

CROSS-COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Cross-Commodity Advisory Council** held virtually via MS Teams on April 24, 2025.

PRESENT

Beth Cavers
Dapinder Gill
Gail Nelson
Gord Morrison
Jesse MacDonald
Karen Yeung
Kate Durisek
Michelle Cook
Nikki Callaway
Sukhpaul Bal
Tyrion Miskell
Walter Makepeace

BC Cherry Association
BC Grapegrowers' Association
BC Fruit Growers' Association
Consolidated Fruit Packers
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
BC Wine Grape Council
BC Wine Grape Council
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program
BC Wine Grape Council
BC Cherry Association
BC Grapegrowers' Association
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program

REGRETS

Madeleine van Roehoudt
Philip Gyug
Ryan Ostertag

Grower at Large
BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food
Consolidated Fruit Packers

STAFF

Kellie Garcia
Shelby Austen

CCLSP Project Director
CCLSP Administration & Communications Manager

GUESTS

Cooper Clayton McGeough
Kaelan Watson
Kent Mullinix
Kristi Tatebe
Morgan Game

Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
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1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by: Beth Cavers

"THAT the April 24, 2025, meeting agenda be approved as presented."

Seconded by: Walter Makepeace

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by: Sukhpaul Bal

"THAT the March 10, 2025, meeting minutes be adopted as presented."

Seconded by: Gail Nelson

CARRIED

4. GUEST PRESENTATION

4.1 LABOUR SUPPLY RESEARCH PROJECT, KPU RESEARCH TEAM

The KPU research team gave the following update:

The Okanagan's tree fruit and wine grape sectors are facing significant labour challenges including issues with reliability, retention, and recruitment of domestic workers. Key concerns on the worker side include housing, wages, and difficult working conditions. Recommendations focus on improving financial support for the industry, strengthening local markets, and providing housing and recruitment support. Policy suggestions include advocating for a review of the Temporary Foreign Worker program and scaling up worker recruitment efforts. The recommendations also call for expanding agriculture education and training programs to attract and retain workers. Overall, attracting younger workers and evaluating the balance between domestic and temporary foreign labour are critical for the sector's long-term sustainability. The research team will continue with precedent research to determine next steps and recommendations for each level of industry, which will be summarized in a final report.

- Walter noted that as a grower with 20 years of experience, he appreciated having his own insights confirmed through the research.
- Tyrion asked if there is a way to determine how many growers in the valley access domestic labour. She also requested a deep dive into the viticulture programs at OC and why they were not successful long-term.
- Sukhpaul emphasized the need for local governments to address policy gaps and support necessary amenities. With rising labour costs, he suggested a wage subsidy to ensure farm workers earn a living wage, stressing that government support is crucial for food security.
- Gord added that, while CFP represents many growers on the packing side, they do not have access to foreign labour because they are not producers. He stressed the importance of supporting growers and noted that paying more to compete for domestic labour affects the bottom line and grower returns at the packinghouse.

5. ROUND TABLE UPDATES FROM MEMBERS

- Kate shared that the BCWGC has launched a new website and updated the grape production guide, with work underway on a pesticide spray schedule in partnership with the Ministry. Their Health & Safety Committee is aiming to improve regional connections and is seeking participation from the Similkameen and Fraser Valley. SWBC has hired an account manager to support onboarding, and a national Sustainable Winegrowing Canada application is on hold due to the federal election.
- Nikki noted growing optimism around issue resolution and increased tourism for the year. She also shared that Wine Growers BC has appointed a new president.
- Gail reported that the BCFGa has been operating under the "Stronger Together" framework and relaunching committees to identify priorities and action resolutions. BCFGa is also working with CCLSP on an application for a data management project, as recommended by the stabilization plan. The project scope is being refined, with work underway to identify required expertise and associated costs.
 - Kate noted that the wine industry is currently reviewing its data systems and portals and offered to share information from the developer they have been working with.
- Tyrion reported that BCGA has focused heavily on ERP and improving access to foreign clean plant material to better serve the industry. Starling control remains a major priority, and there is a need to evaluate the trapping program and increase efforts on the research and education pillars of the project. The recent agriculture tour provided a valuable opportunity to highlight the program to elected officials.
- Beth reported a strong cherry crop and the launch of export programs to several markets, including China, Japan, Korea, the EU, the UK, and California. Grower meetings on compliance are underway, and two summer field days are planned at SRDC. She also highlighted market access efforts with India and Mexico, participation in CPMA's domestic campaign, and sponsorship of the Cherry Blossom Triathlon.
- Gord reported that their focus has shifted to cherries and stone fruit. With the current situation in the U.S., the season will require strategic pricing and marketing. Recent visits to major Eastern Canadian retailers

showed strong support for Canadian cherries and tourism is expected to boost demand. He also noted that the apple crop sold out two months early, reflecting strong demand for Canadian apples.

- Sukhpaul expressed excitement about the Canadian Cherry Month campaign, supported by a strong crop and growing retailer demand for local produce. He also reported that the BC Agriculture Council Board met with Minister Popham, with on-farm processing emerging as a key topic. BCAC plans to send a letter supporting food and beverage processing on agricultural land but emphasizing the need for careful consultation with industry.
- Walt noted the positive change from last year; he is seeing healthy vines and blossoms in his orchards.
- Michelle reported that SIR has begun its first week of sterile insect release in the South, and growers will start seeing staff in orchards. She also told the group that she met with Minister Popham to discuss financial support for the program.
- Dapinder reported flooding issues in vineyards and noted that Cabernet Franc is budding early. He also shared challenges with ERP funding rejections for French vines and how the BCGA is seeking recommendations for program improvements.
- Karen noted increased neglect in orchards and vineyards due to several poor crop years, with many producers dealing with irrigation issues and struggling to get caught up on pruning and overall upkeep.
- Jesse reported significant outreach efforts in recent months. Two upcoming cherry days will showcase new varieties and include alternate pest management talks, with plans to highlight new research projects. An apple day is planned for the fall and work continues with the province on a cover crop ID guide. He also mentioned AAFC's new collaborative research project focused on cold hardiness in cherries, with potential for cross-commodity applications over time, that includes sprayable products and enclosed agriculture systems.

6. REGULAR BUSINESS

6.1 CCLSP COMMITTEES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Shelby provided an update on CCLSP committees and communications.

The Innovation and Technology Committee is exploring new project ideas, including LiteFarm farm management software and laser bird deterrents. Staff are currently working with BCGA to develop a project application for the latter. The Domestic Labour Committee has been paused to clarify alignment with other industry labour initiatives. The Extension Committee was briefed on the upcoming Herbicide Technology and Extension project and potential ABAzyne abiotic stress trials, which CCLSP will align with AAFC and Ministry cold hardiness efforts.

On the communications side, the 2024 CCLSP Annual Review has been finalized and posted on the website. It highlights key accomplishments, project updates, engagement efforts, and financial summaries. Additional work includes preparing summary reports for the 2025 Extension Conference and the April 2 South Okanagan agriculture tour, as well as attending various industry events and facilitating three grower town halls with Minister Popham.

6.2 STABILIZATION FUND: FINANCIAL UPDATE

Kellie Garcia provided a financial update, noting \$627,909 remains unallocated in the Stabilization Fund after current commitments.

6.3 CURRENT CROSS-COMMODITY PROJECTS

Kellie provided a financial update for CCLSP and noted that written updates for each project had been shared in advance.

Shelby informed the Council that CCLSP recently hosted two successful bus tours as part of its efforts to bridge the gap between policy and practice. A summary report highlighting key findings and recommended actions is available on the CCLSP website.

The first tour, held in Lake Country on November 6, was reported on at a previous advisory council meeting. The second tour, held in Penticton on April 2, focused on engaging elected officials and welcomed 48 participants from 35 organizations. A Companion Guide was prepared to support discussions. The tour featured two stops—Brarstar Orchards, hosted by Deep Brar, and Township 7 Vineyards and Winery, hosted by Mary McDermott—covering topics such as urban-rural conflicts, labour shortages, pest and waste management, and water availability. The day concluded with small-group reflections to identify actionable next steps.

These tours have proven to be valuable platforms for cross-sector dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and supporting more responsive policy development. Building on this momentum, CCLSP plans to host additional tours in the future.

- Sukhpaul asked about next steps and emphasized the importance of aligning policies through partnership and cooperation, and that local governments should help pay for future tours rather than relying solely on stabilization funding.
- Beth highlighted the value of relationship building and complimented the final report, asking about its distribution to Regional Boards. Shelby noted the benefits of bringing municipalities together, with many participants leaving with new ideas. Kellie confirmed that the report will be shared widely.
- Kate raised concerns about the absence of RDOS representatives. Shelby agreed and outlined the various efforts made to secure RDOS participation without success. A discuss ensued about other ways to encourage their attendance, such as letters from the industry association boards expressing their disappointment and emphasizing the importance of the tours.
- Dapinder suggested cooperating with local government conventions, such as UBCM, to strengthen engagement. Kellie agreed to explore this option, and Michelle noted that the LGMA conference will be held in Kelowna this year.

Moved by: Beth Cavers

Seconded by: Walter Makepeace

"THAT the Cross-Commodity Advisory Council approves the project expense report for the Local Government and Agriculture Tours submitted by the Okanagan Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program and recommends the final payment of \$8,109.31, which is the actual project cost of \$14,516.64 minus an interim payment equal to \$6,407.33 previously received from IAF."

CARRIED

6.4 CROSS-COMMODITY PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Kellie reviewed proposed project ideas along with rough cost estimates and associated recommendations from the Stabilization Plan. The Council recommended proceeding with the following projects: data management strategy, ABAzyne abiotic stress trials, laser bird deterrent trials, and local government outreach. Other project ideas on the list will be explored at the June meeting.

Sukhpaul asked whether there would be value in hiring someone to conduct an internal assessment of local government staffing, plans and policies, emphasizing the need for a leadership role to liaise with agriculture. Shelby noted that a similar project led by ACARN on Vancouver Island resulted in the creation of a permanent agriculture planning position.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. ADJOURNMENT

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held in-person on June 24, 2025, 10:00 am to 12:30 pm.