



EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND CONTRACTOR SUSTAINABILITY: POSITIVE CHANGE ON THE HORIZON

The timber harvesting contractors made two big advocacy gains at the TLA's 74th Annual Convention & Trade Show. In her speech during the Leader's Luncheon, Premier Christy Clark announced the creation of a training tax credit for loggers and the launching of the contractor sustainability review.

Training is close to the ILA's heart. We currently have four students training to be log truck drivers and 16 students training to be heavy equipment forestry operators. We achieved this through funding provided through the Canada-British Columbia Job Fund. And the students take the in-class portion of the course at Thompson Rivers University's Kamloops campus (trucking) and Williams Lake campus (heavy equipment). The actual machine in-seat time, 120-160 hours, is done with active logging contractors in the Williams Lake area. It's a good partnership and we've trained many young loggers and truck drivers this way.

The creation of a training tax credit will complement the work we're already doing. So much of a logger's knowledge is learned over decades of on-the-ground experience. We're in danger of losing much of that knowledge in the wave of retirements we know are coming our way. This training tax credit will provide an incentive for ILA members to take on the cost of a new employee. Logging equipment is expensive to buy and expensive to run. It's hard to justify reducing its productivity in today's cut-costs-to-the-bone environment. I think this will be one answer to the challenge of training tomorrow's logger.

I was relieved to hear Premier Clark say the contractor sustainability review was going to happen and going to happen quickly. BC's logging associations have been beating this drum for three years as a joint lobby effort, continually warning that the situation for contractors is just getting worse. After the TLA

convention, I joined Aaron Sinclair of PNL Consulting and we toured the southern Interior talking to contractors and asking them to participate in the review. After so long at the bottom of the pile, they were understandably wary but I'm pleased to report 100 per cent of the contractors we talked to were eager to participate. Contractors' prompt commitment to participate in this review is a triumph given such a tight timeframe and evidence that contractors are frustrated.

Finally, I'd like to invite everyone to attend the ILA's 59th Annual Conference & Trade Show taking place May 4-6, 2017 in Vernon, BC. Our theme this year is "Women Working in the Forest Harvesting Industry" and I'm proud to say Melinda Morben from Island Timberlands will be our keynote speaker. Melinda first spoke at the TLA convention a few years ago and hit it out of the ball park, with her quick wit and messages resonating with many contractors in the room. This time around, Melinda will talk about diversity in the workplace and how it can improve your busi-

ness and your bottom line. We'll also have our big outdoor equipment display again this year—each year it gets bigger and the community turn-out on Saturday grows too.

Our ILA Board of Directors has once again invited the TLA Board to join us. This will be the third year the TLA Directors have ventured up to Vernon and conducted their Board meeting at our conference after which the two respective boards gather to discuss contractor issues of mutual interest. This type of teamwork must be effective given the success we have achieved in the announcement of the Contractor Sustainability Review.

After our directors meet, we'll kick things off on Thursday evening with the Meet & Greet event. Turn to page 23 to see the full program. I look forward to seeing you there!▲



Photo: Kent Silbaugh Photography

Visit the ILA's outdoor equipment show on May 5 & 6 in Vernon. It's part of their 59th Annual Conference & Trade Show.