

CONNECTING WITH TLA MEMBERSHIP IN THE NORTHERN INTERIOR



On May 24, the TLA hosted its first ever member networking event in Prince George for more than 60 members and non-members from the Northern Interior. The TLA regularly holds these events to provide members with an opportunity to connect with each other; for the TLA to connect with its members and potential new members to share information about issues that are important to them; and provide an overview of the work the TLA is doing to lobby government on their behalf by standing up for our working forest.

The TLA has been experiencing a growing membership in the north. By hosting this event, we were able to engage face to face with the contractor community in that region and hear more about the concerns that are impacting their businesses.

One of the most pressing issues the north is experiencing is the pending Caribou Recovery Agreement between British Columbia and Canada, which will undoubtedly have an impact on timber harvesting contractors in the North and Interior. In May, on behalf of its membership, the TLA submitted a letter expressing concerns about potential reductions in our working forest as well as demanding compensation for affected operations, which had already been conveyed verbally to Minister Donaldson.

Another timely issue that I'm pleased to share that has recently been resolved is the gap in the Ministry of Forest's Indemnifications and Insurance Coverage policy that potentially impacted contractors across the province who have been hired by the Ministry to fight wildfires. On May 3, together with the Interior Logging Association, we spoke directly to Minister Donaldson and wrote a letter demanding immediate changes be made to the policy to

ensure contractors' equipment is covered. Thankfully our concerns were addressed and there have now been changes made to the insurance coverage provided by Wildfire BC when your equipment is contracted to fight wildfires. Thank you to all who were committed to making those changes happen.

The TLA serves as a defender of the working forest for which its members derive work. I am pleased to see TLA's responses in the media to the anti-old growth harvesting movement. As evidenced by our opinion editorial recently published in several provincial and community newspapers across BC, and interviews on CBC radio "All Points West" on Vancouver Island and "Radio West" in the Interior, our voice to defend our working forest is being heard. Our editorial addressed the inaccuracies that have made headlines over the past year initiated by environmental non-governmental organizations and protests of old growth logging. The working forest supports this province and the TLA will always stand up to protect it; however, I encourage contractors to write their own letters to government.

The TLA works for its membership, so I am proud to see the recent development of an Hourly Equipment Rate Sheet with help from TimberTracks™. The motivation behind this project came from the findings of the 2018 Contractors Sustainability Review (CSR), which incorporated financial data from the contracting community combined with personal accounts shared by contractors and licensees which formed a bleak picture of the financial state of logging contractors in BC. The CSR found that good business relationships enhance sustainability

and competitiveness in the sector, and identified that transparency (or lack thereof) as a predominant issue in relationships between contractors and the licensees who employ them.

Specifically, transparency in terms of both parties having the ability to see and discuss variables that comprise harvesting costs. As such, the CSR recommended the use of developing rate models. To do so requires equipment rate knowledge of the costs to sustainably operate logging equipment, which is an apparent gap and thus typically becomes a source of friction in relationships between contractors and licensees during rate negotiations.

Furthermore, there is a distinct weakness in understanding what the costs are to operate equipment such as grapple yarders on steeper slopes. Therefore, the TLA initiated this project to help fill this gap in knowledge for the betterment of the industry.

The TLA's advocacy efforts are ongoing with so many issues to be advocated across the province. It always surprises me when contractors question why belong to the TLA—of course I am biased as president, but this association gets to the table to get your interests conveyed. There is simply no way you could do that by yourself on so many issues. The current government is highly engaged in making changes to the forestry sector, and our members can be assured that we are making every effort to ensure your voices are heard.▲

Mike Richardson, President, TLA

Tel: 250.203.2649

Email: mike@tsibass.ca