

Why I Voted "No" to the Fee Increase

Our CEO, president and council have all made excellent arguments as to why the ABCFP needs a fee increase to carry out the functions expected of them. I have no doubt that the money requested is desperately needed to continue the initiatives that have been committed to. The bigger question is, where exactly should that money come from?

Professional reliance, and all it implies, is not cheap. That's why it was so expedient for the government of the day to propose such an offloading of responsibility and expense. It may be that forest professionals were (and still are) a little naive to accept such an offer without considering the costs and implications to the membership and to the public. It might even be useful to ask, has forest management improved since it has been essentially privatized? But that's a topic for another day.

For now consider: The focus of an association depends very much on where its funding comes from. If it's from the membership then the members' needs will be considered foremost. If it comes from employers (as it often does) then their needs must be considered too. Only if the funding comes from the public will the association be independent enough to put the public good first.

We all like to think that we are independent professionals but few of us are independent enough to propose actions that might affect our ability to feed our families, no matter how correct we might be. History has shown that professionals can be bought, coerced or discarded at will. If the concept of professional reliance is to work, it must be publicly funded to some degree.

I applaud the initiatives of the ABCFP. The association is on a new track and breaking new ground. The majority of members have now agreed to the fee increase but it would be unwise to ignore the 45% opposed. My 'no' vote was not intended to block increased funding, only to suggest that, when it comes to money, we're barking up the wrong tree.

ROD KRIMMER, RFT; BIG LAKE RANCH, BC



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BC Forest Professional is published six times a year by the Association of BC Forest Professionals

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DESIGN: Massyn Design

PRINTING: Mitchell Press

DISTRIBUTION: PDQ Post Group

ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER: Brenda Martin

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Tel: 604.639.8103 • Fax: 604.687.3264

E-mail: forest-ads@abcfp.ca

ISSN: 1715-9164

Annual Subscriptions: Canada \$44.80 incl HST

U.S. and international \$80 Canadian funds

Publications mail agreement No: 40020895

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

ABCFP Circulation Department

330-321 Water St, Vancouver, BC V6B 1B8



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Meeting The Fate We Have Earned

In response to Garnet Mierau's, RPF, article, "The Race to the Bottom," printed in the September/October issue of **BC Forest Professional**, I would like to explain why BC forest professionals are receiving precisely what they deserve.

As per the insert in the July/August issue of the **BC Forest Professional**, "The ABCFP's advocacy mandate is to advocate for good forest stewardship on behalf of the people of BC not ABCFP members." (Revenue 2010: The Cost of Being a Forest Professional)

It is inconceivable how we expect that we, the members of the ABCFP, can be advocating for good forest stewardship when collectively we are not even willing to advocate for the membership who give a voice to that stewardship.

Regarding the debate Garnet raised about awarding work based on lowest price being punitive, lowest price is the only way for the market to punish an undisciplined industry, such as forestry, that likes to behave badly. It is a profession that likes to bid jobs and drop jobs with little to no bid deposits or repercussions. Experience and duration of service in the field are not indices of increased value to the client or employer. If we look no further than the construction industry we will see the use of surety bonding as an example of how to deal with this issue on a contractual level. This effectively punishes the poor performers rather than all participants as per our current collective race to the bottom.

If the profession and the membership expect to survive they better start acting like they actually deserve it. In response to Garnet's evocation of Darwinian evolution, I will state that a species that is neither prepared to defend itself nor adapt to a changing environment will meet the fate it has earned. The fossil record is full of those who wanted things to slow down, and stay the same.

STEVE NYCHOLAT, RFT
PRINCE GEORGE, BC

Appropriate Representation

I have been discussing with my co-workers the perspectives on the proposed "fee increase vs levy" being put forward by our association. While I fully understand and appreciate council's point of view, I believe they are missing an important point when they say that they have no other options. Council is elected by the membership to represent them and if the membership decides by a democratic vote that they do not approve of a fee increase, then the council must do the one thing they have not mentioned as an option: do less with less! This is a reality for many forest professionals working today and council should be no different. None of the membership has the option to go to their employers and demand more money to do their professional work and at the same time say if they don't get it they will just take it anyway. We do what we can with the resources we are given and if our employer decides more needs to be done, only then is the appropriate response, "We must have more funding." In a democratic organization, no means no, and while council may not like it, they must abide by the vote results and the membership must live with the consequences; positive or negative. If the majority of the membership votes no on the fee increase and council proceeds with the levy, they will lose the faith and trust of the membership, risk becoming dysfunctional, and will indeed become what Sharon Glover says they are not; heavy-handed, authoritarian, undemocratic, and out-of-touch (BCFP July/August, 2010). The way council has approached this issue makes me wonder why we are being asked to vote at all since the results are a foregone conclusion – they will get our money regardless. Sounds pretty undemocratic to me!

PHIL LE PAGE, MSc, RPF
SMITHERS, BC

Put in Your Two Cents

The **BC Forest Professional** letters' section is intended primarily for feedback on recent articles and for brief statements about current association, professional or forestry issues. The editor reserves the right to edit and condense letters and encourages readers to keep letters to 300 words. Anonymous letters are not accepted. Please refer to our website for guidelines to help make sure your submission gets published in **BC Forest Professional**.



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