



MAKING SOCIALLY DISTANCED PROGRESS

The two issues I am most often questioned about, and rightly so, are the current status of implementing the replacement for the fair market rate test, which resulted from the Contractor's Sustainability Review, and the timing of the release of the results from the Old Growth Strategic Review. The impact of both on the contractor community and our rural communities as a whole cannot be understated.

On September 11—just days before going to print—government released its response to the recommendations resulting from the Old Growth Strategic Review. Over the past year, they heard loud and clear from the TLA, ILA, NWLA, COFI, and many rural communities across the province, and fully realize what old-growth harvesting means to our businesses and the well-being of our communities. One only needs to look at other communities that halted old-growth logging to see the devastating impacts, both socially and economically. For contractors specifically, we need to see access and certainty on the land base (our working forest), and we need to see contractors fairly compensated if they lose access or working rights to the land base. Finally, government has started down the road of making the very difficult decisions that need to be made.

The next steps involve all stakeholders coming together to work towards factually based solutions for creating long-term stability for the industry and province. It will require a united voice from all forest professionals to ensure government hears everyone's perspective on how important forestry is to the province. The TLA is well positioned to be a big part of those discussions and our hope is that other major influencers will join.

As previously mentioned, a great amount of work has gone into finalizing the new dispute resolution under contractor sustainability, which is now in

the hands of government and more precisely those of the writers and lawyers. At this stage, even ministers and deputy ministers are in a wait-and-see pattern until it's returned. On a number of occasions, the logging associations have been told that it will be finished in the fall. We are all anxiously awaiting to see it finally come to an end. There are some outstanding pieces of work to be done on the best practices guide and many ques-

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tions around data collection, but this will not stop the changes being made to the dispute resolution mechanism.

In August, TLA board members held their bi-annual strategic planning session to set out the priorities that formulate the plans and goals for the staff and executive over the next two years. I would like to thank the board members for attending the socially-distanced meeting in person and by video conferencing, for sharing their opinions and insight, and being outspoken (in a very large room, six-feet apart, we had no choice but to be outspoken or else we couldn't be heard). The plan is now being formalized and members will see it and its actions shortly.

At the TLA office, staff have been working hard to make sense of the challenging times we are all experiencing with COVID-19 and how we can continue to provide membership value in the absence of networking events and the annual convention. The inability to hold these events is particularly disappointing to me; the board of directors would like nothing more than to continue to hold meetings in smaller communities where forestry is their key industry, but it continues to be a challenge with restrictions on social gatherings.

Not having a convention for the first time ever is a financial strain for the association, but it's in times like these that previous boards created a rainy-day fund, which we will need to withdraw from this year.

The good news is, beginning in October, the TLA is launching bi-weekly TLA TALKS webinars and quarterly virtual Town Halls with Bob Brash to fill the gap; but nothing can really re-

place face-to-face interaction with the TLA membership.

Our new Executive Director Bob Brash has settled nicely into his role. He has been working hard to open up dialog with industry stakeholders including licensees, government, union representatives, First Nations, other associations and, of course, TLA members. Bob's previous experience lends well to having these discussions and we hope that having more open dialog will help to move forward everyone's interests in the forest sector.

Finally, I want to thank our annual sponsors who have continued to support us through these challenging times. Your support is truly appreciated by myself, the board and association as a whole.

Times are challenging right now and there are many other items to discuss but space here is limited. On the bright side, all indications are pointing towards progress; even if it is socially distanced. My hope is that everyone stays safe and prosperous through the second half of the year. 🌲

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