

A FURTHER LOOK:
Community
PERSPECTIVES
on the
BC COASTAL
FOREST INDUSTRY



Linking Communities and Provincial Decision-Makers



TLA and the COMMUNITY

The TLA works to shape a business environment in the coastal forest industry that ensures the sustainability of timber harvesting contractors and the communities they support. Our members operate businesses engaged in logging, road building, log hauling, small forest licence management, log brokerage, independent sawmilling, remanufacturing, heavy equipment sales and service, fuel delivery, camp operations and other businesses that service the coastal forest industry. Together, with other independent contractors, we are responsible for close to 90 per cent of the timber harvested on the coast.

Many TLA member companies have a successful history of working with First Nations, building collaborative relationships that are rooted in a foundation of deep respect. A growing number of First Nations are TLA members. This activity helps boost employment and build capacity within First Nations communities as well as increase First Nations participation in all aspects of the forest economy.

TLA member companies are committed to the sustainability of the coastal forest resource and the communities they support. Representing more than 480 community-based businesses, TLA members live and work in more than 100 coastal communities, many of which rely on the forest industry for their economic and social well-being. For more than 70 years, the TLA's membership has sustained those communities by providing high-paying jobs, supporting other local businesses in the coastal region and generating economic activity that contributes to municipal and provincial revenues. TLA member companies know a healthy, vibrant and sustainable forest industry means jobs and economic growth.

The TLA fosters relationships with all levels of government to ensure the timber harvesting sector's needs are understood and communities are heard. As an intrinsic part of these communities, the TLA is a trusted voice, one that provides leadership by working closely with civic leaders and the provincial government to create and maintain a healthy and sustainable industry that supports local communities.

As part of that work, the TLA encourages the provincial government in its goal to "work with the forest industry on a new Forest Sector Competitiveness Strategy to maintain and enhance the industry, protect jobs and forest dependent communities and extract maximum value from our forest resource."

With responsible harvesting and sustainable forest management practices, our province's fish, wildlife, forests, watersheds and outdoor recreational activities can co-exist in a vibrant healthy ecosystem, one for British Columbians to enjoy for generations to come.

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INTRODUCTION

After talking to the coastal mayors last year about the importance of forestry to their communities, the TLA wanted to know what people living in BC's coastal communities think about forestry, so the association decided to further investigate the opinions revealed in its report, *Community Perspectives on the BC Coastal Forest Industry* (www.tla.ca/Perspectives). According to several significant findings the TLA uncovered, people living in BC's coastal communities agree with their community leaders—for the most part—when it comes to forestry.

“First, we spoke with the mayors then we did some research to find out what the people thought,” explains David Elstone, TLA Executive Director. “It’s reassuring to know that coastal British Columbians value forestry and understand the link between the success of their communities and the success of the forest industry.”



SUSTAINABLE FORESTS

According to the TLA's new research, nearly 60 per cent of people living in coastal communities believe our forests are being managed sustainably. What's more, nearly all, 91 per cent of coastal British Columbians, agree that it's in their communities' best interest if the forest companies and the workers harvesting timber and growing trees in the surrounding area are local.

"Many people who live in BC's rural communities grew up with families working in the forest industry and recognize that well managed forests provide an excellent source of employment in coastal communities," Elstone points out. "Provincially, there are 60,700 direct jobs in the forest sector. Without timber harvesting contractors, BC's forest industry would grind to a halt."

The TLA continues to champion sustainable forest practices and work with all levels of government to promote environmentally sustainable forest practices that balance communities' social and economic interests.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

People also believe locally-based contractors are more concerned with the communities' long-term interests than

the major forest companies in BC. Overall, the number of people who say environmentalists are most concerned with the interests of their community is down compared to previous TLA research.

Furthermore, over the past 10 years, trust that environmentalists are concerned about community interest has decreased while trust in local contractors has remained constant. When asked who was most concerned or second most concerned with the long-term community interests of their communities, 58 per cent said environmentalists while 65 per cent chose local contractors.

These findings support the notion that people in rural communities appreciate the link between healthy businesses operating locally and community prosperity. Many TLA members are second-, third- and even fourth-generation logging businesses, who have helped keep workers and their families living locally, providing high-paying jobs and supporting other local businesses in those communities. Community prosperity and that of TLA member companies often go hand-in-hand because locally-owned companies generate wages, profits and taxes that help to support these towns.



SUSTAINABLE TIMBER HARVESTING CONTRACTORS

Nearly half of BC coastal community residents say the forest industry is less healthy than it was a decade ago, which directly aligns with the TLA's 2016 *Community Perspectives* report where the number one concern voiced by community leaders was job loss. This finding suggests communities are feeling the impact of timber harvesting contractors leaving the industry over the last decade and jobs disappearing as a result.

Contractors are the economic backbone of many rural communities and they are struggling in a business climate that doesn't support locally-owned forestry businesses. Since 2004, more than 25 timber harvesting contractors have had to seek insolvency protection in communities throughout coastal BC. And others have left voluntarily out of frustration at break-even or weak returns. When these contractors close their doors, those jobs are gone too.

It follows as no surprise that two in three (66 per cent) of coastal British Columbians feel the provincial government

should be doing more to support their forest industry.

Premier Christy Clark understands that communities and contractors are suffering, and recognizes the importance of independent timber harvesting contractors to the local and provincial economies. In January, the provincial government announced it is taking a serious look at the issue by conducting a Contractor Sustainability Review with an independent facilitator recently announced as George Abbott and his partners in Circle Square Solutions.

The TLA hopes the review will lead to timber harvesting contractors earning a fair rate of return so they can continue to create steady, well-paying jobs in BC's rural communities. The \$13 billion earned through international sales of BC's forest products is reliant on timber harvesting contractors. This makes the Contractor Sustainability Review not just important for timber harvesting contractors and local communities, but for the forest industry as a whole.



A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Despite the challenges the BC forest industry has faced over the last decade, coastal British Columbians continue to recognize the importance of the industry to the province's economic future, and that opinion has held steady over time.

But when asked if they were satisfied with how land use issues were dealt with in their communities, 47 per cent felt more needs to be done.

The TLA is committed to changing this state of affairs because it shares a unique bond with the people in rural communities. As an intrinsic part of local communities, the TLA and its members understand the need to listen carefully to the concerns of coastal communities, and share their unique perspectives with other stakeholders and all levels of government to preserve a sustainable and prosperous future for all British Columbians.

“From our research, we know coastal British Columbians are supportive of forestry, but it is clear people living in coastal communities continue to feel their concerns are not being heard,” says Elstone.

CONCLUSION

The background of the page is a scenic photograph of a coastal area. In the foreground, there is a body of water with a small, rocky island covered in dense evergreen trees on the left side. In the distance, there are large, forested mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall tone is serene and natural.

The TLA is committed to fostering dialogue on the critical issues that face communities and threaten the sustainability of the timber harvesting sector.

As an advocate for local companies that support BC's coastal communities, the TLA will continue to monitor community perspectives and champion these voices when issues like the softwood lumber agreement, contractor sustainability, and the decline of the allowable annual cut challenge the stability of the coastal forest industry. TLA members live and work in these coastal communities. They build their businesses in and around these towns, supporting local community groups and other local businesses. In this way, they are vital to the economic health of the entire province.

WE LIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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