

## CONTRACTORS ARE AN ECONOMICAL ANCHOR FOR COMMUNITIES



It is my honour to be writing my first message as President of the Truck Loggers Association. On behalf of myself and the board, I'd like to thank our Immediate Past President Mike Richardson for his contribution over the past six years on the board and executive. Mike will not be carrying on as past president for health reasons, and his guidance and sharp wit will be missed. I would also like to thank, Jacqui Beban, who has agreed to repeat her role as Past President for the next two years. The newest addition to the executive team is Aaron Service from Peninsula Logging who is the new Vice President. I am certain Aaron's hardworking, cool-headed approach will serve the TLA well going forward and I am looking forward to working with him.

I am sorry to see Clint Parcher from Coastland Wood Products leave the board; Clint has been committed to making a difference in our ongoing advocacy work. I would like to welcome Bob Marquis of Bob Marquis Contracting as our newest director. Bob is an outspoken defender of the industry and I look forward to his put-it-all-on-the-table approach. And lastly, I'm pleased to welcome Bob Brash as the TLA's new Executive Director. Bob brings a wealth of forestry knowledge and experience to the role and we look forward to working with him.

This year's TLA convention could have been a metaphor for the industry as a whole. It took place in the middle of an unprecedented snowstorm, causing the hotel's heat to fail and showers to be cold. Yet, against these adversities the show went on and contractors adapted to the challenges and persevered. It helped that the TLA staff did a great job organizing the convention and made sure it came off as smooth as possible, for which I commend them.

It seems at every juncture we are facing adversity today. Just to name a few,

there are softwood lumber issues, the unintended consequences of the Coastal Forest Sector Revitalization initiative, the yet-to-unfold Interior Forest Sector Revitalization, the Interior fibre shortage, depressed world markets due to forests affected by bug kills and massive wind storms in Europe, the unknown around the BC provincial government's legislation to adopt the principles of UNDRIP, and the never-ending attack on the harvestable land base by anti-harvesting groups.

Add to that the finally-resolved labour dispute on Vancouver Island that lasted an unreasonable length of time, where over half of the striking workforce is employed by contractors who had no voice in bargaining and no meaningful way to work towards its resolution. And now, the COVID-19 outbreak.

There are also the issues we have not yet seen entirely or are just recently hearing about, such as the government's new "30/3" initiative to reduce delivered log costs by \$30 in three months. At time of writing, this initiative is in the early stages and is focused on process and procedure at the ministry level.

At this past convention, Minister Donaldson listed the many changes (see page 24) the forest sector has experienced in the past 13 years. These are hard numbers to understand and the TLA's position around hard numbers, and especially log exports, has always been to stick to the facts. The fact is, all of the numbers need to be taken in the proper context as the world does not consume pulp as it once did. New and evolving technology has lessened the need for manpower, especially in mills, and made the systems more efficient. Interior lumber mills have shut down due to lack of fibre caused by the pine beetle and wildfires. The fact is, a certain amount of exported lumber is required to make many of the stands we work in

viable. And, the fact is, forestry is not that simple, in fact it's very complicated.

Some other facts: BC forests offer some of the highest quality lumber found in the world; in a time when carbon sequestration is important on a global scale we have the benefit of a world-leading carbon sink that is harvestable and renewable; we have a hard time filling the demand for skilled labour and jobs are more technically demanding than ever before; manufactured products are becoming leading edge in worldwide building products; and governments around the world are recognizing wood products for their versatility for single- and multi-story buildings.

The fact is, we did not end up with the many issues we have today overnight. They developed over time and it will take time for us as an industry to work our way through them. Contractors will be a big part of that future. They harvest the vast majority in BC and run sophisticated businesses with long-term business plans that enable them to economically anchor the communities they work in and the province as a whole. Kudos to the hundreds of contractors who participated in the rally that was held in February on the lawn of the BC legislature. They were there to make a strong point to government and stand up to anti-logging organizations to protect our working forest. It's time that we all speak up to defend our livelihoods. It's going to take work and leadership, but if we don't, no one else will. It is my hope that during my time as president we can continue to be instrumental on the path to the future as we have been for the past 77 years.♣

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