

LISTENING AND LEARNING: THE KEYS TO ADVOCACY AND MEMBERSHIP



As I said in my first President's Report, I believe communicating, building trust and aligning our goals will be key for the success of the TLA. And I saw these three things in action last fall when we conducted our semi-annual TLA membership survey. These surveys let us communicate with members and find out what they're thinking. They help us build trust because our members see us asking their opinion and then responding to their needs. And they help the TLA staff and Board ensure our strategic goals are aligned with the needs of our members.

Two key questions we asked were why members joined the TLA and if they thought their membership provided a good return on investment. Contractors' top reason for becoming a TLA member was "advocacy for contractors" and suppliers' top reason was "support industry." As advocacy is the reason the TLA exists, it's good to hear that it's the top focus of our members as well. Looking to the second question, I am proud to report that 97 per cent of surveyed members believe their TLA membership provides a positive ROI! That level of membership satisfaction means we're providing value to our members and representing them well.

We also asked members to tell us what important issues the TLA should champion on their behalf. Unsurprisingly, contractor sustainability continues to be the number one concern for contractors. Making sure they are earning enough money to pay their employees, pay their bills, invest in their business and—at the end of the day—have a return on the large investment they make to be a logging contractor is critical. The TLA has been working diligently on this front to advocate for our members and I'm proud to report we are making headway.

With this in mind, I'm pleased to acknowledge the provincial government's commitment to move forward with a contractor competitiveness review.

Minister Thomson talks about the review in this issue (page 24) and I look forward to hearing more about this work during the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Breakfast at our convention.

This review comes at a critical time. Our industry is faced with many challenges including external ones such as the softwood lumber dispute. Without a solid foundation of viable logging contractors, our industry's efforts in addressing issues such as competitiveness against other timber producing regions would be difficult. I am hopeful our industry is on the cusp of change for our contracting community, bringing about fairness in the use of our provincial forest resource.

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Returning to the survey results, there were some additional key areas our members want the TLA to keep working on. These include First Nations engagement, protecting the working forest, access to logs, worker training and the pressure licensees apply to contractors around safety programs. This feedback will help us in our planning over the next two years and ensure we're supporting our members in ways that help them be successful. Our industry is constantly evolving and we need to be strategic in our thinking so that we truly are "In it for the Long Run!"

In recent years, it has surprised me how much prouder I am of our industry. I'm getting better at telling forestry's good news story. We're a green industry and a sustainable one. We create jobs in our rural coastal communities so people can live where they work. Eight years ago, if somebody asked me what I did, I would try to avoid telling them I worked in the forest industry and I know I was not alone in this. Today, I am extremely proud to be a logger and

it surprises me how many people will chime in when I say I work in forestry. They'll say, "Oh my husband is a truck driver" or "My sister is an engineer." When we speak with pride about what we do, we encourage others to do the same. We all need to be advocates for a prosperous industry—our employees and their families, our communities and our entire province depend on this! There's a great article in this issue on this very topic. I encourage you to read, "Calling All Forestry Workers: Be an Ambassador for Forestry in Your Community" on page 59.

This is the time of year when the TLA is the busiest—gearing up for our annual convention. It's the biggest annual forestry convention in BC and a

great opportunity to find out what is happening in our industry and to connect with other industry stakeholders.

This year's theme is "In it for the Long Run." We'll examine the current state of the industry and what needs to change in order to strengthen and ensure sustainability for contractors and their suppliers. We anticipate another engaging convention with dynamic speakers. As always Suppliers' Night is shaping up to be an exciting event with both a live auction and silent auction. All proceeds from these auctions go directly to the TLA Forestry Education Fund. It is a great way to support the ongoing education and awareness of our industry. We hope to see you all there, January 18-20, 2017 at The Westin Bayshore in Vancouver. 🌲

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