

OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE PROGRAM BOARD

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the **OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE (SIR) PROGRAM BOARD**
held in the RDCO Woodhaven Boardroom, Kelowna BC, on Friday, February 9, 2024

Voting Members:

Director Shirley Fowler	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director George Bush	Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen
Director Tim Lavery	Regional District Columbia Shuswap (virtual)
Director Mohini Singh	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Gordon Lovegrove	Regional District of Central Okanagan (virtual)
Grower Walter Makepeace	Grower Representative – Zone 1, organic
Grower Joginder Dhand	Grower Representative – Zone 3
Grower Tarsem Goraya	Grower Representative – Zone 2

Non-Voting Members:

Dr. Susanna Acheampong	BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Taras Pojasok	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Guests/Delegates:

Gale Nelson	BC Fruit Growers Association
Lindsay King	BCMAF/SIR 3.0 Steering Committee

Regrets:

Staff:

Melissa Tesche	OKSIR General Manager
Michelle Cook	OKSIR Operations Manager
Evan Esch	OKSIR Entomologist
Tanya Littley	OKSIR Office Manager
Kellie Garcia	CCSLP
Lori White	RDCO Financial Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting of the OKSIR Board to order at 10:45 am.

a. Election of Chair

The OKSIR General Manager called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Board for 2024. Director Singh was nominated by Director Fowler and Grower Makepeace. There being no further nominations, Director Singh was acclaimed the 2024 Chair.

b. Election of Vice Chair

The OKSIR General Manager called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Board for 2024. Director Fowler was nominated by Grower Goraya and Grower Makepeace. There being no further nominations, Director Fowler was acclaimed the 2024 Vice Chair.

At Chair Singh’s request, Vice Chair Fowler chaired the day’s meeting.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1 Adoption of Agenda

Moved by: Director Singh

Seconded by: Director Bush

“THAT the February 9, 2024, meeting agenda be adopted as presented.”

CARRIED

3. MINUTES

3.1 Regular Board Meeting – November 24, 2023 – for adoption

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Director Singh

“THAT the OKSIR Regular Board Meeting Minutes from November 24, 2023, be adopted as presented.”

CARRIED

3.2 Business Arising from Minutes

4. DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

5. CORRESPONDENCE/ INFORMATION

5.1 Staff Report from Evan Esch, Program Entomologist, dated February 2024, re: Measuring Program Success: 2023 Season Results (page 10)

Mr. Esch gave a high-level summary of his report, noting that the Board had seen the preliminary season results in his presentation during the October 13, 2023 regular board meeting.

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Grower Goraya

“THAT the staff report from the Program Entomologist be received.”

CARRIED

5.2 Program Update from Melissa Tesche, General Manager

The SIR General Manager provided a verbal program update to the Board. She advised the Board that the new chiller has been installed at the Osoyoos facility, the seasonal supervisors have started to return to work after routine layoffs, and the administrative team is preparing for the transition to the active growing season.

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Grower Dhand

“THAT the staff report from the General Manager be received.”

CARRIED

5.3 Staff Report from Kellie Garcia, re: Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project Progress Report for September to December 2023 (page 30)

The quarterly progress report was presented by Kellie Garcia.

The SIR General Manager noted that the recent cold snap is a good first opportunity to prove the collaborative model as data is starting to show that this year's crop of soft fruit and grapes have nearly been wiped out. She mentioned that requests for financial support for climate disaster events and/or changes to production insurance would be upcoming from the grower community.

Moved by: Director Buch

Seconded by: Grower Makepeace

"THAT the progress report from the CCLSP be received."

CARRIED

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Staff Service Awards

The General Manager reviewed the year's staff service awards. The Chair thanked all staff for their hard work and determination demonstrated over the years.

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Grower Makepeace

"That the Board express their appreciation to the staff recognized for service awards in 2024."

CARRIED

7.2 Annual Adoption of Safety Policy

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Grower Goraya

"THAT the Board adopt 'OKSIR's Occupational Health and Safety Policy' as presented."

CARRIED

7.3 Memo re: Increase to Parcel Tax Rate

The General Manager presented the report in detail.

At November board meeting, staff proposed an 8% increase to the parcel tax rate as had been contemplated in previous five-year financial plans, but the Board requested staff revise the budget with a 4% increase of the Parcel Tax Rate for 2024.

Grower Goraya expressed concerns regarding the impact of the increase on growers as they are facing very difficult financial times. He noted that many growers are still facing the prospect of removal of apple orchards as apples have not been profitable for the last five-years.

Director Fowler asked if the government been lobbied to provide such support.

Grower Goraya stated there is a group examining the possibility of an apple commission that would focus on orderly marketing and that this will, hopefully, lead to an increase in returns to growers. Grower Goraya commented that over the last 20 years, farmers' income has remained the same or decreased while retailers' profits have tripled.

The SIR General Manager noted that there were provincial dollars set aside for the potential orderly marking

organization for apples.

Ms. King stated that the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food is monitoring the situation closely and that challenges facing apple growers in Washington, USA have also been identified. Growers in Washington, however, are much larger and have access to institutional capital that allows them to stay competitive. She noted the provincial government is aware of these concerns and is in the process of developing programs aimed to assist growers in a meaningful way.

Grower Goraya expressed that the government's budget for agriculture is a lot less than it used to be. He highlighted limitations to production insurance that have negatively affected growers.

Director Bush stated that he was present in 1972 when the income stabilization program came into effect. This program devastated the apple industry as growers didn't keep up with apple varieties and the apple quality decreased. This resulted in the apple industry being 10 years behind. Director Bush stated the income stabilization program didn't work and hoped that other options for grower financial assistance would be pursued.

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Director Lavery

"That OKSIR increase the parcel tax rate for 2024 by 4%, for a rate of \$162.68/acre."

CARRIED

7.4 Bylaw 43 – SIR 2024-2028 Five Year Financial Plan – Three Readings and Adoption (page 37)

a. Schedule A to Bylaw 43 (2024-2028 Financial Plan)

The OKSIR five-year financial plan was presented by the RDCO Financial Manager in detail.

She noted that 2023 was trending towards a cash surplus of \$257,000 that was transferred into reserve.

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Director Lavery

"THAT the SIR 2024-2028 Five Year Financial Plan, Bylaw No.43, 2024, be given three readings and adopted."

CARRIED

7.5 Bylaw 44 – 2024 OKSIR Board Revenue Anticipation Borrowing Bylaw No. 44, 2024 – Three Readings and Adoption (page 41)

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Grower Makepeace

"THAT the 2024 OKSIR Board Revenue Anticipation Borrowing Bylaw No. 44, 2024, be adopted."

CARRIED

8. ADJOURN TO IN-CAMERA

The Board adjourned to an in-camera meeting at 10:56am, following article 4 in the agenda.

Moved by: Director Lovegrove

Seconded by: Director Singh

"THAT this meeting be closed to the public pursuant to Section 90(2) (b) of the Community Charter for the OKSIR Board to deal with matters related to:

(k) negotiations and related discussions respecting the proposed provision of a municipal service that are at their preliminary stages and that, in the view of the council, could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality if they were held in public."

and

(c) labour relations or other employee relations;

CARRIED

The general meeting of the OKSIR committee resumed at 12:15 pm and continued to article 5 in the agenda.

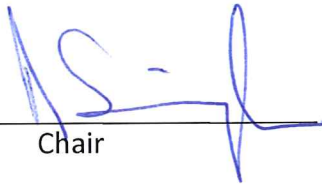
9. ADJOURNMENT

A gift was presented to OKSIR General Manager by the Board as this was her last meeting before her transition to a new job. The Board expressed their appreciation for the General Manager's hard work and many years of service.

Moved by: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Grower Dhand

"THAT the SIR Board meeting be adjourned at 1:05 pm"



Chair



Corporate Officer