



# WHAT FORESTRY NEEDS: A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD, STREAMLINED SAFETY AND HEARTFELT PRIDE

There are some shifts on the horizon for forestry, many of them exciting and some of them worrisome. Here are three shifts I want to outline for you today as the TLA President.

## Contractor Sustainability & Relationship Building

In May, the TLA Board of Directors traveled again to Vernon to support the ILA and its 59th Annual Conference & Trade Show. Due to the timing of the election, Minister Thomson was unable to join us in Vernon this year. However, both Boards along with Ken Houlden, General Manager of the NWLA, had a chance to sit down with George Abbott and his team and discuss the Contractor Sustainability Review that began this spring and will be completed by the end of 2017. The Review is the result of two years of strong advocacy work—we must level the playing field between contractors and licensees. I know George got an earful at the meeting regarding the many issues we face in the contracting world.

What struck me most in our meeting between southern Interior and coastal contractors was—despite the different operating areas—most of our issues were the same. This is a provincial issue and contractors across the province should be interested in what the Contractor Sustainability Review is trying to accomplish. Working together to improve the relationships between contractors and licensees will build a stronger forest industry for everyone.

## Putting On-The-Ground Safety First

Safety is always at the forefront of our minds as we go to work. As we discuss in the article, “Sharing the Load: Streamlining Safety Program Administration” on page 16, contractors answer to many masters. Bill C45 has had an impact on safety programs in every business and I see a widening gap between legal versus on-the-ground safety. Doing proper due diligence does create onerous paperwork.

However, it is a real and valid part of any safety program. That said, does the paperwork and administration of multiple programs increase the safety of the people on-the-ground at its current level? Does it help us build a culture of safety within the industry? Read the article and see what you think. But I think it's time to streamline safety programs so we can achieve the same or better levels of safety with far less administrative duplication.

On a different safety front, an article in the Winter 2017 issue of *Truck LoggerBC* hit close to home for me. “Urban vs Rural: Addressing The Emergency Transportation Gap” highlighted the lack of helicopter emergency medical services available to the forest industry in BC and drew readers' attention to a new report issued by Roger Harris, the BC Forest Safety Council Ombudsman, earlier this year. Our workers deserve to have access to timely helicopter evacuation when they are injured because that first hour after an injury is critically important to their recovery. Our system is not functioning at the level it needs to be and our workers deserve better. There are a lot of interested parties and a real appetite for change at the moment. The TLA is putting this issue at the top of our advocacy list and we hope to see real change in the not too distant future.

## Heartfelt Pride In Our Work

Despite the challenges the industry faces, I've seen a resurgence of pride in forestry workers on the Island and it is great to see. I see it in real life and also on social media. Forestry workers are posting videos of themselves on the job on Facebook and Instagram. It's good to see pride in our industry coming back; it was lost for a long time.

Occasionally though, environmental groups turn our posts around and use a video of someone logging as evidence of the ‘destruction of our forests.’ While that's irritating, I think it's important to continue to get positive forestry messages out there

on the internet. Just keep other organizations in mind when you post and make sure every video shows you meeting (or exceeding) safety and environmental standards. Also, please consider any social media policies at your workplace. And while I'm on the topic, please reach out and follow the TLA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@truckloggerBC). We share the latest news relevant to contractors as well as job postings and cool photos!

Talking about sharing positive local forestry stories, I also encourage you to check out the Forestry Friendly Communities website ([forestryfriendly.com](http://forestryfriendly.com)). This website has been up and running since January and it's sharing positive forestry stories from Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. Check out the videos—you might recognize someone!

## Looking To The Future

Finally, as we settle into some political uncertainty, we need to remember that the forest industry isn't made up of faceless corporations. The people who work in forestry are you, me and our neighbours. You all work hard and are skilled at what you do. Every business that works in the forest industry, including the large licensees, hires local workers and supports local businesses. Regardless of the size of your company, we all depend on having a strong and stable working forest.

So politicians (new and old) take note, TLA members and their employees are the economic backbone of our rural communities. Our small- and medium-sized business owners take pride in handing out well earned paycheques. There's satisfaction in knowing that your business allows people to earn a living for themselves and their families. Please become aware of our perspectives, because without a working forest, we won't be able to provide those paycheques and create the employment that supports rural BC. 🌲

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