



A WELCOMED KIND OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Only a few days before going to print, the Province finally announced its response to the long-awaited release of the Old Growth Strategic Review they commissioned last year. A lot more work is required to adequately decipher the intricacies of both the Province's actions moving forward and the consultant's original recommendations. In general, it appears the Province has taken a reasonably rational approach in terms of its commitment to socio-economic and scientific analysis to guide their final decision-making over their expected three-year timeline to finish the process. However, you can be assured others with decidedly preservationist agendas will be lobbying very diligently and aggressively for their desired outcome. Collectively, our job will be—as an understatement—to counter such viewpoints.

While the old-growth issue is paramount, it should not distract from the broader areas of concern: retaining the working forest and reducing uncertainty.

Current lumber prices are in the stratosphere, and for many of us, this is an obvious relief as the BC forestry sector struggles with ongoing structural issues and the implications of COVID-19. We all want this market to continue but the reality is that it too will pass. Those who are knowledgeable about the industry have all seen these market cycles and know we will see a return to normal sooner than later.

While we collectively enjoy these high market prices, who really thinks we've solved any of BC's forestry problems? Our major problems continue to be high structural costs and the absolute need for an improved investment climate that increases prosperity in the forestry sector.

To get there and make real change happen, it requires all parties involved to actually believe there is a problem. There remains a serious question as to whether

those governing us at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels actually get it. In this issue of *Truck LoggerBC*, Jim Girvan and Russ Taylor's excellent article on the struggles in the BC Interior asks pointedly whether "hope" is the current long-term strategy of those leading us into the future.

Canada, more than ever, will depend on forestry and other resource sectors to economically lead us through COVID-19 and the path toward recovery. For the federal government, this would hopefully translate to a plethora of programs to help the forestry sector and, more importantly, enable it to compete better in world markets. A deliberate signal that they actually support resource industries would be helpful. The question is, how many worthwhile and supportive programs for our sector have been implemented during the COVID-19 era?

On the provincial level, a lot of hard work is necessary to improve the business and investment climate to encourage the expenditures needed in the private sector to move our industry forward. More work is needed to reduce overall cost structures, increase revenues per unit of wood and improve general prosperity. It's very clear what is not needed: more regulation, more cost impositions and indecisive support.

Municipalities, particularly in the Lower Mainland, are not exempt from critique. Stories are constant about skyrocketing property and business tax rates. Businesses say the rates are unsustainable and unrealistic, and many have closed due to lack of affordability.

Fortunately, the TLA's membership includes many resource-based communities who realize and recognize the importance of forestry. Many others are also increasingly recognizing the importance of the resource sector to our country's well-being. There are several initiatives by like-minded groups representing

broad coalitions of those in the resource sector who are striving to bring a suite of policy recommendations to government. At the local level, initiatives such as the BC Forest Alliance, Resource Works, and Forest Friendly Communities are getting forestry facts out to the public.

As a sector, we should continue to be proud of the work we accomplish. Many independent reports continue to reaffirm Canada's forestry leadership in sustainability, certification, product quality, and environmental considerations. In short, we're continuing to do an exceptional job in our forests.

I have the pleasure of working with a very committed organization and board of directors. Everyone involved is committed to their business, employees and communities. They also recognize that challenges in the industry need to be addressed. On that front, the TLA will continue and strengthen our work with governments to improve the prosperity of our industry. We'll ask:

- Are any proposed policy and regulatory changes going to strengthen the overall forest industry and reaffirm the working forest land base?
- Will the proposed changes enable businesses to be more prosperous?
- Will the investment climate be such that it promotes real, sustainable investment in our forest resource?

All parties in our forestry community have to work together on solutions that make all of us better off. The challenge is to get those governing and influencing it through their regulations and policies to accept that this particular kind of climate change is actually necessary and real.♣

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