

FINDING A COMMON VOICE AND SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS



I had a great time at the 57th Annual ILA Conference & Trade Show—networking, attending seminars and walking around the massive inside and outside trade displays. This year, however, there was a single event that enhanced the strength of the harvest sector within the province. A joint meeting between all three logging associations within the province was held to discuss issues we had in common. Those issues were then presented to Minister Thomson, who met with the ILA and TLA Boards together, and later reiterated within his luncheon speech. Our list of asks showed the government that there are common issues affecting contractors across the province and that the three logging associations are willing to work together to find solutions to our problems.

One of the announcements that Minister Thomson made at the conference was an additional \$1 million of funding for the Forestry Service Providers Compensation Fund. As part of the *Forestry Service Providers Protection Act*, the fund was set up and \$5 million of seed money was put into it by the provincial government. The purpose of the fund is to provide relief for

non-remuneration to contractors when the recipient of the services becomes insolvent. As noted in many previous articles in this magazine, the creation of the *Forestry Service Providers Protection Act* was the work of many years of lobbying by the associations to address the archaic *Woodworker Lien Act*.

The fund has already made a significant and positive impact on maintaining contractors viability and therefore their ability to provide continuing employment in the local area. Recently, the fund was accessed by a Terrace contractor due to the insolvency of Greedy Forest Products Ltd. Now a second contractor due money from Greedy Forest Products is still awaiting resolution through the Fund. I received an email from one of the contractors and I quote, “Bill, just to let you know that we received funds from the FSPPA. It helped out our company immensely. Nice to see something you guys worked so hard to implement being used in a fashion it was meant for.”

The dollar amounts awarded to date aren't huge compared to the massive losses that occurred in the Terrace area during the demise of Repap and New Skeena. If the Act were in place back

then, the economic fallout would have been much different. Contractors would have been able to pay sub-contractors and suppliers such as tire and fuel companies. This would have let some sense of economic stability remain in the region. Once a replenishment formula to the fund has been established and enacted, contractors—not to mention their employees and surrounding communities—will have much more surety. We appreciate a government that takes action on our concerns.

When speaking with the editor of the local Terrace newspaper, I mentioned to him that it had been a slow winter for the logging community there. The bottom had fallen out of the Chinese export market. With approximately six million cubic metres of logs and lumber already on the docks, China has reduced the price they are willing to pay for our product. Countries like Australia, New Zealand and Russia are able to ramp up their exports due to the shorter distances and lower transportation costs leaving Canada at a disadvantage. The old West Fraser sawmill that was purchased by a company with strong connections to China continues to operate. Recently, Rod Link, the editor of the Terrace Standard newspaper, stated that the boom Terrace experienced during the last year and a half has ebbed to a dull roar. Site clearing that involved the harvest community is complete and people are waiting for the next major, concrete announcement from the government regarding all of the LNG proposals.

The harvesting convention season has wrapped up for another year. With the success of the joint association meeting at the ILA, talk was it would be useful to do the same at the next TLA convention in Vancouver. I feel this co-operation on common issues as one collective voice for the harvest sector in the province will produce dividends as we strive to better our industry. 🌲



Photo: TLA Staff

Left to right: David Elstone, TLA Executive Director; Bill Sauer, NWLA Manager; Reid Hedlund, ILA Chairman; Minister Steve Thomson, MFLNRO; Don Banasky, TLA President; Jacqui Beban, TLA Vice President; Eric Foster, MLA Vernon-Monashee; Wayne Lintott, ILA General Manager