

BC FRUIT GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

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BCFGA Bulletin



June 2011

UPDATE: Tree Fruit Working Group

In response to the third year of losses for growers in the apple sector in BC, then Minister of Agriculture Ben Stewart appointed a Working Group to “identify and target the key issues impacting the profitability of the industry in British Columbia, and make recommendations to ensure a strong, vibrant and sustainable industry for this and future generations”.

New Agriculture Minister Don McRae quickly affirmed his support for the Working Group. The Working Group is composed of 2 BC Ministry of Agriculture, 1 Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative, 1 BC Tree Fruits and 1 BC Fruit Growers Association staff.

The Working Group is finalizing its report, which reviews grower, packer, and sales agent performance in the apple sector. Yields, grading, returns to growers, packing costs, marketing costs, and wholesale prices are being compared with Washington State. The Working Group is set to report to the Minister in the next few days.

Joe Sardinha, BCFGAs President, and Glen Lucas, BCFGAs General Manager, met with the Board of the Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative on May 19 to discuss possible direction after the Working Group reports to the Minister of Agriculture. Everyone is in agreement that time is of the essence. The BCFGAs will be asking the Minister to take quick action to assist the apple sector in both the long and short term. At its May 19 meeting, the BCFGAs Executive discussed the organization of a peaceful, non-confrontational demonstration to raise public awareness. It was decided to await the Working Group report and the Minister’s response to the report before making any decision on how to proceed.

Postal strike

The BCFGAs will keep growers informed through newsletters and special mailings of events. In case of an extended disruption by a possible Canada Post strike, we will communicate with growers via e-mail. Additionally, the BCFGAs is considering a move to email delivery of its newsletter, replacing printing and postage costs. Those on email will be emailed a link to the newsletter on the BCFGAs website. Others will continue to receive the newsletter by regular post. If you receive email from the cooperative, we have your email. If we do not have your email address, call today to let us know –

contact Elaine at 250-762-5226 extension 21.

Summer Labour Orientation Project

Local Workers

Every year, many young people converge in the South Okanagan to seek work picking cherries. Apple thinning and other work, including sorting cherries, is also of interest to the youth, mainly from Quebec, but also including many local workers.

In order to assist workers and growers, the BCFGGA is once again providing a Summer Labour Orientation Program.

This summer, the BCFGGA will continue to work in partnership with the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA), Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative field staff, and the job placement services at WorkZone (unfortunately, this year the funding to Okanagan French Employment Services was cut. We are hopeful that the funding will be restored next year).

Our aim is to improve worker safety and productivity in the orchard, through orientation sessions lasting about 2 hours. Most workers take the sessions prior to the start of the picking season. Topics covered at the orientation sessions will be general orchard safety, such as proper ladder use, crop and tree damage prevention, avoiding heat stroke, as well as cherry picking and apple thinning techniques. The workshops are a couple hours long, and include a free lunch and transportation for those who attend. Afterwards, the attendees receive a wallet-sized certificate proving they took the workshop, and come out better educated and prepared to work.

Available to be given throughout the Okanagan, in the past the BCFGGA workshops have proven to be a positive experience for all parties. The workshop can also provide some on-site training for your employees while they are waiting to start.

On the part of the farmer, all we need is to borrow a few ladders, some buckets, and your orchard for a couple of hours so we can do practical demonstrations of proper ladder use and picking/thinning techniques. We also encourage farmers to inform us on their specific preferences and techniques for picking and thinning, personalizing the training specific to your orchard!

If you already have your workers and are still interested, we can come to you and give them the workshop. Even experienced pickers take this workshop. In the past, many farmers hired their workers on site afterwards. We have liability insurance in place. Workshops are available until the end of July, though many orchardists prefer to have the workshop prior to the beginning of picking/thinning season.

Available in French, English, and Spanish

If you are interested in a workshop, it is free for both the farmer and the workers, and can be scheduled at your convenience! As we have only one facilitator this summer, we may not have the time to get to all growers requesting a workshop. Workshops will be offered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

**Contact Ronald Forrest at:
rforrest.bcfqa@gmail.com
250 859 3358 or 250-859-3354**

Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program

For growers who demonstrate a shortage of workers (determined by a lack of response to job ads), temporary foreign workers from Mexico and the Caribbean are available. BC Agriculture Council has posted information on their website. Growers are encouraged to complete their own application forms. However, the BCFGA does offer a service for those growers who want additional help in filling out forms and follow-up with the government agencies. The fee for the service is \$45 per worker.

Contact Elaine Miedema at 250-762-5226 extension 21 for further information.

The Mexican consulate has issued a “best practices” information brochure for those growers who already have or are preparing to host Mexican workers:

<http://www.bcfga.com/files/2010%20Best%20Practices%20for%20SAWP.pdf>

Most SAWP workers in the Okanagan are from Mexico. The BCFGA is encouraging a balance of local, Mexican, and Caribbean workers, as future labour supply will be even more challenging than before, once the economy rebounds. An alternate to the Mexican program, the Jamaican Liaison Service provides orientation and ongoing support service for both employee and employer when the worker arrives in Kelowna. Jamaican workers also speak English as a first language, making communications easier for growers. For further information, **contact Donna Adams, Deputy Chief Liaison Officer by cell (250) 869 – 6288 or email : donna.adams@jamaicanliaisonservice.com**

One grower provided the following reference on his Caribbean workers: “They work hard, they are honest, they speak English, and often they don’t need to use ladders, they are so tall.” The Liaison Service is reporting reasonable airfare from Kingston and Montego Bay, Jamaica, and has also obtained a discount for SAWP over the posted prices.

Harmonized Sales Tax

For several years, the BC Agriculture Council has advocated for changes to the old Provincial Sales Tax (PST) system. Many farm purchases were not exempt and there was pressure from retailers to drop the exemptions, due to the administrative headaches and sometimes fines that were taken on by the retailers.

The HST solves these problems, and at the last BCFGA Convention, a resolution was passed in support of the HST. Due to the controversy surrounding the way that HST was introduced, Elections BC will be administering a mail-in ballot Referendum.

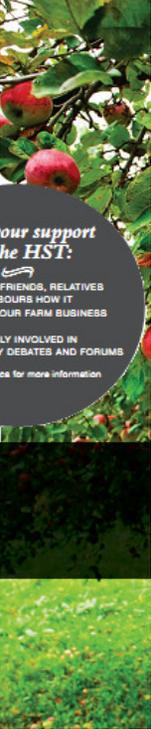
Important dates are:

June 13-24	An HST Referendum Voting Package is mailed to each registered voter in BC
July 8	The last day to request an HST Referendum Voting Package
July 22	Close of voting – All ballot packages must be received

The BCFGA is encouraging all members to vote NO to reinstating the PST. This is in accord with the resolution passed by delegates at the BCFGA Convention, and member support is appreciated.

A postal strike in the weeks before July 22 could interfere with the ballot closing date.

Continued on page 4...



HST is good for BC.

Why is HST good for farmers and ranchers?

- HST saves BC farmers \$15 - \$20 million annually
- HST is a simple system with no antiquated PST exemption list
- HST improves BC farm competitiveness in domestic and export markets

Show your support for the HST:

- 1 TELL YOUR FRIENDS, RELATIVES AND NEIGHBOURS HOW IT BENEFITS YOUR FARM BUSINESS
- 2 GET ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY DEBATES AND FORUMS

Visit [bcae.bc.ca](http://www.bcae.bc.ca) for more information

Vote NO in the referendum.

Are you in favour of extinguishing the HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) and reinstating the PST (Provincial Sales Tax) in conjunction with the GST (Goods and Services Tax)?

YES

NO

 Delivered by the BC Agriculture Council
Working for a profitable and sustainable agricultural industry
[bcae.bc.ca](http://www.bcae.bc.ca) • 1.866.522.3447 • info@bcae.bc.ca

BCAC is partnering with the Smart Tax Alliance in promoting the HST [hstjobs.ca](http://www.hstjobs.ca)

HST Forum in Kelowna

Kelowna residents will get a chance to hear from both sides of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) debate in advance of next month's referendum.

Public forums dealing with the HST will be held in 10 communities across B.C. including Kelowna.

The Kelowna HST forum will be held Monday, May 30 at the Okanagan College Student Lecture Theatre. It runs from 7:30 p.m. until 9 p.m.

Further details can be found at

<http://www.elections.bc.ca/index.php/referenda-recall-initiative.hst-2011/>

BCFGA Attends BC Liberal Convention 2011

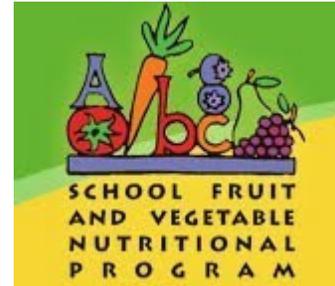
BCFGA President, Joe Sardinha, and Executive Member, Denise MacDonald, attended the BC Liberal Convention held in Penticton on May 13-14th. Other Executives, Fred Steele and Amarjit Lalli, joined them for the 'Celebrate the Okanagan Reception' which wrapped up the Convention. During the two day event BCFGAs representatives attended Cabinet question & answer sessions, town hall forums and policy tracking sessions. Topics included Community Services and Public Safety, Economic Development, Healthcare and Education, Natural Resources and Energy. There was strong support during the Convention in proceeding with mineral exploration and mining, clean energy, Site 'C' energy project, Prosperity Mine, bio-energy industry support, diversification of wood trade markets and promoting use of BC wood in construction as well as health and education support. While there was not an official resolution put forward to support agriculture in BC and invest the needed 100 million dollar shortfall in agriculture and supporting programs, the

BCFGA took every opportunity to promote the industry, highlight the needs of the industry to remain sustainable and link our success to enhancing the 'Families First' theme of the BC Liberals. A number of past Ministers of Agriculture were on hand, which provided a great opportunity to link our industry and agriculture to the very individuals who have held the portfolio. BCFGAs representatives also had the opportunity to meet Premier Clark, Don McRae and other MLA's as well as talk to other members of the BC Liberal party.

A special addition to the Liberal Convention agenda was the addition of an HST town hall session that included panellists Blair Lekstrom, Pat Bell and the Finance Minister himself, Kevin Falcon. The BCFGAs gave its support to the HST which simplifies and increases recovery of tax paid on farm items. The packinghouse issue regarding non-recoverable HST due to a provision in the administration of the tax was raised with the Minister of Finance and should be on the government's radar depending on the outcome of the HST vote. The BCFGAs supplied apples for the delegates during the Convention, which proved to be a big hit!

BCFGA Supports BC Government Expansion of Fruit and Vegetable Program

On May 17th, BC Premier Christy Clark announced a \$3-million expansion of the BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program, created in partnership with the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Education and is led by the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation. Starting in September 2011 through the 2012-13 school year, the program will be available to all B.C. public schools and will expand from the current 1,172 public schools to 1,402 schools, which includes most public and First Nations schools in British Columbia. In addition, \$2.5 million from the Ministry of Health's healthy eating in schools budget has been allocated to support student access to fruit and vegetables for the next two years. One-time grants will also be available to schools to purchase fridges and salad bar equipment to support local solutions to increase fruit and vegetable access for students.



“This program offers great-tasting lessons about healthy choices and the importance of buying local and supporting B.C. farmers,” said Agriculture Minister Don McRae in a press release issued following the announcement. ***“Putting B.C. apples, tree fruits and vegetables into the hands of hundreds of thousands of students shares the freshness and flavours of British Columbia and establishes that link right back to the farm.”***

Childhood obesity is leading to concerns that the current generation of children may have shorter life expectations than their parents, for the first time in recorded history. The BCFGa appreciates the Premier's support and strongly supports the School Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Program, which aims at promoting BC produce, healthy eating, but also reducing health care costs. This Program is a key investment for the BC Government and for British Columbians, seeking to introduce our impressionable youth to healthy eating choices.

To view the full news release, go to http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2011PREM0051-000552.htm

BC Government Launches Healthy Families BC Strategy

On May 24th, the B.C. government launched **Healthy Families BC** strategy of nearly \$69 million on what it says is the most comprehensive health promotion campaign in the country.

Over the coming months, the healthy families strategy will focus on a variety of measures to encourage British Columbians to lead healthier lives where they live, work and play. Of the \$68.7 million allocated for this strategy, the Province is working with health authorities to re-prioritize \$45 million of health authority spending to focus on prevention initiatives that align with this strategy.

Additionally, the strategy will continue to focus on healthy eating initiatives, including a provincial restaurant recognition program to promote healthy eating options.

For more information on the initiative, go to <http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/healthy-communities.php#healthy-community>

BC NDP Proposes Measures to Help BC Fruit Growers and Farmers

During a press conference held in Kelowna on Monday May 16th, BC NDP Leader Adrian Dix, joined by agricultural critic Lana Popham and BCFGAs members, announced a three step plan to help fruit growers and revitalize BC's agricultural sector through a series of comprehensive measures.

Under a New Democrat government, the **Grow BC, Feed BC, Buy BC** program proposes to:

- \$7.5 million Growers' Production Program providing grants for growers to cover equipment, supplies and credit needed to grow a fruitful crop
- Feed BC foods, including fruit, to BC's health care institutions
- Renew the Buy BC marketing program

BCFGA President Joe Sardinha thanked the NDP Leader for taking up the growers' cause and supporting the industry and BC's agricultural sector.

The BCFGAs is working with both Liberal and NDP Party to find short and long term solutions to help tree fruit growers and keep the industry secure and viable.

Lana Popham Reappointed as Agriculture Critic

BC New Democratic Party leader Adrian Dix appointed the Opposition shadow cabinet on April 26th, and it has once again included Saanich South MLA Lana Popham as Agriculture Critic. Lana has a clear passion for agriculture and food – having started a small organic winery and served on a number of agricultural associations prior to her election in 2008.

Honourable Gerry Ritz Reappointed as Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Prime Minister Stephen Harper reappointed Saskatchewan Member of Parliament Gerry Ritz as agriculture minister when he named his new Cabinet in Ottawa on Wednesday May 18th.

Quebec Member of Parliament Christian Paradis was named Secretary of State for Agriculture, while MP for Abbotsford, Ed Fast was appointed as Minister for International Trade.

For a complete list of the new Cabinet, go to <http://www.pm.gc.ca/grfx/docs/cabinet.pdf>

BCFGA Nominates New IAF Board Member

A new board member, Robert Dawson, was appointed to the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF) board by the IAF's members' group, the BCAC board of directors. Nominated by the BC Fruit Growers Association, Dawson brings a lot of agricultural experience to this new role. He was born in Kelowna, where his family began the development of a 100 acre orchard in 1948. After graduating from the University of British Columbia with a bachelor of science in 1967 and earning a bachelor of law degree in 1970, Dawson practiced law until the mid 1970's, before purchasing the family orchard. Since then, he has served the tree fruit sector in numerous capacities and is currently serving a second term on the board of directors for the Okanagan Plant Improvement Company and, in 2008, was honoured with a lifetime membership in the B.C. Fruit Growers Association. Robert Dawson replaces director Don Claridge, an Okanagan orchardist who served on the IAF board of directors since 2009. Continuing IAF directors include Debbie Aarts, Paula Brown, Chris Byra, Irmi Critcher, Gay Hahn, Bar Hayre, Derek Janzen, Jens Larsen, Peter Levelton, Jim Tingle, Ernie Willis and Stuart Wilson, as well as non-voting directors John Berry of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Lindsay Kislock from the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture.



**Investment
Agriculture
Foundation**
of British Columbia

Upcoming Meetings and Events

May 26-28th, 2011	Rotary Okanagan International Children Festival, Penticton
July 1st-August 6th, 2011	Farmers' Markets Appreciation Week
July 23rd, 2011	Orchard Industry Museum 16th Annual Cherry Fair, Kelowna

Each year, the BC Orchard Industry Museum proudly hosts its annual Cherry Fair at the Laurel Packinghouse in Kelowna. This event is designed to create public awareness of our Valley's agricultural industry through a fun-filled family event. It is expected that nearly 1,000 visitors will come to the Cherry Fair this year! The star of the Cherry Fair is the Tasting Table, where museum staff aim to have as many varieties of cherries as possible for the public to sample.

If you are a cherry grower and are able to donate 20 lbs of cherries for the Tasting Table, please contact Jasmine Marshall at Orchard@KelownaMuseums.ca or 778.478.0347.

July 27-29 2011	CFA Semi-Annual Meeting, Banff
August 20, 21st, 2011	Apple Triathlon, Kelowna
August 31st-Sept 4th, 2011	Interior Provincial Exhibition, Armstrong
October 2nd, 2011	Uptown Rutland Scarecrow Festival, Kelowna
October 22nd, 2011	Orchard Industry Museum 23rd Annual Apple Fair, Kelowna
November 4-13th, 2011	RAWF & National Apple Competition, Toronto
November 21-26th, 2011	Canadian Western Agribition, Regina

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**1473 WATER STREET
KELOWNA, BC
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The BC Fruit Growers' Association represents the 758 commercial orchards in BC, with a mandate "to foster a business environment for the long-term prosperity of BC tree fruit growers". The BC tree fruit industry generates over \$130 million in fresh fruit sales annually at the wholesale level, with a further \$120 million in sales from Sun-Rype, the main processor of fruit in the Okanagan

BCFGA Executive

NAME	TELEPHONE	LOCATION
Joe Sardinha (President)	494-9983	Summerland
Fred Steele (Vice-President)	861-6641	Kelowna
Madeleine Van Roehoudt	864-9147	Lake Country
Amarjit Lalli	869-6122	Kelowna
Sukhdev Goraya	491-2229	Kelowna
Denise MacDonald	494-1347	Summerland
Peter Simonsen	496-5156	Naramata
Nirmal Dhaliwal	498-4119	Oliver

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Our Summerland Office closed March 31, 2011.