BC SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION

NOROVIRUS

Where are we, and where do we go from here?

Committee progress update and membership discussion

BC SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Conference | November 2026

Why we established the committee

Norovirus events are more than a food-safety issue for growers.

Business continuity

Closures and market disruption can have significant consequences for farms and the wider supply chain.

Decision-making

Questions about how events are investigated, assessed and managed and what evidence informs decisions.

Industry voice

A need for a coordinated industry position and constructive engagement with the responsible agencies.

Our objective: better information, better decisions and more effective management.

From industry concerns to specific recommendations

01	**Industry priorities**	BCSGA committee identified the core concerns and priorities.
02	**All-of-Government**	Worked through the process to understand agency roles, responsibilities and decision pathways.
03	**Five broad recommendations**	Presented industry's perspectives and recommendations, linked to the committee's original three priority areas.
04	**Next: specific asks**	The next stage is to translate broad recommendations into practical, actionable requests of regulators.

Progress has taken longer than anticipated, despite increasing meeting frequency.

Generating better information: not just advocating for change

A second stream of work is focused on building an evidence base that may help us understand contamination events.

Environmental sampling

Live sampling in Baynes Sound and Nanoose following norovirus contamination events, to explore whether quantification can provide useful environmental data.

Oyster sample library

A baseline library of oyster samples established so that material and data are available to support investigation if another event occurs.

Seasonal monitoring

Sampling is continuing during the season, alongside fluorometer work to explore whether potential contamination sources can be better identified.

VIU STUDENT PROJECT **A student research project is currently underway to contribute to this work.**

These projects are exploratory; they may inform decisions, but outcomes are not yet established.

Where are we today?

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT	Five broad recommendations presented; specific recommendations are the next step.	IN PROGRESS
SCIENTIFIC WORK	Environmental sampling, oyster library and VIU research are underway.	UNDERWAY
NEXT WORKING GROUP	Further discussion expected in December.	DECEMBER
INDUSTRY DIRECTION	We want to hear what members value and where they want us to focus.	YOUR INPUT

The work is not finished. The question is whether we are pursuing the right outcomes.

MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

What does the industry want from this work?

01 **Is this still a priority?**

Should BCSGA continue investing time and resources in norovirus management?

02 **What information matters?**

What would you want to know during the next contamination event?

03 **What should government change?**

Which improvements to investigation, evidence, decisions or reopening matter most?

04 **Where should we focus?**

Continue both streams, refocus resources, or scale back some activities?

Are we doing the right work, pursuing the right outcomes, and focusing our effort where it matters most?

MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

Discussion led by Alex Munro:
He asks the audience, where do we want to go with this committee? The more we look, the more we find that we do not understand. Do you want the Norovirus committee to push for more understanding and knowledge?

He discussed the differences between the American and Canadian processes for norovirus events.
He also discussed how Ireland has a different process – they use baseline levels and make decisions based on spikes from the baseline.

In Canada, the history shows that there is a quick attribution of illness to oysters. We need them to get better at illness investigation.
It is also very difficult to get norovirus closures to reopen. We could push to get this changed.
We could also push to get better policies to handle seed, etc.

In general, we are looking for guidance from the membership on what issues the committee should prioritize.

There is work on trying to determine viable vs not viable norovirus in oysters.

Comments from the audience agree that it is important to continue to gather information and focus on the problem – not putting our head in the sand. Norovirus exists, and this is an issue for the full industry (not just specific areas) – you could do testing in lots of different places in BC and you can find it.