



## The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association

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### Hail Tour

**Kelowna, BC** – The BC Fruit Growers' Association hosted a tour of areas impacted by the severe hail that occurred on the evening of August 12, and the tour was attended by local MLAs Steve Thomson and Norm Letnick, and MP Ron Cannan, as well as about 20 growers and BC Fruit Growers' Association (BCFGA) representatives.

“Our association and impacted growers appreciate the interest and compassion shown by our elected representatives for the damage and economic costs that arise from this natural disaster,” said Jeet Dukhia, President of the BC Fruit Growers' Association.

On August 12, 2013, at about 8:00 pm, a severe hail event occurred in the South Kelowna area of Kelowna. The hail storm lasted about 15 minutes, with hail pellets up to the size of marbles. In the aftermath, trees and vines were left with shredded leaves, and fruit was severely damaged with bruising and cuts to the skin of the fruit. Damage was extensive to about 700 acres, with much of that acreage suffering damage that will make the fruit unharvestable.

Some of the losses will be recovered from crop insurance and other programs, but extent of the damage is unprecedented. Some of the damage is not covered by the current programs, including the harm to the trees and vines from the hail. “Leaves were shredded during this hail and it will take trees up to two years to recover, so there will be lower yields in the 40 impacted farms. In the meantime, growers face extra costs that include additional fertilizers and nutrients to restore the health of the trees and vines, extra time pruning out damage fruit, and the cost of getting the damaged apples and grapes off of the trees and vines,” said Dukhia.

The most severe damage was in the riding of MLA Steve Thomson. The tour looked at damage on two of the severely impacted orchards, and one vineyard. Subsequent to the tour, Thomson arranged for the provincial Minister of Agriculture to see the decimation firsthand. That visit will also include a roundtable with impacted growers and is expected to be held in the week of August 26.

“We very much appreciate that MLAs Steve Thomson and Norm Letnick, and MP Ron Cannan came to see the damage and talked directly with the impacted farmers,” said Dukhia. The BCFGGA is exploring program responses to the disaster with the government.

The BCFGGA is an agriculture association with a membership of 550 commercial tree fruit growers in BC. It celebrates its 125th anniversary in 2014.

Further information:

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