

FRESH PERSPECTIVES: APPRECIATING ALL ASPECTS OF THE FOREST INDUSTRY



Starting from a boots on the ground perspective, after seeing the devastation fires caused in both Alberta and BC already this year, I encourage all logging contractors to gear up for a long dry summer. Make sure you are prepared. Clean out your machines on a regular basis, have the prescribed fire tools on hand and make sure all your employees are hydrated to avoid potential heat stress. With a potential of a wildfire season similar to last year, **please—exercise caution this summer.**

On the safety front, I am disheartened to learn of the serious incidents that have already occurred this year. We have to ask our managers, our crew and ourselves on a regular basis: Why is this happening? Work in the forest industry has been pretty steady for the last few years. We must always be on the guard against complacency. Everyone is responsible for safety and our safety programs cannot be effective if all the players are not working together. This teamwork happens only if open discussions about incidents and close calls are not hampered because people are afraid of the repercussion of reporting. Work hard to keep your programs effective and make sure everyone goes home safe at night. Your business depends on your workers!

On the business front, from talking with a number of TLA members over the last half year, it is my assessment that some licensees do not view their contractors as assets. There is a wealth of knowledge in the contractor community and in too many cases it is not being used to generate, well, wealth. As an industry, we need to get away from rates being front and center and tap into industry experience—asking ourselves how we can improve margins. Part of the problem seems to lie with some contractor managers' incentives rewarding only cost performance and not margin performance. This needs to change if we want to improve working relationships between contractors and licensees.

Despite the fact that BC's coastal logging community generates a significant portion of the economic wealth in most rural coastal communities, it appears that the public and even the people living in rural communities still view mill jobs as being more important than forestry jobs.

The loggers, truckers, forest engineers, log scalers, equipment service companies, mechanics and tow boat operators—many of which are family-owned businesses—make up the communities we live in and their jobs support our local economies. We have to ask; are these jobs not just as valuable as mill jobs?

Many times we hear, "Are these logs going to local mills?" and when they are not, somehow logging becomes bad. Our local mills are dependent on the success of the harvesting sector, but the communities depend on the logging sector which includes licensees, logging contractors and First Nations. Many years of planning and executing the various regulations and policies go into getting trees to the market. However, many people don't want to see logging in their backyard, unless it goes to a mill in their community. Our communities don't seem to be connecting the health of our local rural communities to the health of our forest industry as a whole with timber harvesting being a major part of that process—even if the timber isn't being milled locally.

We need to celebrate an industry with the best forest practices in the world without picking and choosing who can access the resource. The fact that forestry has been happening in BC for well over a century and tourism continues to grow should be celebrated and taken as an indicator that these two industries co-exist well already. The implications of recent resolutions by the BC Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities around ending the logging of old-growth within the working

forest on Vancouver Island are serious and would devastate not only the logging sector, but the sawmill and pulp sectors on the coast and, by extension, the coastal economy as a whole. Either/or is simply not the answer. We need to continue working to ensure we have a healthy working forest and a growing tourism sector that can co-exist.

Looking within the industry, I would like to congratulate the ILA on another very successful conference and trade show. The TLA Board of Directors attended the event and both TLA and ILA boards had an opportunity to meet jointly with Minister Thomson. A strong message was sent to him that under current conditions the logging contractors in BC are simply not sustainable. This was evident when one contractor asked every contractor in the room to raise their hand if they felt their business was on a firm footing. Not one hand went up. We trust that action on addressing contractor sustainability and support from Minister Thomson is coming.

Finally, I would like to send a huge thank you on behalf of the Board and all our members to Kathie Madden, the TLA's Director of Events & Membership, for her time and commitment to the TLA over the last six years. She has been a valuable asset and she will be greatly missed. Happy retirement Kathie! Monica Sayers has joined the TLA and we look forward to working with her in the years to come. Welcome Monica! 🌲

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