



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Meet the farmers and ranchers who form the governing body of BC Agriculture Council and are working together to advance B.C. agriculture:



Jennifer Woike - President
Poultry



Len Smit - Vice-President
Landscape & Nursery



Ray VanMarrewyk - Treasurer
Greenhouse Vegetables



David Mutz - Director at Large
Coastal Horticulture



Lynda Atkinson
Equine



Sukhpaul Bal
Interior Horticulture



Henry Bremer
Dairy



Annelise Grube-Cavers
Organic



Brian Kingzett
Aquaculture



Brian Thomas
Beef Cattle & Pork



Alex Vander Eyk
Floriculture



Hannah Willms
Grain & Oilseeds



Rebecca Senicar
Young Farmers (ex-officio)

Our Vision

BC Agriculture Council is the lead industry advocate for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia.

Our Mission

To grow a strong, sustainable and competitive agriculture sector through building industry consensus and advancing public policy.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we conclude another year, I want to take a moment to celebrate the resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment of our province's farmers and ranchers. While 2024 presented its share of challenges, the agricultural community rose to the occasion with remarkable perseverance and adaptability. Your dedication and ingenuity continue to inspire and strengthen the future of agriculture in our province.

On behalf of the Council's Board of Directors, I am proud of the work undertaken in 2024 and the accomplishments we achieved as an organization. Our benchmarks for success involve ensuring that BCAC is included in conversations that impact the agriculture sector, contributing meaningfully to those discussions, and providing tangible value to our members.

The Council's core activity areas guide our organizational direction, while our member-driven priorities shape our strategic objectives and efforts. Over the past two years as President, it has been a pleasure to engage with the member organizations that propel the important work of the Council and to connect with the dedicated people who work tirelessly behind the scenes on behalf of our farmers and ranchers.

In 2024, the teams at both **BC Agriculture Council (BCAC)** and the **Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI)** worked tirelessly to ensure that farmers' voices were heard where it mattered most. Increasingly, the teams at WALI, BCAC, and our member associations have become key influencers in policy decision-making that supports the long-term viability of our sector—whether it's improving water security, enhancing labour access, or strengthening business risk management programs.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY INFLUENCE

In the first half of the year, the Council advanced members' top priorities on key files such as water security, cost of production, labour, and emergency management. For example, BCAC actively participated in the development of the Province of B.C.'s Watershed Security Strategy, advocating for the formal establishment of agricultural water reserves.

An unexpected policy change to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) Use Regulations, which proposed eliminating the "50/50 rule," emerged early in the year, adding to an already full list of sector priorities. Consultations on this change are ongoing, and efforts by those advocating for the removal of this rule continue. BCAC remains engaged with our membership as this issue evolves, recognizing its potential precedent-setting impacts on the future of agricultural land in B.C.

PROVINCIAL ELECTION ENGAGEMENT

Mid-year, BCAC, in partnership with our member associations, developed the sector's top priorities and proposed solutions to be advanced in the months leading up to the provincial election. From summer through fall, BCAC Board Directors traveled across the province to connect with MLA candidates from all parties, personally delivering these key



All Candidates Meeting in Abbotsford.
August 2024

messages directly from farmers. These meetings were well-received, with candidates expressing appreciation for the engaging and informative discussions.

The Council's goal was threefold:

1. Deliver sector priorities and solutions,
2. See these priorities reflected in party platforms, and
3. Ensure sector priorities are incorporated into mandate letters.

I am pleased to report that all these goals were achieved.

RAISING OUR PUBLIC PROFILE

The Council continued its efforts to grow its public profile, resulting in increased demand for engagement, consultation, and media interviews across all levels of government. At the local level, BCAC broadened its relationship network by actively participating in the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Convention in September. Our "Level the Field for BC Farmers and Ranchers" campaign at the tradeshow booth was well-received and generated meaningful engagement.

NATIONAL ADVOCACY & COLLABORATION

Federally, BCAC continued its active participation in the work of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), ensuring that B.C. farmers' concerns were advanced at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

BCAC successfully had two resolutions supported and passed at the AGM.

BCAC also participated alongside Minister Alexis (then B.C. Minister of Agriculture and Food) at the Ministerial Roundtable during the Federal-Provincial-Territorial meeting.

LOOKING AHEAD

We remain committed to ensuring strong representation on both the Premier's Task Force on Agriculture and Food Economy and the Premier's Task Force on Trade and Economic Security. Our goal is clear: to advance policies and initiatives that will drive competitiveness and growth for B.C.'s agriculture sector and the people who work within it.

IN CLOSING

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our members, their boards, our dedicated team at BCAC, and the many partners and sponsors who contribute to our shared success. Thank you for your commitment to B.C. agriculture and your trust and confidence in me as President. It has been an honour to represent you and advocate for your interests.



Jennifer Woike
President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

BC Agriculture Council has had a transformative year, marked by strong advocacy, meaningful government relations, and a commitment to our members during a pivotal provincial election year.

Throughout the year, we have championed key issues that matter to our members, ensuring their voices are heard at every level of government. As I have said before, our investment into working proactively on policy development has resulted in the federal and provincial governments increasingly relying upon BCAC for consultation and input relevant to the interests of BCAC's member associations. As a result, policies, processes, and programs adopted by both levels of government also increasingly reflect these member interests.

Our advocacy efforts have strengthened our profile and influence, allowing us to engage directly with decision-makers on key issues affecting our members. Through proactive government relations, we have also built and reinforced relationships that position us as a trusted voice during policy discussions and in shaping policies and processes that matter.

In 2024, our sector-wide priorities included:

- **Cost of Production:** *Carbon Tax advocacy, minimum wage subsidy, tax exemption on insurance premiums, Advance Payments Program (APP) supplement.*
- **Water Security and Storage:** *Agricultural Water Reserves, investment for storage, groundwater licensing.*

- **Labour:** *MSP coverage delays for temporary foreign Workers (TFW), flexibility for TFWs to move between farms, housing shortage driving up the cost of providing housing for workers.*
- **Emergency Management and Climate Preparedness:** *Disaster Financial Assistance Program improvements, Food Security Planning & Preparedness Project: Provincial Agriculture Emergency Liaison Training Development, seat in Emergency Operations Centers (regional), pre-qualified pass permits.*

Please refer to our policy development section (page 6) of the Annual Report for further details on our priority areas.

BCAC engaged in several unexpected advocacy discussions and consultations on matters that directly impacted the agriculture sector, whether it was a new bill being proposed (e.g. Bill-12) or changes to regulations under the Agricultural Land Act. Never a dull moment!

The 2024 provincial election presented both challenges and opportunities. We worked diligently to inform candidates and advance our collective priorities while navigating the evolving political landscape. In lieu of our annual lobby day (Ag Day in Victoria), we mobilized our Board of Directors who presented our sector-wide



priorities in each region of the province from July to October. This approach was to personally deliver all party candidates first-hand information on the challenges the sector is facing and present ideas for opportunities stating:

“Solutions FOR the sector should come FROM the sector.”

BCAC and its members received strong praise from candidates and government staff for developing a well-thought-out list of priorities with actionable ideas for solutions. The agriculture sector’s priorities were strongly captured across all party platforms and the Council was even named as a contributor to some platform commitments.

Please refer to our section on advocacy and government relations on page 10 of this report for further details.

Engagement with our members remains at the heart of what we do. Through consultations, events, and direct outreach, we have fostered stronger connections and deeper collaboration, ensuring that our initiatives align with the needs of those we serve. The insights and feedback from our members have been invaluable in shaping our direction as an organization and reinforcing the impact of our advocacy.

This year also marked a significant milestone as we conducted a comprehensive review of our 2022-2025 strategic plan. This process reaffirmed our vision, mission, and priorities, and allowed us to refine our path forward by reflecting on our progress while assessing emerging challenges. With a clear vision and renewed focus, we are well-positioned to build on our successes and continue delivering meaningful outcomes.

As we reflect on the past year’s accomplishments, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated board, members, partners, and staff who have made these achievements possible. Your commitment and support drive our mission forward, and I look forward to another year of growth and impact.



Danielle Synotte
Executive Director



POLICY DEVELOPMENT

BC Agriculture Council has continued to deliver vital policy input at both the provincial and federal levels, ensuring that member priorities are embedded in government programs and policy decisions. In response to heightened demand for policy insights during the 2024 Provincial Election, BCAC strengthened its internal infrastructure—enhancing coordination and member engagement to drive impactful, solution-focused advocacy for the agriculture sector.

In the spring, BCAC staff hosted 25 consultation meetings with member associations to verify policy priority areas identified through similar consultations in 2022 and 2023 and to obtain feedback on BCAC's policy development work to date. Member associations endorsed the below sector-wide priorities for 2024, and feedback was uniformly positive about the need for and effectiveness of BCAC's policy development role.

2024 KEY PRIORITIES

BCAC conducted annual consultation meetings with our member associations in Spring 2024. These consultations reaffirmed the importance of BCAC's four priority areas and sub-priorities:

COST OF PRODUCTION - CRITICAL INPUTS

- Carbon tax advocacy
- Minimum wage in B.C. subsidy
- Tax exemption on insurance premiums
- Advance Payment Program supplement

WATER SECURITY & STORAGE

- Agricultural Water Reserves
- Investment for storage
- Groundwater licensing

LABOUR

- MSP coverage delay for TFWs
- Flexibility for TFWs to move between farms
- Housing shortage driving up the cost of providing housing for workers. Need for financial support as employers try to construct new (improved) housing for workers.

EMERGENCY PLANNING & PREPAREDNESS

- Food Security Planning & Preparedness Project
- Provincial Agriculture Emergency Liaison training development
- Seat in Emergency Operations Centers (regional)
- Re-entry permits
- Disaster Financial Assistance Program improvements

PRIORITY OVERVIEW

WATER SECURITY & STORAGE

BCAC, alongside its members, played a leading role in shaping the B.C. Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program, successfully advocating for expanded eligibility criteria to better support producers. In addition, BCAC continues to push for greater investments in water storage infrastructure, the establishment of agricultural water reserves, and critical reforms to the groundwater licensing system to ensure long-term water security for B.C. farmers and ranchers.

COST OF PRODUCTION

In 2023 and 2024, rising input costs placed significant financial pressure on B.C. farmers and ranchers, prompting BCAC to push for targeted financial relief. Advocacy efforts focused on carbon tax relief, calling for exemptions, rebates, or re-investment of carbon tax dollars to ease the burden on producers. To address rising labour costs, BCAC proposed a wage subsidy to help offset the impact of B.C.'s increasing minimum wage. Additionally, BCAC advocated for a tax exemption on private insurance premiums, recognizing the strain of escalating costs, particularly in response to extreme weather events. To support farm cash flow, BCAC also called for an increase to the interest-free portion of the Advance Payments Program (APP) and proposed for the province to consider a supplement loans program as seen in other provinces, ensuring producers had greater financial flexibility in managing their operations.

LABOUR

Labour shortages, restrictive regulations, and rising housing costs continued to challenge farm employers in 2024. Formal policy positions were submitted on driver's license eligibility for Agricultural Stream workers, funding for workforce training programs, and long-term financial support for farm housing projects.

In addition, BCAC pushed for on-arrival MSP eligibility for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) to prevent coverage gaps and reduce financial risks for both workers and employers. To address ongoing labour shortages, BCAC advocated for greater flexibility for TFWs to move between farms, ensuring a more adaptable workforce. Rising housing costs remained a pressing issue, leading BCAC to call for financial support programs to help farm employers construct new, improved worker housing that meets modern standards. BCAC also collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to develop communications materials for farm employers, outlining their responsibilities under evacuation orders and alerts.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS

BCAC's Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Committee continued to drive critical policy improvements to safeguard farms from climate-related disasters. Key initiatives included:

- Shaping the B.C. Flood Strategy to enhance flood mitigation efforts and protect agricultural lands from severe weather impacts.
- Advocating to expand the Extreme Weather Preparedness Program, ensuring producers have access to the resources and tools needed to manage increasing climate-driven risks.
- Recommending improvements to the Disaster Financial Assistance Program – ensuring funding programs better reflect the unique challenges of farm businesses in post-disaster recovery efforts.
- Strengthening agriculture's role in emergency response and recovery through the Investment Agriculture Foundation funded Food Security Planning & Preparedness Project, outlined in more detail on page 9.

TARGETED ADVOCACY

BCAC made **19 unique submissions** to government covering a wide range of topics critical to the sector, including (but not limited to):

- The need for a **Provincial Agriculture Strategy**
- **On-arrival MSP coverage** for TFWs
- **TFW driver's license eligibility** for agricultural workers.
- **Aquaculture Policy Reform**
- **Labour strikes and supply chain disruptions** highlighting impacts on agriculture
- **Financial Relief for Farmers** – Permanent increase to the interest-free limit under the Advance Payments Program (APP) from \$100,000 to \$350,000 to ease financial pressures on producers.
- **Preventing Burdensome National Fire Code Changes** – BCAC successfully prevented costly changes, protecting farm businesses from unnecessary regulatory burdens.
- **Addressing Agricultural Plastic Waste** – Identified solutions for managing agricultural plastic waste.



CFA "Hill Day" meeting in Ottawa, ON.
October 2024

More so than in previous years, BCAC was also called upon to provide input on programming and administrative processes. For example, BCAC staff contributed to the rapid development of program eligibility criteria under the expanded Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program, as well as a detailed proposal for a Premier's Task Force on Agri-Food Competitiveness and Growth.

In anticipation of an upcoming provincial general election, BCAC also proactively communicated the needs of its membership to government, including identifying the need for a provincial initiative similar to the Canada Carbon Rebate for Small Businesses, funding for on-farm apprenticeship programs, on-arrival Medical Service Plan coverage for temporary foreign workers, long-term flood mitigation infrastructure funding, and more.

KEEPING "AG" ON THE AGENDA

19 submissions

in response to government consultations

2 resolutions adopted

at CFA AGM

25 advocacy meetings

with government officials

5 committee meetings

to inform BCAC's policy work

LOOKING FORWARD

Both the federal and provincial governments increasingly rely upon BCAC for policy input and the development of programming or administrative processes relevant to the interests of BCAC's member associations. This means that policies and programs adopted by both levels of government increasingly reflect member interests.

AGRICULTURE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROJECT

Emergency events in B.C. are becoming more frequent and severe, threatening farms, ranches, and the province's food security. To build a stronger, more resilient agriculture sector, BCAC is leading a coalition of seven farm organizations to enhance the sector's emergency preparedness and response.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

- **Project Development** – Sought and received project funding support from the Investment Agriculture Foundation's Food Security Emergency Planning & Preparedness Fund.
- **Emergency Planning** – Developing a coordinated BCAC Emergency Management Plan to guide its actions before, during, and after emergencies.
- **Agriculture Coordinators** – Trained 59 individuals in 2024 to assist local authorities in protecting farms and livestock.
- **Access Pass System** – Worked with the Province and some local authorities on potential enhancements to a standardized access system to help farmers safely reach their properties during emergencies.
- **Farmer Training** – Hosting regional workshops in conjunction with AgSafe in 2025 to help farmers and ranchers prepare for crisis events.



STRONGER TOGETHER

The plan supports the agriculture sector working with local governments and Indigenous communities in coordinating our emergency response approach and programs.

2024 PROVINCIAL ELECTION

DEFINING SECTOR PRIORITIES

Working closely with our 29 member associations, BCAC identified key priorities that formed the foundation of our advocacy efforts. These priorities remain crucial for advancing the sector's competitiveness and sustainability under the new government.

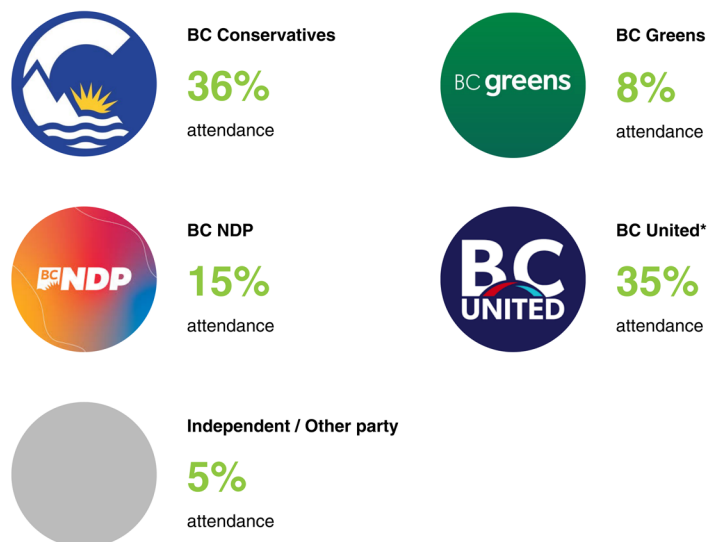
- **Provincial Agri-Food Competitiveness & Growth Strategy:** Develop a sustainable, competitive agricultural sector through a comprehensive action plan.
- **Increased Ministry Funding:** Increase investment in agriculture to levels comparable with other provinces.
- **Water Security:** Prioritize access to water resources for agriculture, including long-term storage solutions.
- **Emergency Management:** Strengthen measures to mitigate the impact of climate-related emergencies on the sector.
- **National Competitiveness:** Address the high costs and taxation that hinder B.C.'s agriculture sector from competing with other provinces.
- **Reconciliation:** Better integrate agriculture into the government's reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities.
- **Land Prioritization:** Protect and enhance the productivity of land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- **Processing Capacity:** Expand B.C.'s food processing infrastructure to ensure locally-produced food can be processed and distributed within the province.

KEEPING AGRICULTURE IN FOCUS

Ensuring that agriculture was top of mind for both voters and candidates was a cornerstone of BCAC's Government Relations strategy in 2024. In the months leading up to the provincial election, BCAC representatives engaged extensively with political candidates and stakeholders to drive home the importance of agriculture sector priorities.

These efforts not only influenced public discourse but also led to unprecedented mentions of agricultural priorities in party platforms. Through a combination of regional engagement, leadership meetings, and stakeholder outreach, BCAC successfully elevated the sector's voice at a critical time for provincial policymaking.

MEETING PARTICIPATION BY PARTY:



**Note: BC Agriculture Council's candidate meetings occurred from July-September 2024.*

PARTY PLATFORMS RECAP

BCAC conducted a thorough review of the platforms of the three major political parties, comparing their commitments to the sector's top priorities. This comparison table served as a crucial resource for stakeholders across the province, helping them understand how each party's platform aligned with the agriculture sector's needs.



REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS B.C.

BCAC board directors and staff traveled across the province to ensure that the concerns of the agriculture sector were heard by candidates in key regions. These meetings provided direct opportunities to advocate for policies that support the sector's long-term growth and resilience.

- 📍 Nanaimo
- 📍 Victoria*
- 📍 Prince George
- 📍 Kamloops
- 📍 Kelowna**
- 📍 Abbotsford
- 📍 Surrey
- 📍 Burnaby
- 📍 Peace Region
- 📍 Kootenay Region
- 📍 Smithers

* including BC Greens leader Sonia Furstenau
 **including BC United leader Kevin Falcon

14+

Meetings

11

Regions of B.C.

120+

Candidates Engaged

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

In addition to regional meetings, BCAC secured discussions with several provincial leaders and key decision-makers, further solidifying agriculture's position on the political agenda. These strategic meetings underscored BCAC's commitment to ensuring the sector's voice was heard at the highest levels of government.

KEY LEADERSHIP MEETINGS:

- Hon. Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture & Food
- Premier David Eby
- Ministry of Agriculture & Food executive team
- BC United Caucus (prior to campaign withdrawal)



LOOKING AHEAD: STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

With the election behind us, BCAC is intensifying efforts to strengthen partnerships and influence policy within the new provincial government. Our continued advocacy will be instrumental in driving sector-focused solutions, ensuring agriculture remains a top priority in legislative and economic decision-making.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

BCAC has continued to strengthen key relationships with both provincial and federal governments, enhancing its role as a trusted partner in policy development.



Premier Eby speaking at BCAC's "Ag Gala"
January 2024

PROVINCIAL & FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT

Quarterly meetings with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food provides an ongoing platform for collaboration on issues impacting the sector. These meetings ensure continuous dialogue on sector priorities such as water access, labour support, and climate readiness.

EXPANDING THE NETWORK

To further extend its influence, BCAC is exploring opportunities to diversify its stakeholder base through associate memberships and new funding sources. This initiative aims to foster stronger partnerships across industries and enhance the organization's long-term sustainability. As of January 2025, we have welcomed three new associate members!



Meeting with MLA Ian Paton, Ag Critic
April 2024



CARGIL-EWOS tour by BC Salmon Farmers Assoc.
June 2024

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

We also enjoyed the return to many in-person member events and industry tradeshow: the BC Poultry Conference, BC Beef Day, the BC Dairy Conference, United Flower Growers' AGM, BC Salmon Farmers AGM, BC Shellfish Growers' AGM, BC Grain AGM, and BC Hazelnuts AGM, to name a few!

EXPANDING INFLUENCE ACROSS GOVERNMENT

BCAC's strategic outreach has increased its influence at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. This growth reflects BCAC's effectiveness in shaping policy discussions on agriculture.

PROVINCIAL & MUNICIPAL HIGHLIGHTS

BC Economic Summit

BCAC organized a high-profile panel addressing agriculture challenges, fostering collaboration with local governments and professional associations.

BC Land Summit

BCAC's presentations on drought management and agricultural land use attracted strong interest, reinforcing its leadership in water and land security.

Union of BC Municipalities Convention

In addition to having a booth at the trade show, BCAC participated in two panels on water and emergency preparedness, further establishing its role in shaping municipal policies impacting agriculture. This coincided with our front-page op-ed on drought and water security in the *Vancouver Sun*.



UBCM Conference - Level the Field Campaign
September 2024

FEDERAL ENGAGEMENT

At the national level, BCAC maintained a leadership role within the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). BCAC successfully led the adoption of two resolutions supported and passed at CFA's 2024 AGM:

Incentive programs for soil health and soil carbon sequestration:

CFA to pursue federal incentives for these practices as a key aspect of ongoing feedback on SCAP and discussions related to the next Canadian Agricultural Partnership agreement.

Support for Indigenous engagement:

CFA lobby the federal government to provide federal government funding that supports efforts by industry associations to engage with Indigenous Peoples on policy development and program design.



Presenting at B.C. Economic Summit
April 2024

RAISING AGRICULTURE'S PROFILE IN THE MEDIA

In 2024, BCAC significantly elevated agriculture's visibility in the media, spotlighting key issues such as **water security**, **labour policies**, and **climate resilience**. Through expert commentary, op-eds, and high-profile interviews, BCAC has strengthened public awareness and positioned itself as a leading voice on matters affecting B.C.'s farming sector. These efforts have amplified advocacy initiatives and highlighted the urgent needs of local producers.

SECURING AGRICULTURAL WATER RESERVES:

An op-ed by Jeremy Dunn, Kevin Boon, and Danielle Synotte featured on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun* stressed the importance of protected water resources for B.C.'s food production. This article underscored the critical connection between water security and agricultural sustainability.

DROUGHT COVERAGE:

BCAC gained widespread media attention with the article, "**We're Being Vilified: With Droughts Increasing, B.C. Farmers Need Water Reserved for Food Production.**" The piece advocated for the creation of agricultural water reserves, emphasizing the long-term risks to local food security.

LABOUR POLICY ADVOCACY:

David Mutz, chair of BCAC's Labour Committee, was featured in the *Vancouver Sun* after addressing a UN report that criticized Canada's temporary foreign worker program. His comments reinforced BCAC's leadership in pushing for critical reforms to labour policies that affect farm employers and workers.



FEATURED IN:

Vancouver Sun
CBC Vancouver
Daily Hive
Country Life in BC
...and many more!

TOP MEDIA REQUESTS:

Drought & Weather Impacts
Temporary Foreign Workers
Water
Rail Strike



Danielle Synotte: We're facing a perfect storm that threatens the future of B.C.'s farms and ranches

Opinion: Amid labour shortages, decreasing agricultural land and taxation increases, imagine the debt load and uncertainty the next generation of farmers are being asked to accept.

By Danielle Synotte

Published Dec 03, 2024 Last updated Dec 04, 2024 2 minute read 8 Comments





AGRICULTURE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Public trust is at the core of a thriving and resilient agriculture sector. BCAC remains committed to strengthening the connection between farmers, the public, and policy-makers to ensure a sustainable future for B.C. agriculture.

**LEVEL
THE FIELD**
FOR BC FARMERS

LEVEL THE FIELD CAMPAIGN – 2024 ELECTION ADVOCACY

In the lead-up to the **2024 provincial election**, BCAC launched the **Level the Field campaign** to ensure agriculture remains a government priority. Our goal is to highlight the challenges farmers face—including competitiveness, labour shortages, and regulatory burdens—and advocate for policies that support a **strong, sustainable** food system for B.C.

speakUP

EMPOWERING FARMERS – SPEAK UP! TRAINING

BCAC closed the year with another successful **Speak Up! training** workshop, equipping farmers and ranchers with the tools to effectively tell their stories, engage the public, and navigate tough conversations around agriculture. These workshops continue to be highly valued, and we look forward to hosting them again in the future!



Canadian
Centre for
Food Integrity

CCFI CONFERENCE

BCAC is a member of the **Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI)**. In October, we attended the Public Trust Summit, an annual gathering that brings together industry leaders to explore consumer perceptions, trust-building strategies, and emerging trends in the food system. A key highlight was the release of the 2024 Public Trust Research Results, offering valuable insights into consumer attitudes and trust in Canadian food production.

WALI GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Despite a significant leadership transition, as I took on the role of General Manager, along with other emerging challenges, our small and dedicated Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI) team remained focused on enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency ensuring workers arrived on time to meet employers' needs.

6,000+

SAWP worker arrivals

1,500+

SAWP & AgStream employers served

1,500+

WALI e-news subscribers

NEW CONSUL AND REPRESENTATIVE

The Mexican Consulate in Vancouver welcomed a new Consul General, Olga Beatriz García Guillén, who replaced Berenice Díaz Ceballos, in 2024. Additionally, Steve Brown was appointed as the new Senior Liaison Officer for Jamaica in the Okanagan, succeeding Donna Adams. Their arrival has further strengthened the collaboration between WALI and the Mexican and Jamaican governments, ensuring continued support for temporary foreign workers and employers in British Columbia.

UNEXPECTED DISRUPTIONS

A severe cold snap in January caused significant crop damage in the Okanagan, leading to over 770 worker cancellations processed by WALI. This underscored the need for agile support systems, prompting several upgrades to the WALI Online Portal. Additionally, on February 29, the Canadian government added a new visa requirement for Mexican nationals, further complicating the process. With reduced flights, WALI was critical in facilitating communication with Employment and

Social Development Canada (ESDC), the Ministry of Labour in Mexico, and employers, ensuring workers could still arrive on time. Employers continued to trust WALI's e-news for timely updates and support during this challenging time.

WALI ONLINE PORTAL

In 2024, the WALI online portal saw significant upgrades focused on efficiency, security, and user experience. A new internal message system was introduced for administration staff, enabling most inquiries to be responded to within 24 hours. Cybersecurity enhancements were also implemented to safeguard sensitive information.

A major advancement was the integration of Recognized Employer Pilot LMIA processing, which required substantial development efforts.

Overall, more than 550 LMIA applications were processed for SAWP Mexico, supporting over 1,500 active users through the WALI Online Portal.



WALI attended the SAWP Mexico 50th anniversary celebration

MEXICO SAWP 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), which began in 1974 with the arrival of 203 workers to Canada, has grown significantly, reaching over 26,000 workers by 2024.

To mark this milestone, the Consulate of Mexico hosted a special celebration at DeVry Greenhouses, commemorating both Mexico's Independence Day and the 50th anniversary of the SAWP program. WALI was present to support and witness this significant event.

CONSULTATIONS ON TFW PROGRAMS

Employment and Social Development Canada aims to develop a new agriculture and fish processing stream that builds on the strengths of the existing SAWP. WALI actively participated in the consultations, collaborating with employer groups and national organizations to ensure B.C. farmers' interests were well represented. WALI has already submitted feedback on accommodation, occupational scope, and healthcare provisions. Upcoming consultations in 2025 will focus on work permit and transportation requirements, as well as wages and deductions.

END-OF-SEASON SURVEY

The Temporary Foreign Agricultural Workers End of Season Survey, funded by MOSAIC, launched in

July. The campaign used both email and direct mail to reach employers with promotional information to share with workers. Over 2,000 employers were contacted resulting in over 300 worker surveys completed. Thank you for your help to amplify our message!

STRATEGIC PLAN

In October, KPMG delivered a 'What We Heard' report, providing valuable feedback from BCAC strategic planning. An ad-hoc committee was formed to guide the development of WALI's strategic plan, focusing on enhancing customer service, government relations, and stakeholder engagement.

Key priorities include:

- expanding value-added services,
- improving platform security, and
- appointing a new President and Vice-President to WALI's governance.



Veronica Moreno
General Manager



ABOUT BC YOUNG FARMERS

The Committee's primary purpose is to provide their input to BCAC to ensure the organization's advocacy efforts are inclusive of the next generation's voice. As an additional purpose, the Committee also provides educational, leadership, and networking opportunities for young farmers in British Columbia.

JANUARY TO MARCH

- Fundraised \$8,800 through the silent auction at BCAC's annual BC Agri-Food Industry Gala
- Co-hosted a booth at the Pacific Agriculture Show
- Represented at the Islands Agriculture Show alongside BCAC
- Attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture AGM in Ottawa with three members
- Contributed to a 4-H BC scholarship
- Attended the Southern Interior Horticultural Show to connect with new potential members

APRIL TO JUNE

- Hosted a committee development workshop on Robert's Rules of Order
- Amended the Terms of Reference to include aquaculture representation following updates to BCAC's membership

JULY TO SEPTEMBER

- Attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture *Summer Board Meeting* and *Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Roundtable* in Whitehorse, Yukon
- Participated in BCAC's election campaign all-party meetings in regions across the province to deliver key messaging on behalf of the sector

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

- Hosted signature *Farm Fest* event in conjunction with the national Agriculture Excellence Conference
- Participated on a young farmer panel at the BC Dairy Conference

2024 COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**BC YOUNG
FARMERS**

- Rebecca Senicar, *Chair*
- Campbell Woike, *Vice-Chair*
- Corne Quik, *Treasurer*
- Amrit Dhaliwal, *Member*
- Tyler Heppell, *Member*
- Jacintha Kulchar, *Member*
- Russell Reitsema, *Member*
- Jeff Spitters, *Member*

FARM FEST X AG EX

BCYF's annual Farm Fest was hosted in conjunction with Farm Management Canada's national Agriculture Excellence Conference (Ag Ex) in Abbotsford, B.C.

The event featured panels on farm business, waste reduction, and a national panel to discuss the ever-growing pressures on Canada's farmland. Hosted farm tours, a joint reception, and two more days of learning at Ag Ex followed the panels. Because of this partnership, young farmers were offered special rates to attend the full Ag Ex conference, which also featured exclusive young farmer sessions.

MORNING PANELS

- From Field to Finance - Tools for Farm Business Growth
- Waste Not, Want Not - Resources for Farmers to Reduce Waste
- Feature Panel: The Loss of Agricultural Land and the Ever-Growing Pressures – What Will Be Left for Ag Production?



GUIDED FARM TOURS

Thank you to the producers who opened their doors to showcase their farm operations:

- Van Eekelen Enterprises Ltd
- Dicklands Biogas
- Rainbow Greenhouses (Ag Ex only)

EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- RealAg Radio LIVE interview.
- Tailored young farmer sessions throughout both events.
- As a result of this partnership, Farm Management Canada plans to include young farmer content in their annual conference scheduling going forward.



BC FARMER ID CARD PROGRAM

CONVENIENCE IN YOUR POCKET

The **BC Farmer ID Card** continues to be a core revenue-generating program for BC Agriculture Council to stabilize member dues. In addition, the program directly encourages membership in BCAC member associations by offering a significant 50% discount on the cost of the cards for farmers and ranchers who are members of these associations.

NEW PARTNER ANNOUNCED

In addition to convenience and tax savings, the BC Farmer ID Card program offers cardholders a suite of exclusive, farmer-focused perks through our affinity partners. In 2024, we were pleased to announce a new partnership with Lenmark. Through this partnership, cardholders can save 5% off all orders, plus sell their first asset valued under \$50,000 for free.

NEW PARTNERSHIP



2024 MARKETING APPROACH:



MEMBER PROMO

Partnering with members to share **targeted campaigns**



DIGITAL MARKETING

A cost-effective approach to reach **new customers**



MEMBER EVENTS

Direct to farmer, great for listening, learning, and **feedback**



SERVICE

Crucial for **increased renewal rate**



RADIO ADS

Broad awareness-building in **targeted geographic regions**



PRINT ADS

A mix of **targeted (member)** and **broad awareness-building**



DIRECT MAIL

Reinforce value for cardholders, leads to **increased renewals**

BCAC EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PROGRAM

In 2024, BCAC launched the **BCAC Employee Benefits Program**. Developed with direct input from farmers, the program offers flexible, affordable plans designed to help farms attract, protect, and retain employees—key to long-term sector success.

NEW OWNER-OPERATOR PLAN

At the end of the year, we started promoting a new offering to launch in 2025. Many owner-operators within the industry are without access to a competitive benefit plan. BCAC is proud to present an option that allows owner-operators to choose between one of five comprehensive plans. Visit bcac.ca/benefits for more details.



TAILORED COVERAGE:

OWNER-OPERATORS

Tailored benefits for owner-operators and their families.

SMALL TO MEDIUM TEAMS* (2-10 EMPLOYEES)

Pre-set, flexible options to fit small farm operations.

LARGE OPERATIONS (10+ EMPLOYEES)

Custom plans designed to match larger business needs.

For more details and to receive a quote, visit:
[BCAC.CA/BENEFITS](https://bcac.ca/benefits)

*PLAN DETAILS (2-10 EMPLOYEES)

| | Bronze <i>New to employee benefits or need a more affordable option?</i> | Silver <i>On solid footing and looking for added value?</i> | Gold <i>Well-established and looking to optimize your benefits plan?</i> | Platinum <i>Seeking premium offers at an affordable rate?</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| PARAMEDICAL | \$250/year, 80% | \$500/year, 80% | \$500/yr, 90% | \$500/yr, 100% |
| DRUG COVERAGE | \$2,000/yr | \$2,500/yr | \$5,000/yr | \$10,000/yr |
| BASIC DENTAL | \$1,000, 80% | \$1,000, 90% | \$1,500, 90% | \$1,500, 100% |
| 24/7 VIRTUAL HEALTHCARE | Included | Included | Included | Included |
| EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM | Included | Included | Included | Included |
| EMERGENCY TRAVEL INSURANCE | Included | Included | Included | Included |

OUR MEMBERS

BC Blueberry Council
BC Broiler Hatching Egg Producers Association
BC Cattlemen's Association
BC Cherry Association
BC Chicken Growers Association
BC Cranberry Growers Association
BC Dairy Association
BC Egg Producers Association
BC Fruit Growers Association
BC Grain Producers Association
BC Grapegrowers Association
BC Greenhouse Growers Association
BC Hazelnut Growers Association
BC Honey Producers Association
BC Landscape & Nursery Association
BC Pork Producers Association
BC Potato & Vegetable Growers Association
BC Poultry Association
BC Salmon Farmers Association
BC Shellfish Growers Association
BC Strawberry Growers Association
BC Turkey Association
BC Wine Grape Council
Fraser Valley Pea and Bush Bean Growers Association
Horse Council British Columbia
Organic BC
Peace Region Forage Seed Association
Raspberry Industry Development Council
United Flower Growers

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