

**Ministry of Agriculture**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER FOR INFORMATION**

Ref: 180605

Date: November 25, 2014

**Issue:** Food Industry Master Plan for Barnston Island.

**Background:**

Barnston Island is located along the Fraser River between Surrey and Pitt Meadows. Metro Vancouver provides planning and building regulations for the Island as part of Electoral Area A. The area of Barnston Island is approximately 622 ha of which 618 ha are in the Agricultural Land Reserve (Land Use Inventory Report, 2010). Approximately 56 ha is occupied by the Katzie First Nation Reserve. The 2011 Census indicated a population of 137 people on Barnston Island. The Island is accessed from Surrey by a free tugboat ferry service (capacity 5 vehicles) under provincial jurisdiction.

Barnston Island has been in agricultural production for over a century. The soils are highly fertile and relatively flat. A perimeter dyke protects the Island but there is still potential flooding risk during high freshet years as well as some seepage issues during high river levels. Metro Vancouver has designated all private lands for farming use. Approximately 58% of the ALR was farmed in 2010. Production includes forage, cranberries, dairy, beef, sheep and goat as well as a small area of mixed vegetables and herbs.

In 2006, a multi-landowner ALR application to exclude approximately 441 ha for industrial purposes was denied by the Agricultural Land Commission on the grounds that the lands have agricultural capability and are suitable for agricultural use. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (now Metro Vancouver) did not support the application. Emri Capital Corp. was listed as a landowner in the exclusion application.

**Discussion:**

Emri Group describes itself as a private investment company focused primarily on investment and management of real estate assets throughout western Canada and the United States ([emrigroup.com](http://emrigroup.com)). Mr. Emri's concept of a Food Industry Master Plan for Barnston Island is unclear. Given the previous exclusion application and the business nature of Emri Group, he may be interested in developing farmland for other purposes such as food processing.

**Conclusion:**

Barnston Island is within the ALR and administered locally by Metro Vancouver. A First Nations Reserve is located on the island. The majority of Barnston Island is farmed. The Island was the subject of an exclusion application that was not supported by Metro Vancouver and was ultimately denied by the ALC in 2006. It is unclear what Mr. Emri means by a Food Industry Master Plan or the potential pros and cons such a plan has for the agriculture sector.

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