



WHY JOIN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION? ADVOCACY

Since joining the Interior Logging Association (ILA) just over a year ago, I have travelled from Smithers to Chetwynd, to Cranbrook and all points in between. During these trips I had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of people representing over a hundred contracting-related companies, ranging from individuals, to those who manage companies with over 100 employees. Regardless of size, they all face the same issues and look to associations like ours to assist them with their challenges.

One question that is often asked of me is “Why Join” and what does the ILA do for its members? The answer is simple: advocacy.

Advocacy is an act or process of supporting a cause or proposal. I can't think of a better cause to support than the well-being of the forest industry and specifically the security of our contractor members. To put things in a little more context, the majority of rural communities in British Columbia are forest dependent, thousands of jobs are directly created through forestry and billions of dollars are generated for the provincial economy. Contractors, however, are being constantly pushed to the financial brink and don't have the time needed to battle the issues that both directly and indirectly affect their businesses. The associations do!

From my meetings over the past year, I have observed ILA members face the following issues:

1. Contractors are still operating with rates comparable to those earned in 2008 when the industry suffered a downturn and they were asked by their employers to take a rate cut to help them out.
2. Despite recent record-breaking profits by the major licensees, logging and hauling rates continue to be cut back.

3. The workforce is aging and no one is entering the industry to take their place.

4. Relationships with the majors are weak and there seems to be a general lack of respect for the contracting community and their role is often looked at as replaceable.

5. Declining AACs in the Interior threaten everyone.

6. Bill 13 contracts and their value in today's market are questioned.

7. We need to do a better job of promoting the benefits of our industry.

8. The two previous wildfire seasons will have long-lasting impacts; are we any better equipped for 2019?

Of course, this is not a complete list of the advocacy topics we deal with every day, but we need to start somewhere.

So, what has the ILA done this past year? One only needs to look at the Contractor Sustainability Review outcome. Premier Horgan's announcement at the TLA's 76th Annual Convention & Trade Show regarding the CSR process is a great example of what the TLA, ILA and NWLA can achieve working together from an advocacy standpoint. While it did not address all contractor issues, it is a good start and collectively we need to continue the battle and advocate on behalf of all our members with the hope of shortening this list for 2019.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the TLA and its staff for their hospitality at this year's convention and I am looking forward to seeing them and the NWLA at our annual convention from May 2 - 4 in Kamloops.

I look forward to continuing our advocacy efforts both collectively and individually and being able to spend more time this coming year with our membership as I continue to travel the Interior to meet existing and prospective members.

I can also be reached at our office at 250-503-2199 or by e-mail at todd@interiorlogging.org if you would like me to visit your worksite to discuss your concerns and how the ILA can advocate for you. 🌲

Todd Chamberlain joined the Interior Logging Association (ILA) in March of 2018. Previously, he spent the past 25 years working in the Merritt area as a woodlands manager for a major forest licensee, managed a forestry consulting firm for one of the local First Nations communities and was the transportation manager for a large trucking company. Todd started in the forest industry in 1981, graduated from Selkirk College in Castlegar with a diploma in Forest Technology in 1985, and became a Registered Professional Technologist in 2005.

He has worked in all regions of British Columbia and also in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories.