



*Appointed Vice President, Timberlands effective September 1, 2015*

### **What attracted you to this role and what do you bring to it?**

I have been attracted to this part of our business since 2005, when I was involved in a former company-wide initiative related directly to Timberlands. We formed a new company from the ‘ground’ up and I was part of a team that encapsulated all facets of the business. This was a very good experience and a good base for this role.

Change is inevitable and I want to ensure we are driving this positive change through a business lens. Challenging the ‘how and the why’ we do certain processes will identify opportunities for us at Western and our contractor partners. Our actions in Timberlands are aligned with our mission of creating a globally competitive sustainable business that operates profitably through the business cycles. We will accomplish this mission with safe and efficient operations and that is my focus within our Timberlands Group.

### **You have spent 42 years working in BC’s coastal forest industry, what changes have you seen over that time?**

There have been so many changes, too many to list. But the one area that has seen significant change and one that I am proud to be part of is the “safety culture.” We have come a long way in this industry with respect to how we deal with safety issues and the relative mindsets. Specifically at Western, we firmly

# **NEW ROLE, LONG HISTORY: MANAGING CHANGE AT WESTERN FOREST PRODUCTS**

By Mike Cass

believe in “Zero” and that all incidents are preventable and we remain committed to that objective. We are pleased that so many of our contractors have joined us and share our vision. As an industry, there have been many initiatives implemented to reduce risk and to drive awareness. Tragically, we still see serious injuries and fatal injuries occurring—while we have come a long way in recent years, there is still more work to do.

### **Looking at those changes, what are the top things you’d change in BC’s forest industry?**

We need to see definitive measures to assist the industry in becoming more competitive. We cannot ‘control’ the external environment and forces that impact the companies that drive and support this industry. But we need to see steps to reduce the ‘red tape’ and create the business environment that attracts much needed capital investment. We all need a successful industry! Through the companies, employees, contractors, unions, suppliers, communities, First Nations, and various levels of government—we can all prosper in an environment that drives success.

### **What’s your message for BC’s forest contractors?**

My message to our industry contractors is much the same as with all our stakeholders in this industry. We need to redesign our strategy, to one that works for everyone. We need all stakeholders to be successful and the preferred approach is the collaborative approach, as this is the best for all concerned. To create a globally competitive business on the coast we need to work together to drive costs out of the business without negatively impacting value. Being safe and efficient operators is critical to creating a profitable business that attracts the capital necessary to ensure we are sustainable. A sustainable business is important because it means our employees can rely on the steady

employment and our contractors can be assured of constant work from which they can build their business.

### **Where do you see the coastal BC forest industry going over the next three years?**

At Western Forest Products, we believe in the future of the coastal forest industry and we’re investing \$125 million in strategic capital to prove it. Our goal is to sustainably harvest the maximum volume available, in turn supplying our domestic sawmills with more logs. This benefits us all by creating stable work for our employees and contractors, generating more economic activity on the coast, and ultimately contributing more GDP to the province.

We all need to be more visionary and forward looking. The industry will continue to evolve and we as an industry need to get out in front and set the design now for what will be our future. We cannot wait for those external forces to impact our businesses and industry. We need to prepare now for inevitable cycles and we need to focus on driving improved business results, in turn improving our businesses and our industry.

Working together will create the positive environment that will attract not only the needed financial capital; it will attract the human capital that will be needed. Our industry demographics reflect the need to attract and retain employees to our industry for the coming years. This is a key area we as an industry are starting to work collaboratively, but more work is needed.

All in all, this is an industry that is, and remains, the driving economic engine of the province. We need all the relevant stakeholders to be aligned in objectives and strategy to create sustainable, safe, and profitable business that benefits us all.▲