

**Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 15th, 2026, 7:30 AM
Regional District of Central Okanagan, Woodhaven Boardroom
1450 K.L.O. Road, Kelowna**

✓ = attended X = Absent * Not required A = Alternate Attended

Advisory Committee Executive:

✓	Quinn, Paula, Chair
X	Hughes-Geekie, Sharon, Past Chair
✓	Malcolm, Ryan, Vice-Chair

X	Nagy, Angela
X	Burleigh, Mark

Advisory Committee:

X	Alluri, Rama
X	Balkwill, Katie
X	Berrie, Carla
X	Bowles, Ron
X	Brophy, Randey
✓	Bruns, Myles
X	Burleigh, Mark
✓	Cannan, Ron
X	Carnio, Alex
✓	Coble, Jordan
X	Dawn, Jeremy
✓	DeVeer, Cassidy
X	Douglas, Laurel
✓	Dyas, Tom
X	Farr, Brandon

✓	Ferreira, Christina
✓	Friesen, Jason
X	Gatzke, Alan
X	Gratz, Derek
X	Harper, Shauna
X	Ireland, Blair
✓	Jones, Garrett
✓	Kam, Michelle
X	Labrecque, Cory
✓	Lake, Brea
X	Metvedt, David
✓	Molina, Tonja
X	Mullings, Dale
✓	Rezania, Sepideh
X	Robinson, Heather

X	Rubadeau, Devin
X	Schlosser, Joanna
X	Selby, Robert
✓	Sheehan, Amanda
✓	Sulentich, Ruth
✓	Threlfall, Rich
X	Walker-Matthews, Ellen
✓	Wall, Jonathan
✓	Wang, Bill
X	Widmer, Larry
✓	Wong, Roger
✓	Wylie, Taylor

Staff and Consultants:

✓	Mallory, Krista
X	Lesack, Sascha
X	Rambe, Mohana

✓	Ververda, Brianne
✓	Walraven, Jen
X	Foster, Jodie

✓	Ginter, Sally
✓	Crocker, Kathy
✓	Stark Leader, Myrna

Guests:

Garcia, Kellie
Bal, Sukhpaul
Arts, Adrian

Day, Kevin

1. Call to Order

Chair Paula Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair acknowledged our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tñxʷúlaʔxʷ (land) of the syilx / Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. We recognize, honour, and respect the syilx / Okanagan lands upon which we live, work, and play.

3. Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of February 25, 2026, unanimously approved.

4. Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project Presentation

Kellie Garcia, Project Director, Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project

This project (CCLSP) brings together 5 industry associations that represent tree fruits and wine grapes, to deal with complex challenges together. It received temporary funding from the Ministry of Agriculture that will conclude at the end of this year and has been an important bridge for the BC Fruit Growers' Association, especially after the dissolution of BC Tree Fruits. The top priorities include: Economic viability, Farm labour & worker housing, Horticultural support, Access to water and Government relations. It remains pertinent to find resources to be able to continue this important work.

See presentation attached.

5. Agriculture Industry Panel

Facilitator: Myrna Stark Leader, Agriculture Program Specialist, COEDC

Panelists: Sukhpaul Bal, President, BC Cherry Association

Adrian Arts, Executive Director, BC Fruit Growers Association

Kevin Day, Owner/Manager, Day's Century Growers

In the last 5 years –

- The closure of the BC Tree Fruits Coop caused the loss of a voice for local agriculture. We have splintered in the region whereas other organizations are consolidating.
- Agriculture is under attack with 80% increases in costs of fertilizers and 20-30% increases in labour costs. Local agriculture is essential for food security and sovereignty.
- The only farmers that are surviving are ones that have been in it for a very long time. Any wins gained are due to efficiencies they've developed.

Climate-related disruptions –

- Wildfire smoke exposure causes early ripening of Bartlett pears so they need more space in a Controlled Atmosphere (CA) environment where they are viable for about 7-8 months.

- Insulative materials have been developed for tree protection, and growth regulators such as dormancy accelerators may also delay bud break when there is risk of early blooming during frost periods.
- Water utility management and parks need to work together to increase reservoir sizes.

Global markets and trade pressures -

- Global environment pressure started years ago with the Columbia River Treaty. Washington state land costs ~1/10 of ours and the size of orchards there is much greater, especially for apples.
- US trade volatility has shown our vulnerability. Cherries are doing better by exporting to Asia with collective efforts.
- Climate volatility is another big challenge. Cherries can't go into CA but are hydrocooled before a 6–8-week storage viability.
- The end price to consumers is so much higher than what growers receive for their produce.

Innovation or adaptation -

- Small scale farming is too restrictive so many farmers must buy separate lots to get to scale.
- SIR is extremely helpful, and the BC Decision Aid System app helps decrease chemical inputs and is expanding to wine grapes, but funding is running out. These have huge returns for consumers.
- Foodsafe paperwork is immense. Tech exists to help with things like this, but you need scale to be able to adopt it.
- Camera box sizers grade cherries and can decrease errors and labour costs.
- Perhaps drones for spraying and autonomous tractors will come but all innovations come with high costs.
- The Summerland research centre has developed ~80% of the world's cherry varieties over many years.

Economic sustainability –

- We need to reconnect kids to farms and the land as the source of food.
- BC has the lowest re-investment from government agricultural support, so increasing that will be important.
- If the CCLSP ends, we'll need more capacity from regional agriculture planners. The RDCO Ag Strategy is top notch but having dedicated planners is essential.
- The single biggest need is crop and farm insurance consolidation as a business risk management tool, especially for farms with multiple dispersed locations.
- The Agricultural Land Commission needs: to be reframed and rebuilt to modernize and prioritize farming, more Provincial mandate rather than just municipal, to decrease duplication of efforts, increase communication, and protect farmers as well as the land.

Action Items for Advisory Committee: Support local farmers!

6. *New Business*

- Next meeting May 20th

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 am.
