



TLA MEMBERSHIP IS GROWING COMMUNITY BY COMMUNITY

By Sandra Bishop

Knock, knock. Who's there?

Powell River, Campbell River, Port Alberni, Port McNeill and Port Hardy.

Last year, BC's coastal forestry communities came knocking on the TLA's door, but it was no joke. In a show of persuasive solidarity they asked to join the TLA. Why? Because they wanted to be a part of the TLA, the way its independent harvesting contractors and related businesses are an intrinsic part of their communities. So the TLA made some changes to its bylaws and has now welcomed all five communities into its fold.

It would take a coin toss to settle who came first, but one thing's for certain: all

the mayors of these communities claim their own community is the crown jewel of forestry.

"For over a hundred years now forestry has been important to our community," emphasises Mayor Dave Formosa of Powell River. "We have a lot of forestry jobs here. TFL 39 is a major component of Western Forest Product's basket and we think it's a jewel in the crown."

"The north Island is the second largest forested area in the province next to Prince George," boasts Mayor Shirley

Ackland of Port McNeill. "I really do believe that this is the bastion of the best forests in BC."

Mayor Andy Adams of Campbell River tells us the central coast, "now has the protection of the most pristine and environmentally sensitive areas possible, but it also has certainty for the sustainability of the forest industry. I think the Great Bear Rainforest is an example of where you can create a balance between two conflicting perspectives so everybody wins."

All these mayors unanimously agree on one thing: It's critically important for local governments to fully understand and appreciate the impact of the forest sector on their communities and on the province of BC, and that's why they joined the TLA.

Mayor Adams spearheaded the movement for other communities to join. "We had the support of the Truck Loggers Association for a number of years and really felt that it was important for us as local government to be members, as we have as much of a vested interest in the industry as the contractors and forest companies. We're elected to represent members of our community and the forest sector is certainly an integral part of our community, so we felt it was important for us to be there and stand up and speak on their behalf."

The TLA continues to create stronger links between coastal communities and the provincial government that, hopefully, will lead to improved understanding between all stakeholders in BC's coastal forest industry.

Mayor Ruttan illustrates, "The TLA has a really good relationship with our pro-

vincial government. It has a lot of influence. And the TLA helps get the ongoing message to the provincial government about how critically important forestry is to the whole provincial economy."

live and work. In many ways, their problems are our problems—our victories, their triumphs."

According to Campbell River's mayor, aquaculture and forestry are the two

79 per cent of the population of Port McNeill still derive their income from the forest industry.

Mayor Ackland said it was a no-brainer for Port McNeill. "I think the Truck Loggers Association recognizes and is at the forefront of a lot of the issues facing the industry. They positively promote the local industry and they've also supported a lot of innovation here."

Contractor sustainability is at the forefront of the TLA's efforts to create and maintain a healthy and sustainable industry that supports coastal communities. This one issue threatens the whole industry, but also the stability of communities from an employment and economic perspective.

TLA Executive Director David Elstone likes to say, "The TLA shares a unique bond with local governments in the communities where our members

main resource sector job creators for his community "and the entire north Island. There's no question Campbell River is the centre for the coastal forest industry, and it has been a key economic driver for our community for decades. We are still the centre for head offices for the majority of the major forest companies on the coast and also for the independent contractors."

In Port Alberni, the forest industry is "our largest employer and generator of income for our businesses in this area and, in fact, because of that—property taxes for the City of Port Alberni. The economic benefits that flow to the city from the truck loggers and all things forestry is huge, so we need to make sure that as a city we fully participate in all




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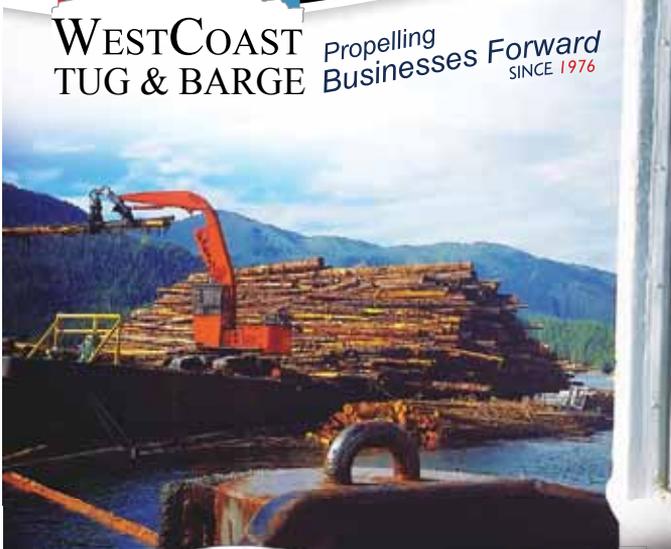
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activities related to forestry,” says Mayor Mike Ruttan. “Locally, 2,500 jobs, directly and indirectly, flow as a result of the forest industry.”

“Port McNeill relies on the forest industry for our economic well-being,” points out Mayor Ackland. “In our last economic development plan which was done in 2014, the consultants identified 79 per cent of the population of Port McNeill still derived their income from the forest industry.”

Mayor Formosa expounds, “Hundreds of people in Powell River work in the forest industry and they’re high paying jobs, solid jobs—they have pensions, they have benefits. You can own the house, the car, the boat and live the dream with a good forestry job, and we still have them here. With the baby boomers aging out, there’s lots of opportunity for the younger folk to step into the industry.”

Mayor Ruttan wholeheartedly agrees. “There are lots of incredibly bright, skilled, well trained people in this Valley and in this industry that have the know-how. We can take wood fibre and turn it into bodies for cars and planes. We can

refine wood fibre and use it for jet fuel. We’re only limited by the extent that we want to push those R&D boundaries.”

The mayor is excited about Cantimber Biotech, a new start-up company that makes activated carbon from woody material left over from harvesting in the Alberni Valley. “Initially, Cantimber was thinking that 100 per cent of their product would be sold to Asia and they found that 100 per cent of that product is actually needed in North America. It has huge potential.”

These community leaders believe in the future of forestry, but acknowledge the need for more training and education to fill the projected skilled labour shortage of 25,000 jobs over the next decade. Local governments view this as an opportunity for communities. Mayors are quick to recognize the TLA’s support of education and training programs that ultimately enables “young people who want to move to their communities or stay and raise their families to be skilled and equipped with well-paying jobs.”

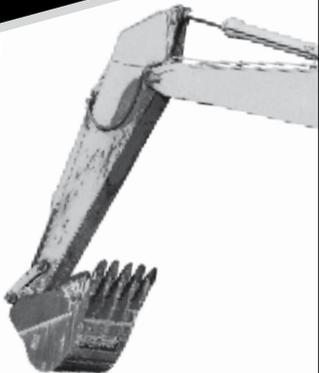
Communities are ready to welcome them. “This is a place where many young people want to move to because

it’s a place where you have tremendous opportunities for families at a relatively reasonable price,” notes Mayor Ruttan. “We have incredible location and livability, great climate, great opportunity and a city that can easily handle more people.”

Mayor Ackland is proud of the industry’s contribution to her community. “In Port McNeill our eco-tourism industry and forest industry understand that we rely on each other for both to remain bright and sustainable going into the future. The best environmentalists are the loggers themselves. They understand the cycle of a tree, the growth, the area, the soil in which it grows, the climate that affects the trees and the need for tree planting to sustain this beauty.”

“It’s good to know communities recognize that forestry is a part of their heritage as well as their future, and are standing up and joining with us. Welcome to the TLA,” says Elstone. 🌲

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