

DOMESTIC LABOUR COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **Domestic Labour Committee** held virtually via MS Teams on June 21, 2024.

Members Present:

Andrea Palmer	BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Annelise Simonsen	BC Fruit Growers' Association
Beth Cavers	BC Cherry Association
Connor Williamson	BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Kellie Garcia (CO-CHAIR)	Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
Kristi Tatebe	Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Morgan Game	Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Shamore Watson	BC Fruit Works
Shelby Austen	Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project
Sukhpaul Bal	BC Cherry Association

Regrets:

Benoit Gauthier	Noble Ridge Winery
Brent MacKinnon	BC Tree Fruits Cooperative
Tyrion Miskell (CO-CHAIR)	BC Grapegrowers' Association

1. WELCOMING REMARKS

Kellie introduced the guests from Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and the committee proceeded with introductions.

2. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

ACTION ITEMS		
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS
All members	Send any relevant industry events to S. Watson.	✓
K. Garcia	Update committee on KPU labour research project.	✓
K. Garcia/T. Miskell	Identify potential new "at-large" members and invite them to join the committee.	IP
S. Austen/S. Watson	Share contacts for high school summer job advertising.	✓
S. Watson	Look at bursaries/grants available for students.	✓
S. Watson	Investigate hiring using alternate routes (ski hills, prison systems, tree planters, etc).	✓

3. MEMBER ROUND TABLE UPDATES

- Annelise highlighted the uncertainty within the industry regarding labour, stating producers are reluctant to hire staff due to current financial burdens.
- Sukhpaul noted that this year's cherry crop is approximately 20% of normal. He highlighted the difficulty in securing Temporary Foreign Workers in advance when the workload is unknown. While larger operations would have typically planned their labour needs in advance, the recent cold damage has made this difficult. Each operation is facing unique challenges this season.

- Connor and Andrea updated the group on the Ministry’s efforts to streamline provincial policies for Temporary Foreign Workers. They are collaborating with stakeholders to develop resources for employers, especially for emergencies like last year's wildfire evacuations. In the hopes of reducing labour needs and redundancy, the Ministry is also working internally on the On-Farm Technology Adoption Program to identify the best use of funding for the next stream. Additionally, the Ministry, in partnership with AgSafe, is offering mental health resources, including eight free counselling sessions, to support producers and their families.
 - Kellie informed Connor about CCLSP’s recent lunch and learn session for producers, which addressed mental health and resilience in agriculture through collaboration with AgSafe and the Canadian Mental Health Association. In response to Sukhpaul's concern about Temporary Foreign Workers, Connor acknowledged the need to waive the three-month waiting period for medical services and mentioned ongoing efforts with the Ministry of Health to address this issue.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 BC FRUIT WORKS: UPDATE & REVIEW OF MARKETING MATERIALS

Shamore informed the committee that the BCFW website updates, including translations into French and Punjabi, are now live, aiming to serve as a central resource for both employers and workers. Marketing and recruitment campaign materials are finalized, pending committee feedback before launch. The messaging is designed to be sensitive to the challenging labour environment this season, avoiding overpromising while addressing unknown labour needs. Currently, there are 36 workers and 3 producers registered; Shamore sought feedback on improving producer engagement.

Sukhpaul suggested leveraging industry associations for distribution to boost engagement, offering hands-on assistance with sign-ups to encourage producer participation. He also proposed emailing previously registered producers to highlight available workers in their area, acknowledging the current challenges but emphasizing the need to build for future labour needs. Annelise expressed concerns about messaging directed at producers and planned to discuss them directly with Shamore.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER NAME	ACTION REQUIRED
All Members	Review marketing materials and provide feedback to Shamore.

4.2 KPU LABOUR RESEARCH PROJECT: UPDATE

Kristi introduced Morgan as the intern working on the project and mentioned they are currently in the process of hiring a second intern. The research will include primary data collection through interviews to better understand challenges faced by employers and workers, the interaction between Temporary Foreign Workers and domestic labour, and strategies to enhance the domestic labour force, and secondary data to obtain a comprehensive view of industry needs and directions for the future.

Interviews are scheduled to occur during the growing and harvest seasons, with analysis planned for the fall. Kellie expressed the aim of involving up to 20 employers and 20 domestic workers in interviews, with potential to expand these numbers based on engagement. Shamore will assist KPU in conducting interviews to establish connections within the industry.

Connor emphasized the importance of representing domestic travellers such as Quebecois. Annelise and Sukhpaul volunteered to participate in interviews from the producer perspective. Andrea mentioned her

colleague, an orchardist deeply involved in labour issues with returning workers each year and offered to facilitate his participation in the interviews.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER NAME	ACTION REQUIRED
All Members	Send potential interviewees to Shamore.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 RESCHEDULE NEXT MEETING (NOV 29 TO NOV 22)

Kellie informed the group that the next meeting will be rescheduled to November 22 to precede the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council meeting on November 26. The committee unanimously agreed to this adjustment.

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER NAME	ACTION REQUIRED
Shelby Austen	Send updated meeting invite to all members.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The next Domestic Labour Committee meeting will be held on November 22, 2024, at 9:00 am via MS Teams.