

WHEN WILL WE HAVE CERTAINTY AND CONFIDENCE?



Spring is arriving and hopefully the snowy season is behind us on the Coast and contractors in the Interior can start preparing for their breakup period. One thing we all have in common is the hope that the world we work and live in will approach some level of normality towards the end of summer.

However, I fear that normal for our working environment may be awhile off—if ever. There is so much uncertainty with government making nation-to-nation agreements that will profoundly affect contractors and their employees, record lumber prices affecting stumpage, and decisions still to come around the Old Growth Strategic Review.

As always, the TLA is looking to government to create certainty on the land base so industry knows where it stands. Big (licensees and mill owners) and small (contractors, suppliers, and municipalities) businesses alike will not risk investment on an uncertain land base or business climate. This needs to be the goal in British Columbia. Confidence is not created when we have tree farm licences with up to 50 per cent undercuts, new and unclear policies around fibre recovery zones, and land use policies on many horizons that have yet to undergo social and economic reviews. Undercuts need to be made available to the many stakeholders; policies must be clear and not create a climate of waiting for the right timing; and land use policies need to be transparent.

As if that is not enough to cause uncertainty for contractors, the anti-everything crowds have all resource industries in their sights and are pushing hard to stop, it seems, everything. It is incredibly frustrating to see leading news outlets giving time to entirely “not news”. This of course is their right, as it is others’ right to push back with factual science-based information. I encourage everyone—contractors, employees, spouses, family, and everyone you know—to share their knowledge of the forest harvesting and wood products

sector and have a voice. Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper, take to social media and share the great posts put out by the TLA, Council of Forest Industries, Association of BC Forest Professionals, and others. It would be a huge help if the average British Columbian had a better understanding of how well our forests are managed and what that means to communities, ecosystems and economies across the province. Please share your story.

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On this subject, I am proud to be an owner in a forest harvesting company, live in a predominantly forestry driven community, and serve as president of the Truck Loggers Association. I am proud that resource industries can continue to support the province during a pandemic, and it is refreshing to hear Minister Conroy speak in glowing terms about the sector’s ability to adapt and persevere for the better good of the whole province—now that’s “real news”!

The TLA has restructured some of its committees, and I want to thank those who give their time to sit on them and provide their valuable insight and input. Committee work is not a huge time commitment for someone who wants to be involved, and it is key to much of the work we do at the association. If you have an interest in a specific committee, please reach out to a director or to Bob Brash.

One of the ongoing high priorities of the Safety and Training Committee is helicopter emergency medical services and timely evacuation. The TLA has been advocating this need for at least 20 years, and we believe it is well past time for a 21st century solution to emergency evacuation and transfer of

injured workers. It is becoming more obvious that this is not only a forest industry issue. It’s infuriating to see that a helicopter can land quickly at a car accident in the lower mainland, but we have to wait several hours in a cutblock, or a fish farm, or a remote community, all situated many hours away, where a critically injured person is at least two separate emergency vehicle trips away from a hospital.

When a person is airlifted, they are

critical enough to need a higher level of care and should be heading to the facility best suited to their treatment. This is a healthcare issue across the province, and the solution needs to be collaborative. Rural communities, industry, volunteer organizations like search and rescue, can all come together to help create a solution, but no one organization is strong enough on its own. Government needs to be involved to anchor the process and help get a program established. Transportation of the critically ill or injured is everyone’s issue, and a patchwork of responders cobbled together by government or industry is just not good enough in 2021.

Finally, I’d like to welcome Jeff Cutforth from Stella-Jones Inc. (Kanaka Creek Pole) as our newest director on the TLA board. We value your commitment to our industry and look forward to your input on the issues that affect all of our members.▲

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