



## A MORATORIUM ON HARVESTING OLD GROWTH IS NOT THE ANSWER

I am pleased to report that the TLA membership's advocacy voice is resulting in change. At the 76th Annual TLA Convention & Trade Show, the Premier and Minister of Forests both finally revealed significant updates to the Contractor Sustainability Review (page 23). With the announced elimination of the fair market rate test and other significant policy changes, hopefully logging contractors will have a reasonable chance at achieving financial sustainability in their businesses.

I'm also very pleased another top advocacy issue was addressed by the Premier, who acknowledged the current acute skilled labour shortage in the forest industry and announced his commitment to look at TLA proposed tax credit solutions to this critical problem.

Additionally, government revealed its Coast Revitalization Initiative, which will bring changes to long-standing log export and post-harvest utilization policies. With the limited information available, I hope that those changes do not generate unintended consequences. Assuming these changes don't actually result in a negative harvest response, contractors could benefit by handling upwards of an additional two million cubic metres through utilization changes in the Coastal region. However, as we have long advocated, the real solution lies in the underlying issue of consolidated tenure.

While these issues have a huge impact on the forest industry, if we don't have forests to harvest these policy changes will be moot. Our working forest has been reduced by 34 per cent over the last 15 years. The single best way to create jobs is to increase the harvest, or at least keep the amount of working forest we have today.

In February, I was disheartened to learn the Sierra Club gained media attention after delivering 20,000 protest letters to the offices of Vancouver Island MLAs calling for a moratorium on old

growth timber harvesting. Notwithstanding whether those signatures even came from BC taxpayers and voters, it made me pause to think about the weight of those 20,000 voices in a province of four million.

For any of the 140,000 contractors or forest workers who read about it,

**The single best way to create jobs is to increase the harvest, or at least keep the amount of working forest we have today.**

I suspect they would question where those signatures came from given that the majority of BC's population reside in urban areas and generally have very little connection or awareness of the resource sector and its significance to those smaller communities or the province as a whole.

So, should the TLA submit its own petition? I would suggest it's not necessary when you look at the evidence. Premier Horgan, Minister Donaldson and Minister Heyman need to take into consideration how the impact of land use planning for old growth forsakes the livelihoods of families in rural communities. A moratorium on harvesting old growth and a sole reliance on second harvest timber is not the answer.

Jobs directly related to the forest industry on the Coast alone represent almost 20,000 workers. If each worker has a family of four, that equates to 80,000 people who would directly be affected by a moratorium on harvesting old growth.

We also need to consider all of the indirect jobs and businesses associated with the industry that support our communities; like grocery stores, restaurants, and hotels; and the teachers employed to teach our youth; and the nurses and doctors keeping our population healthy.

Often forgotten are the relationships between the forest sector and backcountry tourism for skiers, mountain bikers,

kayakers, and wildlife viewing that rely on access to the "wild areas" by using forest service roads, all of which are built by loggers harvesting old growth forests and subsequently maintained by the forest industry for continued access.

When we take a look at how far reaching the reliance and impact of our

forest resource has on people, economic activity, and well-paying jobs, we can appreciate how important it is to continue harvesting old growth.

It is simple. None of this would exist if it weren't for a forest resource sector that includes harvesting old growth timber.

It's time we start remembering where our incomes come from. Where our services come from. Our working forest needs protecting from the efforts of a few that don't have our provinces well-being in their best interest.

As sustainable forest stewards of the public forest resource in this province, we actively conserve old growth timber. *The Great Bear Rainforest Act* was created for this exact purpose; Old Growth Management Areas were created for this purpose; and many more other forms of forest reserves and retention were created and maintained so we will never, ever run out of old growth timber.

The Sierra Club should not make the news for sending 20,000 letters, they should make the news for threatening the financial livelihoods of British Columbians.▲

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*David Elstone, RPF, Executive Director, TLA*  
Tel: 604.684.4291 ext. 1  
Email: david@tla.ca