

# BCVMC Townhall

April 12, 2022

## What We Heard

Content in this document reflects the feedback received from the first BCVMC Townhall held April 12, 2022. Thank you to all those who attended and provided input. We appreciate your engagement and look forward to hearing from industry again at our next Townhall planned for October 2022.

### *Challenges to recruit Commissioners in the current environment*

- Commission benefits from strong leadership, trust, representation, experience at the table
- Workload may be perceived to be significant; however, it is on par with other boards
- History/ risk of litigation
- A limited number of growers willing to assume industry leadership roles

### *Major impact of BCFIRB Directive - Agency Director restriction*

- Perceived loss of access to Agency experience and knowledge
- Smaller pool of candidates
- Significantly reduces candidates from the interior of Vancouver Island
- Encourage BCFIRB to reconsider the restriction

### *Enhancing Commissioner recruitment*

- New focus of the Governance Committee
- Staggered terms for Commissioners spread out the need to recruit
- New Skills Matrix framework identifies Commission gaps
- Addition of two independent Commissioners



## Key Townhall Takeaways

### *Admin Penalties*

- Consensus to make food safety a part of General Orders
- Consensus by participants to implement Admin Penalties

### *Agency Reporting*

- Keep it simple e.g., provide report card
- Consensus by participants to develop draft report card

### *Election Policy*

- Larger, fewer farms = fewer leaders to sit on the Commission
- Further restricting leadership pool doesn't make sense
- Consensus to implement the revised policy while continuing to encourage BCFIRB to reconsider this direction
- Consensus by participants to introduce online voting

### *Grower Engagement*

- Positive response to enhance engagement with emphasis on townhalls, Advisories and electronic balloting

## *Advisory Groups including Agencies provide industry knowledge*

- All stakeholders represented on Advisories (agencies, wholesalers, growers)
- Provide valuable insights, quality input for BCVMC governance
- Good place to bridge gap with agencies
- Important to have cross-agency representation
- Longer (3 year) terms because of the depth of the work and length of time that is required
- Two separate advisory groups: Greenhouse and Storage Crop (up to 10 members each)
- Suggest they meet 2x /year with focused agendas
- Include subject matter experts as required

## *Election Policy*

- Commissioner onboarding is in the process of being strengthened; elements of which could be used for advisor onboarding, townhall agendas, and for communication to other organizations
- This is a complex industry with a lot to learn and understand

## *Independent Commissioners*

- Interview process for independent Commissioners was effective
- Commission is very accepting of the addition of independent Commissioners
- Four strong independent candidates were interviewed for the two appointed positions

## *Online Voting*

- Procedures are in place; BCVMC just needs to move onto it!
- Eight other boards moved onto an electronic platform resulting in increased participation
- Nominations can be handled electronically
- Reminders can easily be sent out e.g., reminders day before /day of election increase participation by as much as 50%
- Other professional bodies have seamlessly moved online
- Consensus by participants to proceed with online voting for BCVMC



*All content reflects the feedback received from industry participants.*

## *Participant Ranked Methods for Ongoing Grower Engagement*

1. Townhalls
2. Electronic voting
3. Advisory Groups
4. Newsletters
5. Web portal
6. Social media

## Food Safety & Compliance Enforcement

- Food safety is a risk for the industry and may not be adequately addressed
- The industry is only as strong as its weakest link
  - smaller growers with no program put all growers at risk
  - unregulated products aren't covered by current guidelines
  - food safety standards need to be in place for wholesalers
- Crisis management communication should separate regulated from unregulated producers
- Agencies only sell product from producers who have food safety in place
- No threshold for storage crop – should there be one?
- Consider advocating for requirements on farmers markets:
  - Impossible to identify all farmer's markets and /or their products
  - Put pressure on government to put restriction on farmers markets e.g., required certification
  - Consider creating a registry e.g., food safety certification renewed annually
  - Farmers Market Association – educated to better understand risks
- Once food safety is incorporated into the General Order it comes under BCVMC legislation.
- Consensus by participants that Admin Penalties be implemented – paramount for industry

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## Agency Accountability

- Agency Accountability includes guidelines in the General Order and reporting requirements
- Participants indicated a desire for consistent reporting by Agencies which would also help set standards for new entrants
- In response to FIRB's requirement for Agency accountability reporting, participants recommended a simple report card template
- If an Agency is not performing:
  - Set standards to audit against
  - Offer a framework for dialogue about underperformance based on set standards and industry average
- Hard to compare Agencies because many different business models exist e.g., variations in warehousing, freight costs, direct store structure
- How is data harmonized to determine if the return to the producer ensures they are receiving a reasonable return?

### *Possible Measures to Include in an Agency "Report Card"*

- Simple Audit – does the agency have:
  - Strong governance (e.g., independent directors)
  - Marketing plan
  - Management structure
- Other possible metrics
  - Movement of growers to another Agency
  - Costs, freight, sales price
  - returns compared to industry average
  - net grower return

Three priorities  
from industry  
feedback

- ✓ continue strengthening governance
- ✓ continue strengthening the value chain
- ✓ address food safety

## *What Went Well*

- Townhall meeting; this is a first!
- Hold Townhalls twice per year
- Informative; good information
- Structured feedback
- Open and honest; didn't feel threatened
- Good dialogue; participation
- Spirit of collaboration; strong interaction
- Better understanding of roles and responsibilities of the Commission and how issues are being addressed
- Ability to give feedback and suggest actions to draft frameworks
- Ended on time
- Learn a lot from listening; good to hear other perspectives; a lot of wisdom in the room
- Structure of meeting agenda
- In person
- Meeting puts things into perspective and increases understanding

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## *Next Time*

- Less background explanation
- Go further into the Strategic Plan
- Invite/ benchmark other Commissions – share market information
- Encourage more growers to attend
- Chair/ Vice chair/ GM to attend district meetings
- Continue to demonstrate progress
- Townhalls and newsletters to report progress



## *Potential topics for Fall Townhall*

- Advisory group roles and discussion focus
- Input on draft delivery allocation process
- Input on key issues for the Commission to address
- Input to industry risks

# BCVMC Commission 2022-2023

Debbie Etsell (Chair)	Independent
John Newell (Vice Chair)	Greenhouse cucumbers
Craig Evans	Independent
Kevin Husband	Storage Crops – at large
Natalie Janssens	Independent
Hugh Reynolds	Processing Crops
Armand Vander Meulen	Greenhouse peppers
(Vacant)	Storage Crops
(Vacant)	Greenhouse Crops
Terms ended May 31, 2022	
Cory Gerrard	Storage Crops
Blair Lodder	Storage Crops

## Committees & Advisories

### *Governance Committee*

- John Newell (Chair)
- (Vacant)
- Natalie Janssens
- Hugh Reynolds
- Andre Solymosi (ex-officio)

### *Finance & Audit Committee*

- Craig Evans
- (Vacant)
- Andre Solymosi (ex-officio)

### *Advisories - Greenhouse & Storage Crop*

*(membership TBD)*

- 2 Commissioners (1 as Chair)
- 5 Growers appointed by Commission
- 2 Agency representatives
- GM (ex-officio)
- Staff and subject matter experts invited as required
- 3-year staggered terms

Expressions of interest in being an Advisory member can be sent to [bcvmc.chair@bcveg.com](mailto:bcvmc.chair@bcveg.com)

## Townhall Attendees

### *Industry*

Randy Andres	IVCA (online)
Jack Bates	Tecarte Farms (online)
Murray Driediger	BCfresh
Brian Faulkner	BCfresh
Rick Gilmour	BCfresh
Peter Guichon	Felix Farms
Ed McKim	Ed McKim Farms
Della Oberhoffner	BC Council of Marketing Boards
Mike Reed	Longvine (online)
Randy Simut	Canadian Farms
Susan Smith	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Ray VanMarrewyk	Westcoast Vegetables Ltd.
Don Voth	Merom Farms
Mark Voth	Merom Farms
Zach Walsh	Vancouver Island Produce (online)
Jack Zellweger	Zellweger Farms Ltd.
David Zirnhelt	Director, BCFIRB
Bill Zylmans	W&A Farms

### *BCVMC Commissioners*

All attended (see Commissioners on previous page)

### *Commission Staff*

Andre Solymosi	General Manager
Suzanne Babcock	Compliance and Licensing Officer (online)
Debbie Oyenuga	Market Analyst and Operation Support Officer
Claudia Trigo	Administrative Assistant

### *Consultants*

Mary Benning	Finley & Associates (online)
Donna Finley	Finley & Associates

*Further feedback  
can be provided to  
[bcvmc.chair@bcveg.com](mailto:bcvmc.chair@bcveg.com)*