



## LOCAL & GRASSROOTS: THE TLA'S ON-THE-GROUND PERSPECTIVE ON BC POLITICS

The BC forest industry is in the throes of a softwood lumber dispute which will have far-reaching impacts. At the time of printing, we're layering on a potential change in leadership from the BC Liberals and a unique and untested NDP/Green alliance. These circumstances put forestry's uncertainty factor at its highest in many decades. As any business person will confirm, uncertainty is a particularly non-productive state to be in.

Investors of all shapes and sizes, including TLA members who operate small- and medium-sized businesses reliant on the forest industry, always attempt to formulate a sense of certainty before pulling the trigger on their investments. Those investment dollars are typically spent to upgrade, develop, build or become more competitive. Unfortunately, with rising uncertainty, those investment expenditures may slow or worse—be put on hold until clarity on forest policy and regulation is achieved.

That is where the Truck Loggers Association fits in. TLA members are the local contractors and suppliers that provide well-paying jobs throughout British Columbia and reinvest their earnings back into their businesses, their suppliers and their communities. Timber harvesting contractors log over 90 per cent of the trees harvested each year in BC. They are the economic backbone of rural communities in this province.

It's clear to me that the TLA's local, grassroots voice is very distinct from many other organizations that are directly influenced by broad international interests—we have no international shareholders, members or fundraisers. The TLA answers only to our members who live and work in BC and they have a deeply vested interest in the success of the people of British Columbia and the sustainability of the forest sector as a whole. The TLA is also non-partisan and we work with all governing and opposition political parties to build a healthy

forestry industry and ensure that those working in the forest resource share in its prosperity.

So, how does the TLA and its members see that happening?

### Contractor Sustainability Review

First and foremost, the current Contractor Sustainability Review is a key initiative for all logging contractors in the province. The Review is the culmination of two years of advocacy work. There is a dire need to level the playing field between the thousands of contractors and the few forest tenure holders that control the resource and retain their services. Simply put, the business relationship between these parties has deteriorated to the point of being broken. The Review is broad in scope and important for the health of the entire forest industry including its workers and the communities that rely on it. We believe it's important that any new forest industry policy should be put on hold until after we know the outcomes of the independent Contractor Sustainability Review overseen by George Abbott.

### Training Tax Credit

Another critical issue is finding the future generation of trained workers to run the industry. The average age of timber harvesting workers is over fifty. To learn all the skills of a logger, one must develop them on-the-job. That is why there is a proposed Truck Loggers tax credit for training new and existing workers on-the-job. The idea is rather than creating a bureaucracy around training, have those that know best how to deliver the training do so on-the-job, in a safe, effective and efficient manner. The TLA believes this training model will be vital to the success of the timber harvesting sector going forward.

### Protecting the Working Forest

Having a forest to go work in is fundamental. We must preserve the working

forest from continued cries for protection if we want investment in the industry to continue. There is a direct correlation between the working forest and the jobs. The less area we have to harvest, the less jobs and government revenue the forest resource will generate.

### Promoting our Sustainable Forest Practices

British Columbia employs some of the best forest practices in the world supported by highly trained forest professionals regulated by the Association of BC Forest Professionals. Our industry meets stringent forest practices regulations and is subject to oversight from an arms-length organization, the Forest Practices Board. Most of our forests also have third-party verification of sustainable forest management by various forest management certifying bodies and we have developed higher level management plans and land use plans that tell us where to harvest and where to set aside areas for ecosystem conservation and preservation. But perhaps most importantly, there is a dedicated group of people, the forest workers, whose ethic and respect for their workplace outshines any form of regulation or environmental standard.

The forest resource is still the top natural resource revenue generator for this province. While taxes are a far larger source of income, we need to recognize that the tax base is supported by employment and businesses reliant on our forest resource. Continued uncertainty will begin to erode our industry's ability to be competitive in a global market place. The TLA is here to provide a voice and balanced perspective that will help make our province a success.▲

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