US-Canada softwood lumber negotiations off to slow start

Softwood Lumber agreement set to expire in October 2015

BY JOHN THOMPSON

The US-Canada Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA), designed to keep peace in the woods as it applies to lumber exports, is due to expire October 12, 2015. The Agreement was signed in 2006 for a seven-year term with a provision to extend it for another two years. That extension was exercised in 2012. The current Agreement can be renewed but not be extended indefinitely hence the October due date.

Under terms of the Agreement, Canadian lumber producers face a sliding scale of export duties in order to access the American market. The Agreement, borne of repeated American litigation over “unfair competition” was initially greeted with rancor and resentment but James Gorman, President of the Council of Forest Industries, COFI, says Canadian producers have been happy with its outcome.

“The Softwood Lumber Agreement has worked. Canada’s market share which was capped at 34 per cent has stayed well below that—it sits at around 29 per cent—and at the same time the US share has increased from 61 per cent to 71 per cent of its market.”

“We’re of the view that Agreement should be renewed in its entirety under all of its existing terms,” he says. “Failing that, we are of the view that it must expire.”

Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development confirms talks have begun but are tight-lipped about the details.

“The Government of Canada has been consulting provinces, territories and industry on future softwood lumber trade with the United States,” says spokesperson John Babcock. “Based on these consultations, we have shared with the U.S. government our preference for a renewal of the Agreement.”

The Office of the United States Trade Representative says, it too, is ramping up. “In light of the approaching expiration of the SLA next year, the United States is engaging with U.S. industry and other stakeholders, including Congress, on how to best proceed,” says media chief Matt McAlvanah on behalf of the Office.

Canada favours an “as is” approach to renewal. The Americans, it appears, are not as keen.

The US Lumber Coalition, a nationwide lobby of softwood lumber producers, continues to rail against Canada’s stumpage system. A recent ruling by the London Court of International Arbitration, the third party arbiter in SLA disputes, has only added fuel to the fire. In 2011 the Court agreed with a Coalition complaint that Ontario and Quebec had subsidized their forest industries by underwriting certain costs previously borne by timber harvesters thereby reducing the cost of wood and creating a marketing advantage. The Court told Quebec to add another extra 2.6 per cent in export duties on top of its existing obligations and 0.1 per cent on Ontario product. Those penalties were expected to amount to $59 million of which $20 million was collected.

In March of this year, the London Court said the provinces had suffered enough and cancelled the remaining extra duties. “The Coalition is very disappointed,” said Luke Brochu, Coalition Chairman. “For Canada to be allowed to collect export taxes with one hand then give them back with the other hand through illegal subsidies and not to pay a penalty for it, seriously undermines our faith in the usefulness of this trade agreement with Canada.”

Other irritants include BC government compensation for tenure take-backs should the government cancel the tenure holders rights prior to expiration and various provincial loans, loan guarantees and incentives. The Coalition would like to see an end to provincial pricing systems and regularly updates the U.S. Department of Commerce on perceived SLA infractions.

In Canada, it’s left up to the provinces and their regional industries to let Ottawa know what it wants in a new Agreement.

“Government uses a number of mechanisms to consult with industry,” says COFI President James Gorman, “including a Business Advisory Committee.

Continued on page 2
BY ROBIN BRUNET

Unlike previous years, BC forest companies and industry associations are finishing 2014 on a high note and express cautious optimism about the year ahead.

But they stress that the challenges endemic to doing business on the west coast will continue for the foreseeable future.

In December, Western Forest Products Inc. announced the second-highest third quarter revenue in the company’s history ($262.1-million) despite a significantly challenging operating environment, including the second-worst fire season in provincial history. “We also faced weaker Japanese and Chinese lumber markets,” says Amy Spencer, director, communications and government relations.

Canfor’s sales in 2014 as of December were $2.487.2-billion, slightly higher than the same period last year ($2.385.4). “Our company is in a good position with the financial strength to grow,” says Wayne Guthrie, Canfor’s senior vice president of sales and marketing. However, Guthrie acknowledges that it’s hardly the time to relax: “Today’s global markets make it even more important to diversify our product base and our markets.”

West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. recently released third quarter 2014 lumber operations earnings of $101-million compared to a Q2 of $81-million, the third quarter 2014 lumber operations earnings of $2.487.2-billion, slightly higher than the same period last year ($2.385.4). “Our company is in a good position with the financial strength to grow,” says Wayne Guthrie, Canfor’s senior vice president of sales and marketing. However, Guthrie acknowledges that it’s hardly the time to relax: “Today’s global markets make it even more important to diversify our product base and our markets.”

West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. recently released third quarter 2014 lumber operations earnings of $101-million compared to a Q2 of $81-million, the rise is attributed to “the result of reduced costs and certain manufacturing productivity improvements related to capital investments,” according to a report to shareholders.

Softwood

Continued from page 1

comprised of industry reps from across the country.…” Gorman says federal Ministers and officials meet with the reps to make sure the positions they adopt have the full support of Canadian industry. In effect, a united front. And, as previously mentioned, those consultations have begun. However it’s unlikely that formal negotiations are going to start any time soon.

The Americans are currently pursuing a massive free-trade proposal called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). If ratified, the Partnership, which includes 12 Pacific-trading countries including Canada, will facilitate the flow of capital, labour and intellectual property. The Obama administration has made TPP a top priority and COFI President James Gorman believes the Americans are too pre-occupied with completing the deal to worry about softwood lumber right now.

“The Office of the United States Trade Representative has signalled they’re not in a position to formally engage,” says Gorman. “They’re very much focussed on the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations, particularly with Japan, and the expectation is that the United States will likely stay focussed on TPP in the hope that it will come to some sort of resolution in the spring. We’re probably not going to be in a position where they’re really engaging on softwood lumber until that time.”

What happens if there’s no renewal in place by October’s end?

“The U.S. government has committed to a one-year standoff on trade litigation upon the expiry of the Agreement,” says the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development’s John Babcock.

“If there’s no agreement put into place by October and there’s talk of retroactive duties for one year, how do you run your business?” says Russell Taylor, President of International Wood Markets Group which counsels producers on market trends and opportunities.

Babcock says the U.S. government has “committed itself to not launching any anti-dumping and/or countervailing duty investigations against Canadian softwood lumber producers for one year following the expiration of the SLA.”

Good news in the short term perhaps but Taylor still doesn’t like the prospect of long term market instability. He wants to make Softwood Lumber Agreement issues the centerpiece of the Group’s Global Log and Lumber Conference in Vancouver this coming May. He’s invited the U.S. Lumber Coalition to participate. So far, the Coalition has yet to agree. ◊
EDC revisits its BC forecast

Chief economist admits exports not living up to expectations

BY JOHN THOMPSON

Hard on the heels of its Global Export Report which predicted good times for BC's forestry industry, Export Development Canada’s Chief Economist Peter Hall admits BC wood products exports are not living up to expectations.

The bi-annual report, released last month, predicted an increase of 11 per cent in 2014 and 15 per cent in 2015. As of September, BC wood shipments increased a mere 5 per cent over last year.

“That’s considerably below our forecast and that illustrates the extent to which shipments have actually turned down in the last couple of months,” says Hall. “We think the pricing environment is still going to be robust and so we see increases happening but we are not as comfortable about where we were when we published this forecast on the actual volume side of things.”

Russell Taylor, President of International Wood Markets Group, a private Vancouver-based research and analysis firm, agrees.

“We do our own forecasts and in comparison this one is overly optimistic relative to our assumptions,” says Taylor. “Our forecast is simple. Lumber exports in volume, not dollars, are sideways this year, not up and we think it’s going to be sideways at best next year and dropping after that because there’s just less production going to be happening out of the BC Interior.”

The mountain pine beetle infestation continues to plague the BC forest industry. The province has increased the annual allowable cut (AAC) in order to salvage value out of the diseased trees, but BC’s Council of Forest Industries, COFI, expects the AAC to decrease as stock depletes.

“In the Interior, the annual allowable cut will have moved from 62 million cubic metres in 2010 to about 52 million cubic metres in 2020 and by 2030 it’s going to be down to about 40 million,” says COFI President James Gorman. “The maximum harvest is going to drop by 35 per cent over the next 15 years.”

Hall acknowledges the problem of supply is putting next year’s forecast at risk.

Nevertheless he remains bullish on the industry as a whole largely because of a low Canadian dollar and a resurgent US housing market. The demand for housing will keep prices high, he says, offsetting a drop off in volume.

“We’re talking about an industry that has a lot of structural headroom in terms of its building. We’re used to talking about surpluses on the housing side; they have to grow by 40% just to keep pace with the household formation and the economy.”

As for those disappointing 2014 BC export stats, Hall thinks it may be a momentary blip.

“Our core thinking at the moment is that there’s a problem getting the supply to the US market and the US market is having a hard time finding workers.” Homebuilding could be held back by a shortage of skilled workers but he’s not sure, pending a review of incoming data.

“I can’t tell you definitively if it’s a BC issue or it’s the specific markets that BC is supplying. Having said that, Quebec, Alberta and Ontario don’t seem to be having the same trouble.”

BC’s loss may be a boon for other provinces as their mills ramp up after years of relative inactivity. BC accounts for 58 per cent of Canadian wood shipments, the lion’s share by far, while its nearest competitor, Quebec, accounts for only 18 per cent. But Quebec’s exports are rising by 23 per cent a year. Ontario accounts for 9 per cent of shipments and exports are rising 11 per cent per year.

“Alberta is remarkable,” says Hall. It now accounts for 8 per cent of wood shipments but is rising this year by 30 per cent. These resurgent industries are going to make a difference if BC can’t deliver enough fibre.

“Some room has been created,” says Hall and “they may be able to step into the gap.”

The problem of supply isn’t the only issue facing BC producers. The Canada – US Softwood Lumber Agreement, already extended, is due to expire this coming October.

Hall admits the SLA was not factored into the EDC’s recent forecast but says it will be addressed in the next report due in April 2015.
The forest industry in 2014 has had its ups and downs just like any other year. British Columbia saw a near record forest fire season, in New Brunswick there was a public backlash against a forestry plan, Nova Scotia dealt with environmental concerns pertaining to a major mill. And of course there were some tragic mill closures.

The year was not without its positives though. The industry continued its slow and steady climb out of the depths of the recession. Many mills have reopened in 2014 after years of being idle. Other mills have expanded operations, adding new lines, new shifts, and new investment.

Ontario finally followed the British Columbia lead in adopting mid-rise wood frame construction into their building code. This change will by all accounts be beneficial for the forest products industry in the province.

2014 also saw technological innovation continue to drive the industry into new, uncharted and exciting directions. New techniques in construction, such as ever more complex and ambitious forms of glulam and panelized construction, push the limits of what can be done with wood. Innovations at the molecular level hint at a day when wood products may supplant fossil fuels in everything from plastics to gasoline.

The year ahead promises to be both as prosperous and challenging as 2014. That great challenge of the industry the softwood lumber agreement will be rearing its ugly head late in 2015. The overseas markets may be shrinking in the year ahead but U.S. housing continues to rise and the Canadian dollar will stay low. Forestry CEOs and analysts predict much the same for 2015 as the year before: slow cautious growth.

As ever the industry will take the good with the bad and keep working to making Canadian forestry a world leader.


A world without forestry

NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

The past twelve months have been filled with excitement and change, not only for the staff here at the Working Forest, but for the industry as a whole. It has been nice to see the positives this year, the growth and development that has occurred within the forestry sector, but it is even more exciting to think about what the coming year has in store.

 Best wishes for a safe and prosperous 2015.

We want to hear from you!

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ON THE COVER

Myles Thorp shares a shot of a load of spruce beetle killed fire wood being unloaded at a fire wood distributor’s log storage yard. The trees are so short they won’t properly bunk on a conventional truck.

David St. Martin

Here at the Working Forest, we are anticipating a great deal of growth. Perhaps what has us most excited is the ongoing development of a brand new website that is in the midst of being re-designed from the ground up to better suit the needs of our audience, and our valued clients. We are very excited to share it with you in 2015. Until then, have a safe and prosperous new year!
EXPECT US IN THE UNEXPECTED
CANADA’S FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

fpac.ca/innovation  #FutureofForestry

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Canada has the largest share of intact forest in the world

BY DAVID LINDSAY, PRESIDENT AND CEO, FOREST PRODUCTS ASSOC. OF CANADA

Did you know that Canada’s forest products sector employs almost twice as many people and contributes twice as much to Canada’s manufacturing GDP than auto manufacturing according to Statistics Canada? Naysayers who write off the forest industry as a sunset sector might be surprised to know that 2014 was a relatively good year with exports up about 10% from a year earlier, with good prospects for further growth in 2015.

There’s no doubt that the industry still faces challenges after the crushing downturn of the recent recession, but the sector has been successful in refocusing and reinventing itself. It has become confident about the future because of its idealistic vision, pragmatic approaches and smart decisions by both industry and governments. The self-assurance is captured in the industry’s Vision 2020 which has set the ambitious goals of generating an additional $20 billion in new products and markets; refreshing the workforce with 60,000 new workers and further improving environmental credentials by another 35%, all by the end of the decade.

These three vision goals are complementary. For example to generate more value from every tree, the industry is now focusing on innovation as an engine of growth. Wood fibre is now being used in everything from car parts to cosmetics to chemicals and clothing. With help from government such as the Investments in Forest Industry Transformation (IFIT) program and focused academic research, the sector is developing more cutting-edge world-first innovations. The bio-economy, nano-technology, 3d printing and more are all exciting opportunities for forest fibre. All of this will help create new growth but also help “green” the economy since these new products are made from a renewable resource and can replace those made from more carbon intensive materials.

Canada’s forest products industry already has strong environmental credentials. Canada remains the country with the largest share of intact forest in the world with nearly 90% of its original forest cover. Only 0.15 % of Canadian forests are harvested each year and all harvested areas are regenerated by law ensuring our forest resource will be there for generations to come. Canada is recognized for its progressive forest management practices with 40% of the world’s independently certified forests. Pulp and paper mills have cut greenhouse gas emissions by about 70% since 1990. About thirty mills now generate green electricity on site using residual materials from their operations — enough to power all the houses in northern Ontario with enough left over to power Kingston and Waterloo. Forest companies belonging to the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) are working co-operatively with environmental groups in the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) to both conserve the Boreal and support the economy.

Yet with all this progress, forest companies are not resting on their laurels – under Vision2020, the sector is aiming to further reduce its environmental footprint by 35% by the end of the decade. This is based on twelve parameters including water and energy use, recycling and improving on the ground sustainable forest management practices.

FPAC is gratified to see that a 2014 international market survey by Leger Marketing showed that Canada’s forest products industry had the best environmental reputation in the world, something that can be a source of pride for all Canadians.

The industry is also trying to attract its next generation labor force through its campaign “the greenest workforce” by highlighting the sector’s positive environmental profile. Potential employees can feel good about establishing their career in a renewable sector that offers a good quality of life.

All in all the industry is growing and further greening itself as it looks to the future with cautious optimism, still one of the most important economic sectors in Canada supporting jobs and prosperity especially in rural Canada.
Developing innovative uses for pulp by-product

FPIInnovations is creating a plywood adhesive from lignins

**By Michael B. Humble**

FPIInnovations and West Fraser Timber have created an innovative new use for the lignin that is a natural by-product of the pulp industry.

“We are building a plant to extract lignin from West Fraser’s kraft mill in Hinton and at the same time working with their plywood mills to show them how to use that lignin as a glue, it’s research that’s been ongoing for seven years,” Tom Browne, Research Manager Biorefinery/Energy at FPIInnovations explained.

While a fairly new commodity in the modern pulp industry, lignin has been used commercially over the years. Commonly used in the 1950s and ‘60s when the resins that lignin was competing with were very expensive. As those typically oil based resins grew cheaper over time, the economics of lignin stopped making sense in the production of plywood, Browne explained.

“In kraft pulping, you chemically dissolve the lignin and wash it away and the fibre gets used to make photocopy paper and other products. The lignin gets burned as a heat and power source for the mill that is sufficient to keep the mill from buying little or no additional fossil fuels,” Browne said.

The opportunity now is to take out some of the lignin and develop a higher value use. In the case of FP Innovations partnership with West Fraser, a plant is being built to process this higher value lignin and is expected to be operational by August, 2015.

“The mill makes over a thousand tons of pulp a day so this will only add 30 tons of lignin which might add a couple percent to the gross sales figure every year, but the bigger impact is that it is a first step into new products, new processes; it’s a way of getting your feet wet without discovering that the water is either freezing or scalding,” Browne explained.

In the case of West Fraser, because they also have plywood mills, they have an internal market for the product that will save them money in additional purchases with every ton of lignin substituted. According to Browne, this could be viewed as the first step towards bigger, more radical and riskier applications with potentially bigger payoffs.

There are also environmental benefits as the lignin replaces a product partly made from petroleum so they are able to replace a phenolic resin with a renewable version of it. The primary benefit of the project is that it allows West Fraser to start the move towards replacing oil in materials through a more efficient use of renewable resources.

“We have the world’s largest sustainable forests in Canada, no one comes anywhere near having the same number of hectares of sustainable harvests every year. We can prove that according to these given standards, our resource is renewable, that it will still be there for our children and grandchildren even if we cut today. If we use that wisely, not just to replace fuels in cars, but also to replace plastic and materials made from oil, it is a good thing.”

There are many uses for lignin and Browne admits that the reason they started with the adhesive aspects is because there was a built in need for it with West Fraser’s plywood mill down the road so it provides a nice through line between the pulp and panel mills.

Browne explains that while the potential is strong, they are nowhere near being able to replace a full range of phenolic products.

“There has been a hundred years of research on how to do this with oil, and five years on how to do it with lignin, but once there are tons being made, customers will be able to buy the lignin and develop it to their needs. It’s sort of a chicken and the egg thing though, there are people out there in the chemical industry who want to develop with lignin, but if there is no production capacity, how are they going to do that?”

Browne explained.

Browne sees a great deal of promise for 2015, not only with the opening of the pilot plant in August, but also the potential to develop additional partnerships.

FPIInnovations is also developing a process that will convert large quantities of wood into different products, including one that would replace the corn and sugar cane-based plastics currently used in biodegradable plastics.

“We need to be able to sell both products to make it economical, but we have already done the engineering and it looks promising so we are hoping to get a pilot plant set up for that in Thunder Bay as well,” Browne said.
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Despite predictions of fairly steady pricing in the lumber and pulp industries for next year, Canadian lumber and pulp companies should see stronger revenues thanks to the lower value of the Canadian dollar.

“What underpins most of the outlook for solid wood producers is obviously housing, US housing in particular, and we’re thinking it will continue its slow, steady improvement next year,” said Kevin Mason, Managing Director at ERA Forest Productions Research.

Mason explained that this year, there were about one million starts, and ERA is projecting 1.11 million for 2015. That 11 per cent increase is similar to recent years, and he predicts that growth in single-unit dwellings will be more prevalent than multi-unit growth in the coming year.

“Multis have been driving the industry for the past little while, but they are starting to show signs of saturation in some markets. We believe that single units will pick up next year, which will be beneficial for the industry, as singles tend to use three times as much wood as a multi-unit dwelling,” Mason explained.

Mason hopes that there will be additional growth, but the employment situations and lending markets are currently impediments to growth in the market. In the US in particular, engaging more first-time homebuyers in the market would have a very positive impact.

“The home ownership of the 25-34 year-old age group is the lowest we have seen since World War II. While there are some demographic and socio-economic reasons for that, other challenges include high student debt levels, tougher lending rules, and a job market where people are not so much unemployed, as they are underemployed. As well, many people have just left the workforce, and the US labour participation rate is approaching a 40-year low.” Mason said.

The challenges extend beyond the North American market as well. Japan has experienced a significant downturn in new housing starts, Mason explained, and Japan’s weakness is forecast to persist. In China, there are concerns on the housing and construction side, but the overall wood demand should see consistent amounts of lumber and logs being shipped thanks to the current Canadian currency advantage. Mason explained that this year, there were 3.3 billion board feet of lumber shipped to China, while current forecasts for 2015 have that figure closer to 3.2 billion.

“We think it will be down a little bit overall, but very little. China is now working to reverse some of the rules they originally put in place to cool the housing market; there will also be a bit of an inventory cycle at some point next year that should lead to pretty comparable results to this year,” Mason said.

The pulp industry is still growing globally and Mason believes that while there are very few capacity expansions in softwood next year, there are plans in the work for growth in 2016 and beyond. Newsprint should benefit from the lower Canadian dollar, and the publication-paper grades above newsprint will see price increases early in the new year, and again in either April or July, due to recent mill/machine closures.

“The big challenge right now is in uncoated free sheet markets due to imports. Imports have really accelerated and come into the market in a big way, so the market is oversupplied and pricing is coming under pressure. However, there is the potential for a trade case against imports, which would bolster our outlook on North American pricing and shipments.”

Overall, Mason believes that the current state of the Canadian dollar is a huge factor. Canadian pulp and lumber companies are likely to benefit greatly from this, and Mason is revising some estimates for several producers based on the outlook for the dollar.

“If the situation changes on the oil front during the year, it could lead to a stronger dollar, which in turn would change everything again. But we aren’t anticipating Canadian dollar strength next year,” Mason said.

For the short term, however, there is reason to be optimistic about the coming year. The low value of the dollar, continued demand for pulp and lumber, and the cautiously growing US housing market should all lend themselves to a prosperous new year.
Eastern forestry CEO’s are encouraging caution as the industry’s slow rebound continues. Despite the improvements in production and markets in 2014 the recovery is still fragile. While optimism is high for 2015, executives are warning that the year may be static in terms or even a bit tumultuous.

EACOM president and CEO Kevin Edgson says that he is very encouraged by the future outlook but it is important that policy makers and stakeholders in the industry understand just how delicate the recovery is. “In general, 2014 was actually quite similar to 2013. The market itself had a little less volatility in 2014 and the positive is that we are continuing to move in the right direction. At EACOM we had the restart of the Timmins mill as well as continuing to ramp up the Elk Lake mill after investing in two new saw lines. We saw sales increase in large part due to the additional volume after several years of break-even type financial performance,” Edgson said. “On lumber I am optimistic; the recovery continues as housing starts continue to return towards long term trend levels and supply response is muted. We believe the recovery stage will continue to be slow and steady in line with general improvement in the U.S and Canadian economies. That steady improvement is the outlook for both sides of the borders.

Key challenges in 2015 will be maintaining a supply of skilled labour as demand increases, a problem faced by many industries Edgson noted. The other challenge that he is watching closely is the looming expiration in October 2015 of the softwood lumber agreement with the United States. “Our perspective has been that the agreement in its current form is a functioning agreement. It has brought eight years of trade harmony on a file that has long been an issue between Canada and the U.S.,” Edgson said. “We are hopeful that both sides of the border will see the value of continued trade management and we can avoid going back to largely what was an acrimonious battle.”

With respect to the issue of human resources, Edgson said “Skilled trades are vitally important to us especially as we look to add shifts and try to get ahead of a part of the workforce that is getting set to retire.” The Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC) has quoted in excess of 60,000 new jobs will need to be filled by 2020. “We’re working to great an environment for growth and we think we offer a pretty terrific workplace opportunity, particularly for those people who want to enjoy benefits of living in a more natural, less urban environment and close-knit communities.”

Richard Garneau, president and CEO of Resolute Forest Products related that demand for paper continued to decrease in 2014 but pulp and lumber grew over 2013 levels. “Countries such as China are consuming more pulp than a few years ago so it is a bright spot on forest products. Lumber certainly was better in 2014 compared to the previous year. The housing starts in our largest market, the U.S., are going up. That was one of the positives we had in 2014. We are expecting housing starts to go up to 1.15 to 1.2 million which would be good news for the lumber business,” Garneau said.

"In 2015, I expect to see softwood pulp to continue to be strong because there is no new capacity. On the hardwood side it’s going to be challenging because we saw quite a few monster mills open in Latin America. The eucalyptus mills with a capacity of up to 1.5 million tons, which started in 2014, are going to have an impact on the market. Consumption will not be sufficient enough to outdo that new capacity.”

Garneau warned of the impact of flagging economies around the world going into 2015. He said that while economic news from the U.S. seems to be positive, the Chinese market is slowing down. The Indian, European and Japanese markets are also waning. “It’s a world market; we are not in a vacuum any more. We sell product in 90 different countries around the world. The emerging economies are slowing down. The Indian, European and Japanese markets are also waning. “It’s a world market; we are not in a vacuum any more. We sell product in 90 different countries around the world. The emerging economies are slowing down, so 2015 could be challenging but it’s difficult to tell at this time. We are hoping it will be reasonable but there are indications that it could be bumpy,” Garneau said.
The 14th annual Wood WORKS! Awards night held in Vaughan, Ontario in November was a particularly special occasion as the program and guests celebrated changes to the Ontario building code as well as the achievements in architecture, engineering and design.

“This year was a particularly special celebration because it marks the beginning of a new era for wood construction. We are privileged to recognize the winners of this year’s awards program and pleased to celebrate the Ontario Building Code changes that have created opportunities for the construction of entirely new building types in Ontario. We are all excited about the future of wood construction in the province and look forward to the first 6-storey, wood frame building built in Ontario,” said Marianne Berube, Ontario executive director of Wood WORKS!

The code changes were reflected in one award in particular this year. The Wood Champion award was given to a group whose efforts have helped bring about the changes to the Ontario Building Code. The strong partnership and combined voice of the Ontario Home Builders Association (OHBA), the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), RESCON and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, helped code changes become a priority for the Ontario government and key stakeholder groups.

Educational efforts in the form of articles, interviews and speaking engagements further garnered industry support. Joe Vaccaro, CEO of OHBA; Bryan Tuckey, the President and CEO of BILD; and Richard Lyall, President of RESCON led a strong campaign with their membership. Wood frame provides another option to realize urban densification plans by municipalities all over the province, and ultimately leads to more affordable housing options. The Bedford report reiterated the need for a Midrise construction solution that was ‘Made in Ontario’.

AMO’s executive board, especially two Mayors from Northern Ontario, fully supported the Mid-rise changes, recognizing the significance Mid-rise would have to the industry that sustains their communities. Mayor David Canfield, Chair of NOMA, and Mayor Al Spacek, Chair of FONOM, helped educate their peers and the Ontario government about the need for this change and the benefits it would have for all Ontarians.

“Over the last 14 years, we’ve seen a wide variety of building types nominated for awards and this year is no exception. It is clear that the role of wood in commercial and institutional construction is growing. There are many reasons for the increased use of wood,” Berube said. “People understand and appreciate wood’s environmental benefits and, in many applications, designers and developers are also reporting significant time and cost savings. Also, new products, advancements in manufacturing, innovative designers, and now code changes are all creating opportunities for increased wood use.”

Congratulations to the Winners of the 14th Ontario Wood WORKS! Awards

www.wood-works.ca/ontario

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Halsall Associates Ltd.

INSTITUTIONAL/COMMERCIAL DESIGN >10 M
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Architecture 49
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ENGINEER WOOD ADVOCATE AWARD
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ZAS Architects, Toronto, ON

WOOD CHAMPION AWARD
OHBA RESCON, BILD, AMO,
Chair of FONOM, Chair of NOMA

Joe Vaccaro, Ontario Home Builders’ Association; Allan Spence, Mayor of Kapuskasing, President of FONOM; Dave Canfield, Mayor of Kapuskasing, President of NOMA; Tad Patry, Great Gulf; Richard Lyall, RESCON; Vincent Molinaro, Ontario Home Builders Association; Steve Upton, BILD; Paul Golini, BILD; Jim Lopez, Tembec (Sponsor)
Wood brings structure to a human scale

The Interior Design award winning Social Sciences building at the University of Ottawa features a 15-storey tower, a curved glass prow or ‘flatiron’, and a six-storey pavilion with a dramatic 12-metre cantilever. Diamond Schmitt Architects’ Donald Schmitt says the eye-catching, sloping amphitheater and main entrance is a design element that his team spent a lot of time on. “That whole element was totally clad in wood panels on the exterior and interior,” Schmitt said. “It’s on an axis of pedestrian movement; you see it when you are coming from any direction on the campus. It’s at a crossroads.”

The building’s large public spaces, which are used by thousands of students, feature cherry wood paneled walls that absorb sound. One of the two atria in the building features a six-storey high biofilter living wall, the largest in North America. Next to the feature stair in the north atrium are two- and three-storey slatted cherry wood screens; wood paneling surrounds the entrances of the large lower floor classrooms.

Around the perimeter of the atria, wood is used in combination with glass. A continuous solid cherry wood handrail tops the glass guards of the upper floors and is interrupted by wood study counters situated in key locations around the perimeter. “I think the wood changes the scale to bring it down to a human scale. It creates a contrast with the glass and aluminum elements of the cladding as a whole. It creates a distinct place,” Schmitt said.

A modern traditional structure

The recipient of this year’s Jury’s Choice award, the Deer Clan Longhouse in Milton, Ontario, brings together Canada’s aboriginal history and the common future of Canadians by combining different wood construction technologies that span more than 500 years. “Both traditional First Nations technologies and contemporary wood fabrication systems were used. Wood became part of the medium for telling a fascinating chapter in Canada’s history,” said Calvin Brook, Principal of Brook McIlroy Architects. “Wood was mandatory both as a way of honouring First Nations culture and traditions but also to create continuity in the narrative of a place that spans half a millennium. Wood also allowed us to design an environment that people seem to instinctively embrace,” Brook commented.

A wood exoskeleton wraps the exterior of the longhouse and bass wood bark is used as rain screen to create an authentic look. “It’s not often we use bark as a rain screen for a fully insulated and air conditioned building,” Brook said. The structural system uses wood exclusively, featuring exposed arch/column glulam supports which are intentionally left with a rough-cut finish. This finish was “used as a way of maintaining the wood’s inherent qualities and reinforcing the image of a structure sculpted from nature,” Brook said.

Within the building, the walls and dome of the Gathering Circle features a unique spiraling, overlapping Fir panel system which helps tell the story of Aboriginal Creation, Brook explained. The layered timber and bark of a traditional long house is echoed in the all wood interior, with exposed pine purlins and tongue and groove cladding.
Standing out in the crowd

The Residential Wood Design Award winner, Great Gulf Active House, adhered to Active House standards, a Dutch metric which emphasizes the qualities both the client and architects were looking for. Superkül principal architects, Meg Graham and Andre D’Elia, say the 3,200 square foot house in Thorold, Ontario was the culmination of years of research into how to achieve a more sustainable, but still economical, residential product.

The house was designed as a panelized wood structure to reduce construction waste and the duration of on-site build time. The factory built wall, floor and roof panels were trucked to the site and all framing was completed in just a few days.

Some of the design elements that reduce the house’s environmental impact and improve energy efficiency include south-facing glazing, oriented to maximize solar heat gain in the winter, while overhangs and window shades keep the house cool in the summer. To reduce the need for municipal water, the house has a cistern and rain water system that is used for lawn watering and the low flush toilets.

Visually, the Great Gulf Active House stands out in its suburban setting. The natural cedar cladding provides warmth to the subdued grey brick and metal cladding. The large expanses of red cedar found in the garage door, entry porch and front door. At the rear, a red cedar fence and a generous cedar deck – framed by a cedar soffit -- extends the interior living space out.

Wood is also carried through as a feature element of the house’s contemporary interior where white oak floors, stairs, handrails, kitchen cabinets, and millwork details, contrast with crisp white walls.

Using the existing local design guidelines for a traditional gabled roof and adapting them for the Active House yielded a multi-functional design that was the basis for a beautiful open plan home with an abundance of interior daylight, and superior environmental performance.

**A sauna like no other**

Nestled into the granite shore of a remote island near San Souci, Ontario, the Grotto is a sauna like no other. The Ontario Wood Award winning design by Partisan Projects of Toronto pushes the limits of what can be done with wood. The locally sourced Eastern White cedar interior is unfinished and mirrors the rock and water that surrounds it.

“We digitally scanned the site to produce a highly accurate 3D model to design from so that we could fine-tune the building and have it emerge from the site in precisely the right way,” said Partisan Projects’ Alexander Josephson.

The project not only pushed the limits of the material but also the tools. Designers went so far as rewriting the software code of CNC machines to achieve their vision. Partisan worked closely with fabricators to develop the process for achieving a stable panel with such complex geometry, while having all the grain oriented to align once carved.”

“Given that the island is water access only, the most efficient way to complete the project on time and within budget was to prefabricate it in Toronto and deliver it to the site,” Josephson said. “Delivery to the site required a police-escorted convoy from Toronto, a 60-000 ton crane, and 2 barges to deliver the prefab building to the site.”

Josephson says that the limits of the skilled craftsmen involved were also tested in the hand-assembling of the interior. “Thus the project is a synthesis of cutting edge software, CNC technology and old-world craftsmanship.””

**Design evokes rugged surroundings**

Victoria Linklater Memorial School, this year’s recipient of the Northern Ontario Excellence award, evokes the mythology and rugged natural surroundings of North Spirit Lake First Nation through the use of wood, creating an inspirational learning environment for students.

“The design for this school uses structural wood extensively, in combination with natural light from high levels along with the sensation you feel when you are walking with trees on either side or travelling along the edge of the shores of the lake.” Victor Kolynchuk of Architecture49 Inc. explained. Wood was used throughout the building; for structural systems, roof decking as well as the interior and exterior finishes. “It’s not isolated to one particular location,” Kolynchuk said.

“We tried to create mystery and wonder using natural light from high levels along with the sensation you feel when you are walking with trees on either side or travelling along the edge of the shores of the lake.”

The heart of the school is a central library and media centre which is illuminated from above. Glass walls between tall wood columns allow natural light to flow into adjacent rooms around the centre. Utilizing glass and wood in combination helped the firm achieve several goals. “Transparency of glass in combination with wood structure allows you to see different layers of wood from one room to another as you experience a forest. The central library and spaces around it are visually connected through the use of glass with wood showcased as structure and ceiling as a familiar, unifying element for the design,” Kolynchuk explained.
Historic stadium gets a facelift

The transformation of Ottawa’s historic Lansdowne Park with the addition of a vast wood canopy that envelops the stadium’s south stands received the accolade of this year’s Institutional/Commercial $10M Wood Design Award. The TD Place Stadium’s south stand ‘veil’ serves as the signature element of the project and stands out amongst the concrete of the stadium and greenery of the park. The undulating form is peeled back up at particular locations to allow for physical and visual connections between the stadium and the surrounding park, enabling visitors to exist in both places at once.

“This multisport complex is a true manifestation of a ‘stadium within a park’ concept, with the veil emerging organically from an engineered and landscaped berm like a row of trees rising within the woods,” said Walter Gaudet, Senior Vice President of Cannon Design.

Created with glue-laminated cedar, no two pieces are alike on the fluid form of the veil. The material was the ideal choice because it can be formed and shaped with bending and machine to create the desired contours.

The veil is made up of more than 750,000 parts and is 154 metres wide and 25.5 metres high at its tallest point. The total length of glulam used on this project is an impressive 12.54 kilometres. Left unfinished, the veil will slowly change to silvery sheen, avoiding long-term and costly maintenance.
Purlins, the secondary structural beams, look like tree branches extending from the 24 uniquely shaped primary vertical supports.

Community inclusion and design innovation

Architects, community stakeholders and government came together to realize a sustainable vision for Ottawa’s Richcraft Recreation Complex. The Wood WORKS! Green Building award winning project features a fitness facility, community spaces, a double gymnasium, an 8-lane 25 metre pool and targeted a LEED Gold certification from the outset.

Pilon Architecture Inc. principal Gerry Pilon says that a major wood component was the natural choice given strong sustainable design agenda presented by the City of Ottawa.

“One of the mandates of the project that the client had was to have a community focus group that we would consult with throughout the design. It was the community that told us that they really wanted wood,” Pilon said. “They didn’t just tell us that they wanted it to look and feel bright and comfortable they told us wood was a way of achieving our goals. That made it easy for us as a choice.”

As a community centre, attention was paid to creating an environment that ensured public inclusiveness. The familiarity and comfort of wood helped achieve a design with the feel of a “home with a big backyard” rather than an institutional building.

“The project is adjacent to an area called Trillium Woods which is a naturalized trail system and park zone that meanders through the city. The community wanted to make the project feel like it was part of that,” Pilon said. “Wood is a material that everyone can relate to, it exudes warmth and character. It’s a big part of our Canadian landscape and economy.”

On approach to the building, visitors are welcomed into an open, two-storey main lobby and central corridor space which features glue laminated timbers, a 64mm thick wood roof deck, and maple slat wall treatments on the second floor. All recreational activities in the building can be viewed from this central hub.

The thermal performance of the roof is increased by the 38mm and 64mm tongue and groove decking because of the inherent insulative properties of the wood.

In the gymnasium, a hybrid wood and steel roof system was devised to meet structural requirements. The 18.5 metre long Douglas fir beams break up the visuals of the exposed metal framing and roof deck. Below, on the gym floor, a sprung wood flooring system provides beautiful aesthetics and the high performance floor that athletes need. The energy absorbing and dissipating system provides that safest surface to play on.

“We have used maple as wall treatments for its acoustical properties within the pool area and the gym,” Pilon said.

Blending in with the surroundings

This year’s Multi-Unit Wood design award winner, Southdown Institute, takes advantage of its natural setting.

Terry Montgomery of Montgomery Sisam Architects believes that the most compelling feature of the building is the courtyard. “Not only does it embrace an existing stand of white pines, but it creates a contemplative focal point for all the activities in the building, emulating healing and renewal,” Montgomery said.

Located on a 6.38 acre site which is part of an important watershed, the 30,000 sq. ft. Southdown Institute was designed as a wood structure with prominent wood finishes to complement its natural surroundings.

The rural setting located just outside of the municipality offered challenges not normally associated with projects of this kind, such as the need for a private septic system and well water supply.

“It was important for us to create a sense of place which was intimately linked to natural surroundings and the wood materials helped us to forge this link. We used factory finished cedar siding for the cladding, brazilian walnut wood decking for the exterior deck, and for interior millwork we used wood from a reclaimed red oak tree which had to be removed to site the building.”

After being milled, dried, and treated, the red oak was transformed into the institute’s new entry doors as well as a featured wood panel wall in the entrance lobby.

One of the natural properties of wood is its ability to absorb and release moisture. This hygroscopic effect will result in a moderate level of humidity at all times and improved air quality. Cedar panels were also used within the sauna for the same reason.

“When you celebrate wood you encourage the continued use of a great renewable resource. Wood gives you design flexibility and you can do a lot with it. It’s those characteristics that make for special buildings and that why we do it,” Pilon said.
Mattawa mill has attempted to secure fibre for years

While tenure reform in Ontario moves along at a snail’s pace, more communities are hoping the Enhanced Sustainable Forest Licence (eSFL) model is adopted as a means to attract companies and investors with the ability to secure long term fibre supply.

Fort Frances’ current battle with tenure and mill closures has been highly publicized. Community leaders and members headed to Queen’s Park in early November to seek support from the provincial government to establish the Crossroute Forest as an eSFL and heat Resolute’s shuttered kraft mill to maintain the assets for prospective buyers.

“We have a mill in town that we feel should be operating,” Fort Frances Mayor, Roy Avis told The Working Forest.

“We understand there is a company interested in purchasing the mill, but the big problem is wood supply and it’s not the amount of wood, it’s the cost of the wood.”

The most pressing issue, Avis explained, has been the need to heat the mill over the winter to protect the assets for potential buyers. In a statement to CBC news, Resolute spokesperson Seth Kursman said Resolute has incurred a cost of $17.5 million to keep the mill ‘heated and lit’.

Resolute recently announced their intention to heat ‘critical areas’ of the mill while a new buyer is sought.

Negotiations between Resolute and an interested buyer, Wisconsin-based Expera Specialty Solutions, reportedly broke down due to the high costs of fibre from the Crossroute Forest which Resolute still controls a licence for.

Establishing the Crossroute Forest as an eSFL would help facilitate the sale of the mill Avis explained. “An eSFL would have a real impact on the seller and the buyer. You wouldn’t have the seller of the facility and the person that operates the forest all in the same,” Avis said, which has ultimately led to a conflict and a situation where a sale agreement cannot be made.

In a statement to CBC News, Kursman said Resolute is not against the notion of an eSFL. However, he stated that prices for fibre from the Crossroute Forest are consistent with others in Eastern Canada, including northwestern Ontario which tends to be a high-wood-cost region.

But the issues surrounding fibre supply and allocation are not limited to northwestern Ontario. In Mattawa, Ontario, complications in securing a reliable source of fibre has been ongoing for several years and led to one company declaring bankruptcy.

Jeff McGirr, Director of the Mattawa-Bonfield Economic Development Corporation (MBEDC), spoke to The Working Forest about the region’s long battle with securing long-term fibre allocation.

The Mattawa-Bonfield region was hit hard by the economic downturn and was hit harder when Tembec started downsizing the Mattawa sawmill and ultimately closed the mill in 2009, our corporation the MBEDC purchased it from Tembec to save this valuable infrastructure which included over 80,000 square feet of manufacturing indoor space.

With more than 500 jobs lost in the region, the MBEDC began negotiations with Tembec to protect the building and its assets which led the site being sold to MBEDC for $1 and the purchase of a dust collector system for $50,000.

In order to maintain the site, the MBEDC assumed a line credit of $500,000 to cover the costs with the main goal of creating employment opportunities through soliciting the mill to a suitable buyer.

“The MBEDC worked hard in dealings with over 20 different companies in various sectors,” McGirr explained.

In the fall of 2010, a new start-up company, BioSilta purchased the site for the development of new green energy biomass products such as wood pelletizing, green house produce and co-gen electricity. The project was anticipated to create 145 jobs.

The previous wood fibre supply that was attached to the mill was taken back by the Ministry of Northern Development Mines & Forestry and was placed in the competitive wood tenure system pool for re-submission of application.

McGirr explained that with applications submitted to the Ministry of Northern Development of Mines & Forestry for wood fibre harvesting rights, BioSilta was unable to sustain operations and by late fall of 2012 the company went into receivership.

Today, a new company, BioNorth Technology Group has acquired the mill with hopes of developing a range of related businesses but the issue of wood fibre still plagues the sawmill site.

While the company has not released any specific details, McGirr made it clear that the company required a minimum of 50,000 cubic metres of fibre annually, particularly softwood.

“We are still dealing with the same issues however instead of taking the political route we are now working hard towards securing fibre in a new way,” McGirr explained.

The new route includes: MBEDC becoming a shareholder and sitting on the board of directors of the local Nipissing SFL; working with stakeholders such as the Biomass Innovation Centre, Union of Ontario Indians , MP Jay Aspin and MPP Vic Fedeli and a group which includes the mayors of Bonfield, Calvin, Mattawa, Mattawan and Papineau-Cameron.

“We are exploring all opportunities for a directive; exploring ortunities to buy existing harvesters/ shareholders out, working to build business to business relationships between BioNorth and local companies – we are starting small, planning big and working towards bringing back the lost jobs that have devastated our region,” McGirr said.

With a direction in place for securing long term fibre supply, McGirr is hopeful this project will come to fruition. “It’s our priority to create jobs and to see that fibre supply is returned to the community, we have a multimillion dollar, job creating opportunity on our door step – now we just need all stakeholders to come together to make it happen,” he concluded.

Ontario mills struggle to acquire fibre allocations

BY LAUREN LEVAY

Mattawa-Bonfield Economic Development Corporation (MBEDC), spoke to The Working Forest about the region’s long battle with securing long-term fibre allocation.

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A long and diverse career takes forester out of the

Forester Myles Thorp started in the industry piling lumber at age 18

BY LAUREN LEVAY

With over 40 years in the forest industry, Myles Thorpe, currently in Yellowknife, Yukon has explored a variety of Canadian terrain while working various positions. While he admits there were challenging times, overall he has enjoyed a rewarding career in the sector.

“There was a lot of discouragement getting into this industry ten to fifteen years ago. Guys like me have been beat up by environmentalists who thought we were evil pillagers of the land. But I’ve enjoyed my career regardless. We are trained to think beyond a 4 or 5 year cycle. We look at the forest and its potential 100 years from now” Thorp commented.

Tomp began in the industry piling lumber at sawmills, loading box cars and bucking logs for one of the last river drives on the Fraser River in 1973. On one fateful day in March when he was bucking logs knee deep in mud, he watched an assistant ranger hop out of his Forest Service truck in clean clothes, hand his boss a slip of paper (inspection report) and drive away. “From that point on, nothing but junk came out of the bush. I was 18 years old standing in the mud wondering ‘what gave that guy the authority to do that and how come he didn’t have to stay in camp?’ I wanted that job – so that’s how I got into it,” Thorp laughed.

In the fall of 1973 Thorp attended the forest technologist program at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George, BC which kick started his career with BC’s Ministry of Forests.

Working as a resource officer with the Ministry of Forests in Fort Nelson, Thorp was responsible for developing ten year range management plans, working with biologists and guide outfitters on an extensive habitat and range burning program, planning and developing recreation sites and trails, participating in forest protection as a fire boss and eventually becoming the district planner and worked on the first integrated resource management timber supply analysis in the province.

After upgrading his education to become an RPF he became the operations manager of the Fort Nelson Forest District in total he spent 25 years in the district. After Thorp was promoted to operations manager he managed seventeen staff responsible for all aspects of forest management in the district.

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Myles Thorp at a natural regeneration project on a 1998 forest fire in the spring of 2011 in the Yukon.
mud and into the trees

“In the late 80’s and early 90’s, I realized we needed to do something around land use planning. The war in the woods on the coast and southern interior was in full swing. Most of the early land use planning programs focused on top down planning, I realized that for Fort Nelson, a bottom up grassroots approach would be best. Working with a group of stakeholders, we worked on creating one of the first land and resource management plans (LRMP) for the province. What we were trying to do was figure out what land was available to do a timber supply analysis. You couldn’t assume that every hectare was available for harvesting, there were other values that came in,” Thorp pointed out. As a result of this planning process the Fort Nelson Forest District land planning team was a key player in the development of the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area. “By the spring of 1995 we had a group of about 38 stakeholders, government agencies, town council including representatives from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers; sawmill industry; logging contractors; trapper associations; environmentalist; guide associations; First Nations; and union members; We met for five years and came up with a land use plan for the 8.9 million hectares in the Fort Nelson district,” Thorp said. “That’s why they are able to do a lot of the work they are doing in Fort Nelson, in both oil and gas and forestry. It’s a legacy I’m proud of,” Thorp continued. In 2002, an opportunity arose in the Yukon’s forest management branch. “At the time, the Federal government was devolving the responsibility of managing resources to the territorial government,” Thorp explained. Thorp was tasked with developing and completing Forest Resource Management Plans and was a key participant on the team that developed a new Forest Resources Act for the Yukon. The Federal government had managed Yukon’s forest under a regulation attached to the Lands Act...
CRIBE appoints new president and CEO

Former program manager Scott Wiebe assumes new role

CRIBE is positioning itself for the future by making some changes to its structure that will aid in its continued success.

As of December 1st Scott Wiebe will assume the role of Chief Executive Officer and President of CRIBE replacing Lorne Morrow who will be stepping down after a successful five year tenure. Although new to the role, Scott is not new to CRIBE having spent two years there as Program Manager before joining AV Terrace Bay as Business Analyst.

In October, Michael Willick accepted the position of Chairman of the Board of Directors replacing Frank Dottori who, due to his experience and understanding of the bio-economy, has provided excellent leadership to CRIBE since its inception. Frank will remain as a Director on the Board.

In addition, Thunder Bay’s Douglas Murray has joined the board in the role of Director for a 3 year term effective November 1 2014. Don Campbell and J.P. Gladu are stepping down as Directors after 6 years and 3 years respectively. Both provided invaluable service and leadership to the CRIBE board. “At this time I want to welcome the new members of the board and to thank current and departing members and CEO for their important work in furthering the bio-economy in northern Ontario,” said Mike Willick, Chairman of the CRIBE Board. “Lorne Morrow, Don Campbell and J.P. Gladu have provided unparalleled expertise and service to our shared vision for the forestry sector and the North”.

Scott Wiebe

A fibre recovery project from a pine plantation hit by Mountain Pine Beetle in 2011

The Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bio-Economy is a provincial initiative to transform the forest products industry in Northern Ontario. We’re an independent, not-for-profit research corporation, with $25 million in funding provided by the government of Ontario, that partners closely with other relevant organizations to provide support to direct and turn research results and innovative business opportunities into operational realities. CRIBE will help the bio-economy to play a central role in the metamorphosis of Northern Ontario’s future - creating jobs, opportunity and prosperity. ◊

A fibre recovery project from a pine plantation hit by Mountain Pine Beetle in 2011

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Keeping forestry history alive

The Powell River Forestry Museum reminds visitors of the town’s origins

BY LAUREN LEVAY

Logging and forestry museums across the country help keep forestry history alive and remind the public about the importance and ongoing evolution of this vibrant and longstanding industry. The Powell River Forestry Museum strives to remind locals and tourists of the origins of Powell River. Forestry has been one of the mainstays of the region long before Europeans arrived in the late 1800s. The prominence of forestry continues today, which was evident as Bert Finnamore, museum heritage manager, watched a tug boat carry a boom down to Vancouver as he spoke to The Working Forest over the telephone.

Keeping the history of forestry alive is the same as keeping the history of anything alive, Finnamore explained. “It gives people the sense of place, where they grew up. It connects you with the past. The slogan for our museum is ‘our past, our heritage, our museum’. That rings very true. If people don’t understand where they came from, they have no connection to preserving it. The role of the museum is like a conscience within the community that keeps the memory alive,” Finnamore said.

The museum itself was established in the early 1980s, partially in response to the loss of the Anderson sawmill. An old sawmill with equipment dating back to the 1870s, the Anderson sawmill was established by Swedish immigrant, Andy Anderson, who moved to BC in 1901. The sawmill operated until the 1960s when the lease the ran out. In 1976 the city purchased the land but not the equipment. The same year, the Burnaby Village Museum recognized its historical significance and purchased the sawmill.

“It was bought as a living museum, it was that good,” Finnamore commented. “But the kind of logging that would require such equipment never actually occurred in the Vancouver area because it was all hand logged. The Burnaby Village Museum has offered the sawmill back to us and we are working hard to get it back. We are putting together proposals to raise funds to acquire it.”

Finnamore explains that the equipment at the Anderson sawmill represents the first real industrial logging that occurred in the region. “There are steam donkeys and massive pulley systems for overhead transport of logs. The pulleys alone need a crane to lift. They are crushing the 3x4 foot pallets on which they sit in storage. If we can get this, the sawmill will come back full circle. It would look great on the side of the highway and would attract more visitors” Finnamore said.

“Prior to the establishment of the town, First Nation communities utilized the forest, especially Western Red Cedar for making just about everything including clothing, fish traps and nets, string, rope, boxes, serving dishes, implements, canoes, and massive poles and planks for longhouses. They used red cedar, which they called “the tree of life”, and made virtually everything with that single species of tree,” Finnamore said of the first form of forestry in the area. When the first European settlers arrived in the 1880s, Finnamore explained they intended to handlog the forest and utilize the land for agriculture. “They found out that the forests were so formidable because of the size of the trees that they couldn’t farm it. In fact they had to retool and scale up to the size of the trees. Cross cut saws had to be reengineered for the size of the tree. Then they had to move the tree from A to B which included oxen and skidways down to water, from where they could be boomed and hauled to a mill” he explained.

Commercial forestry took off in the region and the town was formed when the Powell River company set up a pulp and paper mill around 1910. Located near a huge forest resource, water falls for electricity, and a deep water ocean port providing access to world markets, the Town of Powell River flourished with the help of the forestry sector.

“Ever since, Power River Pulp and Paper has been a major employer in the town. It peaked in the 1950s with about 3000 workers. They are now down to about 450 employees. That doesn’t mean production is down though. Machines today are much more efficient, but the impact on the town as an employer is still substantial, although much less than the past,” Finnamore commented.

Currently the Forestry Museum is open from 12-4pm during July and August. “We would like to get the museum insulated so we can extend the season by two months on each end. We get very good visitation from tourists during those months when we are open, but if we extend the season we could double or triple the attendance,” Finnamore said.

While Finnamore explains the museum is ‘artifact heavy and technology poor’, he believes this enhances the overall experience. “You really get a better sense of the history which can’t be as effectively captured using modern technology.”

While a forest history museum may help other communities understand the importance of the industry, Finnamore explains Powell River is an interesting case.

“The Sunshine Coast Trail goes right by our doorstep access to world markets, the Town of Powell River set up a pulp and paper mill around 1910. Commercial forestry took off in the region and the town was formed when the Powell River company set up a pulp and paper mill around 1910. Located near a huge forest resource, water falls for electricity, and a deep water ocean port providing access to world markets, the Town of Powell River flourished with the help of the forestry sector.

“Ever since, Power River Pulp and Paper has been a major employer in the town. It peaked in the 1950s with about 3000 workers. They are now down to about 450 employees. That doesn’t mean production is down though. Machines today are much more efficient, but the impact on the town as an employer is still substantial, although much less than the past,” Finnamore commented.

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While a forest history museum may help other communities understand the importance of the industry, Finnamore explains Powell River is an interesting case.

“The Sunshine Coast Trail goes right by our doorstep and through many forest cutblocks. It seems to be more of a showcase on how all these groups can get along. Powell River is a good example of how we have reached an understanding between industry and community. The role of the museum is to assist in education about the balance between industry, jobs, and tourism. We still want the jobs of an industrial town, that’s where we came from, and if you take a walk along the Sunshine Coast Trail, you can still see some pristine wilderness that our visitors expect,” Finnamore concluded.

The Powell River Forestry Museum is located at Willingdon Beach Park in Powell River, B.C. on the Sunshine Coast overlooking the Strait of Georgia and Vancouver Island. The Museum is open daily from noon to 4:00pm July and August.
One of the many benefits of spending time with woodlotters is visiting the beautiful, and varied, communities across the province that they call home. Such was the case again when the Columbia Woodlot Association hosted the Annual General Meetings of the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations and the Woodlot Product Development Council in September. Tucked between the Rocky and Purcell mountain ranges, the milky, glacier-fed Kicking Horse and Columbia Rivers weaving through it, the city of Golden is as picturesque and rugged as they come, and an ideal venue for a gathering of woodlot operators. It’s home to some of the most well-established family operations in the program, as well as some thriving secondary industries that feed off the forests. Formal meetings for this year’s AGM were held in the historic Golden Civic Centre, a rustic timber frame building with vaulted ceilings and an abundance of character. Woodlotters were welcomed by committee chair Brian Amies, City Councillor Ron Oszust and Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Norm MacDonald. They spoke about the tremendous opportunities these gatherings provide, and the many benefits of sharing stories of successes and challenges from across the province so that the entire program can grow and thrive. A diverse cross-section of speakers was present to share their insights, including Matt Wealick, Chief Operations Officer of the Ts’elxwéyqw Tribe, who oversees a woodlot licensed by seven different First Nations tribes. He shared the parallels between Band management and managing a woodlot, and cited some of the hurdles they’ve had to clear with their operation, including protected species regulations, cultural heritage resource preservation, community watershed management and public interface, among other things. He, too, spoke of the excellent opportunity to meet with other woodlot operators and learn how they’ve solved similar problems. In a region so heavily concentrated with family woodlot operations, it was fitting that the “father” of the woodlot program was present to offer his thoughts. Dr. Peter Pearse, Professor Emeritus at UBC and Commissioner of the 1976 “Royal Commission on Forest Resources” - the proverbial hammer to the wedge for the nascent woodlot program - shared his observations on the state of forestry in BC. It was the Pearse Commission that recommended the woodlot model as a means to bring small parcels of private land under active forest management, and make Crown land available to entrepreneurs wanting to pursue silviculture and timber production, as a means of profit and preservation of public forests. He called on all stakeholders to critically examine the productivity of BC’s forests in comparison to other regions, such as Sweden, and give serious consideration to the notion of area-based tenures, which he feels are more conducive to long-term success than the current volume-based tenures. In between the sit-down sessions woodlotters were invited to

**BC woodlots AGM:**

Minister’s Award of Excellence

• Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson was on hand in Golden to present four woodlot licensees with awards for innovation and excellence in woodlot management at this year’s AGM.

• Clayton Foster of Vanderhoof, who received the $2,500 award for the North region, in recognition of his commitment to stewardship and innovative marketing practices.

• Fred and Jane Marshall of Boundary, who received the $2,500 award for the South region, for their leadership in the field and their long-time advocacy of the woodlot licensing program.

• Wolfram Wollenheitt and Sibylle Walkemeyer of Campbell River, who received the $2,500 award for the Coast region, along with a separate $2,500 provincial award in recognition of their commitment to long-term forest stewardship.

Federation members take in a woodlot tour in Golden, B.C. as part of the AGM
The rocky mountain way

notion of area-based tenures, which he feels are more conducive to long-term success than the current volume-based tenures.

In between the sit-down sessions woodlotters were invited to participate in several site tours – some flat-out fun like the float down the Columbia River, others more information-based.

Tours of Canadian Timberframe Homes and Louisiana-Pacific revealed some surprisingly intense and thriving operations that rely on the supply of quality timber from the region. With prefabricated homes going as far afield as New Hampshire and Kentucky, Canadian Timberframe is a zero-waste, highly efficient facility with 22 staff turning ready-to-assemble homes around in four to six weeks. At peak production they’re sourcing roughly 50,000 board feet per month, some of which comes from local woodlots.

Louisiana-Pacific’s Golden plant focuses on the production of some plywood, but primarily LVL, or laminated veneer lumber, a structural steel replacement that is gaining immense popularity in home and commercial construction. How popular? The Golden facility houses over 300 employees now, with hiring planned for this year to meet the demands of a plant operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They also rely on a steady supply of timber from local licensees: LVL is made from 100% Douglas fir, and with an appetite of 220,000 metres to meet production targets, their supply chain involves some logging, some purchasing, and some creative trading with mills that need the spruce, balsam and pine off Louisiana’s license.

It wouldn’t be an AGM without some hiking in the bush, of course. Randy Appleton and Irv Graham took visitors out to Woodlot #1819, a robust plot with thick underbrush that is intersected by power lines and mountain biking trails. A big blue busload also got to tour the Braisher Woodlot, #0447, one of the truly multi-generational woodlot operations. The Braisher family has been managing this land for 96 years, and the upcoming generation is already well-entrenched in forestry.

The concentration of intergenerational woodlots in this region is something of an anomaly, and was celebrated in the Stewardship video at this year’s meeting. Whether listening to the Braishers, Wolfendens, Wardwells, or Schiessers, the dedication to preserving the land for future generations rings out loud and clear. As the eldest Braisher, Ormond, put it, “We’re part of every bit of the ground. We’re all part of it.” And there is the essence of BC’s woodlot program.

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- Physically fit and able to accomplish road and cut block layout
- Strong use of GPS
- Computer literate - (Word, excel)
- Able to comfortably work independently within a team
- Desire to learn new skills

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