

AGRICULTURE IN ACTION: BRIDGING POLICY & PRACTICE

April 8, 2026

The Kelowna Agriculture Bus Tour was held on April 8, 2026. The tour was organized by staff from **the Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP)** and the **City of Kelowna**, bringing together farmers, local and provincial government staff, and industry partners for a full day of on-the-ground learning and discussions.

The purpose of the tour was clear: to strengthen communication and relationships between farmers and government, and to ground policy conversations in the lived realities of agricultural operations within Kelowna's growing urban environment. The day included guided visits to three local operations:

- **Day's Century Growers** tree fruit packing facility
- **Jealous Fruits** temporary foreign worker housing site
- **Tantalus Vineyards**

"Each stop offered insight into what it means to farm within Kelowna's city limits, from intergenerational operations to the challenges of farming at the urban edge. The tour was thoughtfully designed, well executed, and offered meaningful learning at every stop."

– Tour Participant



What We Heard

Conversations throughout the day were shaped by the tour stops, with farmers and staff speaking candidly about operating agricultural businesses in Kelowna's urban-rural landscape. Four key themes emerged.

1. Neighbour Concerns & Urban-Rural Conflict

The tour began at Day's Century Growers, a long-standing, family-run pear grower and packing facility located in the middle of a growing urban area. Surrounded by neighbourhoods and businesses, the site provided a clear example of the realities of operating agricultural infrastructure in an urban setting.

Farmers emphasized that **urban-rural conflict is often rooted in misunderstanding**, not opposition. Packing facilities, delivery trucks, seasonal noise, and early-morning operations are essential to farming - but not always well understood by nearby residents.

We heard that:

- Farmers invest significant effort into maintaining positive relationships with neighbours
- Open, proactive communication is often the most effective tool for reducing complaints
- Awareness of the Right to Farm Act is uneven, particularly among newer residents
- Farmers benefit when local governments help reinforce agriculture as a protected and expected land use



2. Vertically Integrated Farming, Diversification & Agritourism



At multiple stops, operators spoke about the importance of **vertical integration and diversification** to remaining viable in an increasingly unpredictable operating and economic environment.

At Day's Century Growers and Tantalus Vineyards, participants heard how controlling multiple parts of the value chain (growing, packing, marketing, and direct sales) can help buffer farms against poor crop years, market disruptions, and rising input costs. These approaches allow producers to adapt, stay competitive, and build resilience long term.

Agritourism and on-site experiences were also discussed as valuable tools for diversification, particularly when supported by clear and consistent policy frameworks. It was emphasized that successful diversification depends on maintaining strong ties to active farming.

Participants highlighted that:

- Active farming must remain the primary use on ALR land
- Clear, consistent policies are needed to support diversification and value-added activities without encouraging farm replacement
- Misalignment between municipal zoning and ALC requirements creates uncertainty, delays, and additional costs for producers

Overall, the discussions reinforced that well-designed policies can support agritourism and value-added activities while ensuring agriculture remains the foundation of these operations.



"Seeing Day's Century Growers highlighted how complex handling, packaging, and sales really are. While grapes are often seen as value-added, this stop showed that pomme fruit producers manage just as much work after harvest—an impressive operation to see firsthand."

– Tour Participant

3. Education & Outreach: Labour, Housing & Community Understanding

The visit to Jealous Fruits' temporary foreign worker housing site prompted some of the most detailed and personal discussions of the day. Participants learned about the significant care, investment, and regulatory requirements involved in providing appropriate housing for agricultural workers.

Farmers and hosts spoke openly about:

- Racism and misinformation faced by foreign workers
- Limited public understanding of who these workers are and the role they play
- The social and economic contributions workers make in the community

Discussion also focused on the **operational and financial impacts of housing delays, denials, and limited housing availability**. These impacts are often misunderstood, as farmers must house workers regardless of whether on-farm housing applications are approved.

These challenges impact **supervisory and management level agricultural workers** in particular, who are typically employed for longer periods, require greater privacy and space, and may seek to bring family members with them. When housing is unavailable, employers must rely on off-farm rentals, short-term accommodations, and/or dormitory housing with colleges, universities, or ski hills. Workers housed off site must then be **transported** to and from work locations, requiring additional vehicles, drivers, fuel, and scheduling coordination

Overall, the discussion underscored how **housing availability and approval timelines directly affect farm operations**, labour retention, and worker wellbeing—well beyond the housing units themselves.



4. Consistent & Supportive Policies & Regulations

Throughout the tour, growers highlighted the challenges of navigating inconsistent policies across jurisdictions, particularly those who are farming or housing workers in more than one municipality.

While participants acknowledged the **complexity local governments face**, there was strong agreement that:

- Predictable, aligned regulations make compliance easier for everyone
- Early engagement prevents unintended consequences
- Regional coordination is essential for shared challenges like worker housing

Participants welcomed news that the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) is planning to host a **regional planning lab focused on temporary foreign worker housing**, with partner municipalities at the table. This initiative was seen as a concrete opportunity to work toward policy alignment and shared solutions.

Next Steps

Short-Term Priorities

- Share this summary with Council, AAC members, and City departments
- Reinforce **Right to Farm** messaging through City communications
- Participate in RDCO's upcoming regional planning lab on farm worker housing
- Incorporate **on-farm learning** and agricultural resources into staff and elected official orientation

Longer-Term Commitments

- Work toward greater alignment between municipal policies, zoning, and ALC requirements
- Improve permitting clarity and timelines for farm diversification, agritourism, and worker housing
- Expand education and outreach related to agriculture, labour, and housing
- Maintain regular, informal opportunities for dialogue between farmers and City staff
- Support vertically integrated farming and agritourism initiatives that keep agriculture at the core
- **Continue advocating for consistent, supportive agricultural policies at the regional level**



Additional Resources

- [Agriculture Bus Tour Companion Guide for Local Governments](#)
- [2025 Agriculture in Action: Bridging Policy & Practice – Final Summary Report](#)
- [Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project](#)

