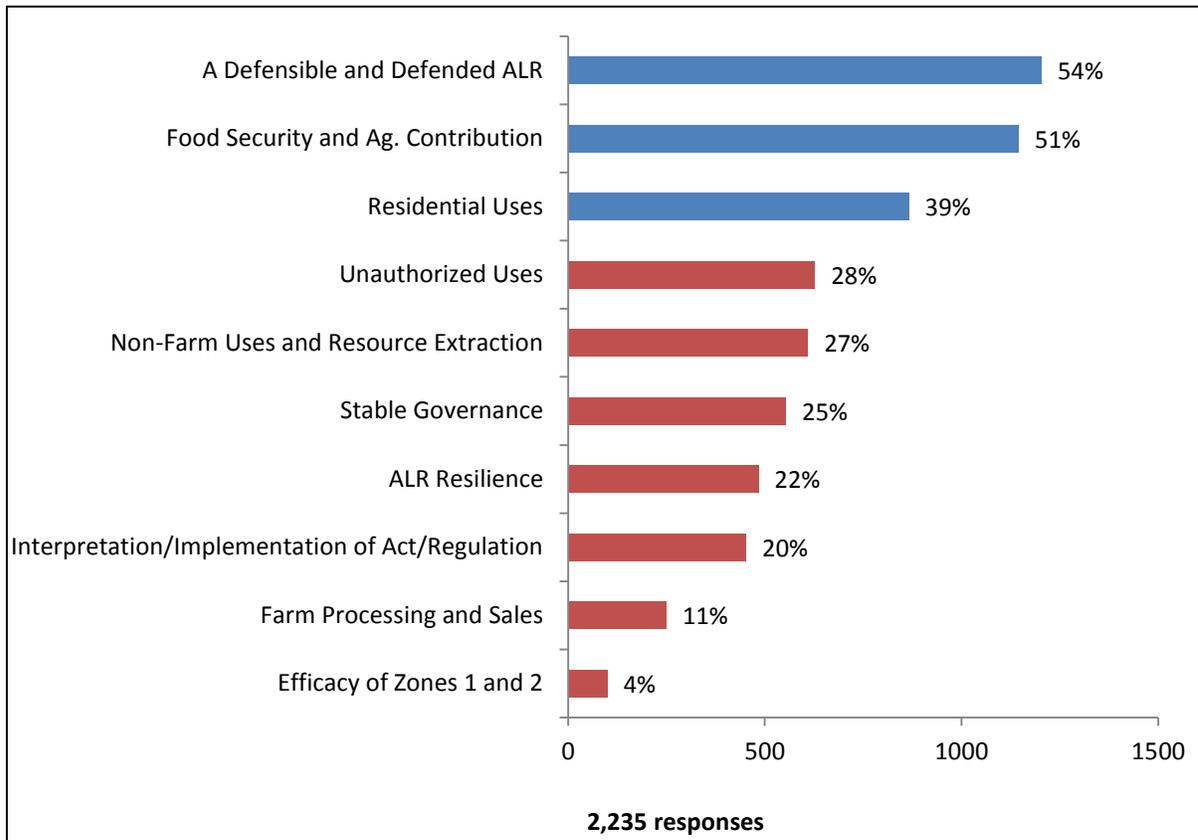
***Resource extraction should be allowed if buildings and surface changes are temporary. Partial cost of rehabilitation should be posted as bond before development occurs. Penalties for non-compliance should be twice the cost of rehabilitation.***

**-Quesnel Community Stakeholder Consultation**

## 12. PRIORITIZING ISSUES

Participants of the online survey were additionally asked to choose three of the 10 issues that they thought were the most important and were allowed to provide additional feedback/comments. Based on responses to the online survey, the top three issues selected were: a defensible and defended ALR, food security and B.C.’s agricultural contribution, and residential uses in the ALR (see Figure 12-1). It is worth noting that, when asked to provide additional comments on their selections, 23% of participants indicated that all 10 issues were equally important.

**Figure 12-1: Ranking of issues to be addressed<sup>21</sup>**



<sup>21</sup> Note: Frequencies are greater than the total number of participants since multiple responses (3) were selected. The red bars indicate the top 3 selected issues, while the blue indicate the other 7 issues. Percentages reported correspond to the number of participants who selected the option.

## 13. OTHER ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Participants who submitted written responses and participants of the community consultations were given an opportunity to present and discuss other issues for consideration.

### 13.1. Taxation and financial support

Participants of community stakeholder consultations raised the issue and need for greater efforts to encourage farming and enhance support of food production. A topic of discussion across most participants was taxation and/or financial support.<sup>22</sup> Stakeholders largely supported incentivizing current and aspiring farmers in the form of tax breaks and/or financial support, while disincentivizing foreign or “absentee” ALR landowners who contribute to little or no agricultural output.

*Continue to support innovative partnerships for developing farmers and getting them into farming (e.g. Richmond farm school, young agrarians Surrey project). Funding and support for initiatives like this is good.*

**-Abbotsford Community Stakeholder Consultation**

### 13.2. Cannabis production

Most community stakeholder consultations<sup>23</sup> also involved discussions regarding cannabis production and processing, emphasizing:

- The impact of increasing land costs; and
- The need to move production to industrial areas rather than on arable soil in the ALR.

*Cannabis should not take over good growing land. This drives the price of land for no reason. No agricultural producer can afford to touch it, and they can't compete with the returns that cannabis growers are making.*

**- Cranbrook Community Stakeholder Consultation**

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<sup>22</sup> Taxation and/or financial support were largely discussed during the Abbotsford, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Prince George, Quesnel, and Richmond consultations.

<sup>23</sup> Concerns regarding cannabis production in the ALR were expressed during the Abbotsford, Cranbrook, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, and Prince George consultations.

### 13.3. Resource extraction and ALR contamination

Many regional stakeholders<sup>24</sup> also discussed the importance of addressing issues of water and soil contamination – particularly as a result of resource extraction. Stakeholders from Fort St. John, in particular, expressed concern with the oil and gas industry not being held to a “stricter standard,” and that more resources need to be allocated towards reclamation and restoration efforts.

*Abuse of water is incredible. Legislation around water is out of control. Illegal pumping of water is rampant. Farmers can't get irrigation licenses, but oil and gas can through the Oil and Gas Commission.*

– Fort St. John Community Stakeholder Consultation

*Agreements made with the Oil & Gas Commission are not working for the integrity of the reserve and should not be allowed.*

– Kamloops Community Stakeholder Consultation

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<sup>24</sup> The importance of addressing issues of soil and water were discussed during Abbotsford, Cranbrook, Fort St. John, Kelowna, and Nanaimo consultations.