

MINISTRY OF JOBS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

INCREASING CRITICAL INDUSTRIAL LAND SUPPLY

Issue

There is a shortage of industrial land, creating barriers for BC businesses to grow and reducing economic competitiveness. It's critical that we find ways to protect existing industrial land, use it more efficiently, and unlock more for economic development.

Background

According to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, industrial lands make up just four per cent of the total landmass in the region but result in over 450,000 direct and indirect jobs, \$50.1 billion in GDP, and an overall output of \$92.5 billion. Given that industrial land generates a third of regional GDP and more than one-in-four jobs (27%) are located on industrial lands, the shortage of industrial land is a major economic inhibitor for regional economic development.

In that same report according to NAOIP Vancouver, "Industrial lands are some of the most productive in the region based on economic output, jobs and wages. Priority needs to be placed on the addition of more industrial lands to Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley to continue to support the movement of food and goods and to create and maintain jobs in our region. With the critical shortage of industrial zoned and serviced land, industrial businesses have relocated to other regions due to land shortages, impacting economic benefits locally and this trend will continue unless all three levels of government make an effort to address the issue."

A recent report from Metro Vancouver¹⁰⁹ and a subsequent Vancouver Sun article¹¹⁰ point out that industrial jobs pay above-average wages and that we are losing some of these well-paying jobs to other regions, including Alberta.

A local example is the City of Abbotsford, which conducted a comprehensive study to assess opportunities for future industrial growth. The Industrial Land Supply Study aimed to provide a clear picture of Abbotsford's current and future capacity for industrial development. In the 2016 Official Community Plan (OCP), Special Study Areas A and B were identified as key locations for future industrial expansion. These areas were chosen due to their convenient access to Highway 1, Abbotsford International Airport (YXX), rail lines, and existing industrial zones.

The study examined Abbotsford's role in both local and regional industrial markets, determining which areas should be considered for removal from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to meet growing industrial demand and support local employment. Special focus was given to Special Study Areas A and B, as outlined in the OCP. Since these areas are currently within the ALR, any non-agricultural use requires approval from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). The City carefully evaluated factors such as infrastructure, traffic impact, agricultural suitability, and buffering, alongside existing industrial land supply. These findings helped shape the City's decision to apply for ALR exclusion in support of industrial growth.

¹⁰⁹ <https://metrovancover.org/services/regional-planning/Documents/economic-impact-of-industrial-lands-in-metro-vancouver.pdf>

¹¹⁰ <https://vancouversun.com/business/real-estate/industrial-land-businesses-jobs-metro-vancouver-report>

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Vibrant communities evolved over time. Often, industrial lands are “up-zoned” to retail or residential uses, but with the imposition of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), there is no mechanism to designate new industrial land. The ALR was intended to protect good-quality agricultural land from being lost to development. The ALC has been successful in protecting valuable agricultural land, however also preventing land that is not productive from an agricultural perspective from being used productively.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Undertake a review of underutilized agricultural land with an eye to unlock more Industrial land.