

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT ANNUAL ILA CONFERENCE

By Jackie Pearase



Industry representatives, trade show vendors, sponsors or forest minister—there was something for everyone at the 61st annual Interior Logging Association Conference and Trade Show in Kamloops May 2-4.

The veracity of the 2019 theme, “Our Strength...Is Your Membership,” was demonstrated with strong attendance at Friday’s annual general meeting and the lunch, business and learning that followed.

Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development Doug Donaldson generated interest and applause with his speech after lunch

for a crowd of ILA members, government representatives and industry stakeholders.

Topics of key interest included the Forest Service Providers Compensation Fund; amending the *Forest and Range Practices Act* with Bill 22; progress of the logging contractor sustainability review; and a government-led forest renewal process for the Interior similar to the Coast Forest Sector Revitalization Initiative.

Donaldson announced at the conference an additional \$250,000 for the Forest Service Providers Compensation Fund to provide financial assistance to forestry

contractors and service providers adversely affected by licensee insolvency.

“To date, the fund has provided \$484,000 in distributions to three small business insolvencies since its inception and with this 2019 grant, there’s over \$8.4 million remaining available. So we’ve got your backs on that one,” said Donaldson to applause.

The audience also showed appreciation for his comments on Bill 22, which received second reading in the BC Legislature on May 2.

Donaldson said the amended *Forest Act* will provide public accessibility and



transparency around forest stewardship plans and foster a diverse forest industry that can address some of its new and ongoing challenges.

He said it is unwise to renew multiple year forest tenures, increase concentration of tenure and swap tenures without first considering changes in the forest over the past decade and what is in the best public interest.

“We want to make sure people know that businesses will look after businesses as it should be, but government’s role is to look after the broader public interest when it comes to the publicly owned forests. It’s

a recognition that increased concentration has really created some of the situations that we see: the downward trend in employment and a downward trend of domestic manufacturing,” he explained. “It’s an initiative to try to bring more public oversight and public control around a publicly held natural resource: our forests.”

The provincial government’s Logging Contractor Sustainability Review, launched in January 2017 and completed January 2018, resulted in 13 recommendations around improving competitiveness of logging contractors and licensees.

“I understand ministry staff are working closely with the ILA and other associations and licensees on the changes to the Timber Harvesting Contractor and Sub-contractor Regulation. I know that was very important to you,” Donaldson said. “The changes are needed to make the new structure efficient, transparent and durable. We’re working on that and working to finish that quickly.”

He said the changes are designed to improve transparency around rate development and provide an effective and timely process to resolve disputes between parties.



“It represents fundamental change so it’s important that all parties work collaboratively to get this right,” he added.

An Interior forest policy strategy to help address challenges drew an enthusiastic response.

Donaldson said the Interior forest sector faces a shrinking supply from beetle kill, the impact of wildfire, US lumber trade action and declining lumber prices, which negatively impacts the 50,000 high-wage harvesting, processing and

manufacturing jobs the Interior forest industry supports.

“To address these challenges and secure and restore BC forestry jobs, we need to take a different approach,” he noted. “We’ll be engaging with First Nations, industry, labour, communities and stakeholders to shape new policies that support retrieving maximum value, not volume, from our forests. That’s the future in the Interior.”

Increasing the use of mass timber is part of the solution, with the government committing \$20 billion over three years for public infrastructure projects using mass timber to help drive the domestic market, increase investment and tap into markets outside BC.

Donaldson said the Interior forest policy strategy process includes six months of extensive consultation and is linked to the Interior TSA coalition process that will develop a TSA-level vision for industry competitiveness and community economic stability.

“It’s fundamental that we have a high degree of integration and collaboration on these initiatives. My hope is for strong engagement from all First Nations, licensees, local governments, labour leaders, various stakeholders and associations like yourselves on this opportunity. It’s a real opportunity to shape the future of the Interior industry and the communities it supports.”

Donaldson also touched on the impact wildfire has had on the province, particularly in the past two years, and ongoing efforts by the government to not only fight fires on the ground but to take preventative actions like prescribed burns



and wildfire risk reduction projects with local governments and First Nations.

Percy Guichon, at the event representing Tsi Del Del Enterprises Ltd., was one of many who spoke with the minister after lunch.

Guichon wanted to highlight his concerns about the Caribou Recovery Strategy and the future AAC reduction, but also to put his support behind plans for the Interior.

“I’m interested in the Interior revitalization project and we’d love to be a part of it,” Guichon stated. “The government needs to really go out and reach out to everybody that’s going to be impacted by their decisions. They have to be knocking on their door right up front, not at the end of the project.”

The Interior Safety Conference on Thursday was enough to pique the interest of first-time conference attendee Norman Druck, Timber Lands Manager at Weyerhaeuser.

“I thought the speakers there were world class. I found it so valuable that I think we’re going to participate more next year,” Druck noted.

He was impressed with the presence of the Forest Minister at the AGM and conference and he is anxious to learn more about the initiatives Donaldson talked about.

Druck also enjoyed the trade show at the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation Powwow Grounds where he satisfied his interest in loaders while also perusing the wide array of equipment, products, services and organizations.

The conference also included a workshop on the Harvest Billing System and the *Freedom of Information Act* from John Drayton of Gibraltar Law Group and Wendy Sherman, Gudeit Bros. Contracting Ltd. logging administrator. Dave Earl, British Columbia Trucking Association president and CEO, led a second workshop on cannabis in the workplace.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious dinner and dancing to the Shawn Lightfoot Band Friday night and took part in the silent auction hosted by the Shuswap Branch of Canadian Women in Timber.

The conference finished with a final day of the Trade Show on Saturday.♣

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