



IN



## ECONOMY

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### **Logger woes could topple B.C.'s softwood lumber industry**

By [Lauren Pullen](#); Anchor/Reporter Global News



It's one of B.C.'s biggest money makers. With record lumber prices, you might expect the softwood industry to be booming. Instead, it's going through a series of tough times, forcing an increasing number front-line loggers to throw in the towel. And as Lauren Pullen reports it has local logging associations worried about what the future will hold.

It's one of B.C.'s deep-rooted money makers, but there're some big concerns about the future of the [softwood lumber industry](#).

The United States' plan to implement a tariff on Canadian exporters, the bulk of which are in B.C., is just one blow to the already bruised sector.

READ MORE: [Donald Trump announces 20 per cent tariff on Canadian softwood lumber](#)



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B.C.'s logging associations are meeting in Vernon to talk about the outlook of the industry and they're specifically focusing on the struggles facing front-line contract workers.

"Over 90 per cent of timber harvesting in British Columbia is done by contractors. If they're not healthy and not financially viable, we've got a problem in this industry," Truck Logging Association (TLA) executive director David Elstone said.

"If we can't get the logs out in a sustainable fashion...we won't be getting the logs out."

Both the TLA and the Interior Logging Association (ILA) say contractors have quit the business.

"It's very hard for contractors," Wayne Lintott, ILA general manager said. "Some of the guys logging now are making the same rate as they were 10 to 15 years ago."

Lintott is spearheading the Interior Logging Association's 59th Annual Conference and Trade Show, which will take place in Vernon this weekend. It displays the latest technology and equipment for the industry.

For the first time in years, Lintott said there are "sold" stickers on some of the highest priced equipment before the trade show has even opened, as contractors are trying to turn around as much lumber as they can in the the most cost-effective way.

"Over the last five to 10 years or so, contractors have gone through tough times, have not been able to rebound and repair our balance sheets," Elstone said. "It leaves us in a more tenuous situation."

"There's businesses on the line, businesses that are waiting for change, hoping for change."

The logging associations hope that change comes from the provincial government, which has launched a Contractor Sustainability Review to try and figure out why the front-line workers are floundering.

It's too soon to say if there will be any impact on jobs, but Clarence Baggett, who ran his own logging business for nearly 50 years, said he's a prime example of the deteriorating workforce.



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Baggett said he had no choice but to close his contracting business because he just wasn't bringing in enough money.

Logging associations are questioning why the industry is in such a tough spot, considering Canada is reporting record lumber prices.

They're hoping the province's review will provide some answers. There's no timeline on when it will be complete.

Logging associations warn the entire forest industry is at risk if the situation doesn't turn around.

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