

27. Assist Creation of the Independent Contractors and Businesses of British Columbia (ICBA) 1975

This was a first and only time that I became politically involved as a result of labor restrictive legislation brought in by the NDP government at that time. I have already outlined the struggles that ViL had with the construction unions, but it was in 1974 that the NDP passed a Public Works Fair Employment Act as their solution to labor issues in the Construction Field.

The brief synopsis was that only Unionized Workers would be legally permitted to work on all government funded projects. This included Schools, hospitals, Roads for example.

At that time there were 100,000 Workers who had an Interprovincial Trades Ticket of which 33,000 were certified in their respective unions. This was a huge victory for the BC Yukon Trades Council that had convinced the then Minister of Labor, Bill King that this made sense.

Of course, the majority of the Contractors in the province employed all the non-union Workers where, the 67,000, in number were employed. This did not make any common sense to me. When I discussed it with my fellow Contractors, it did not make any sense to them as well. So, it followed that I called around and about 70 Contractors assembled in the basement of the Crown point Hotel in the spring of 1974, and all agreed that something should be done about only 33,000 taxpayers being the only ones who could benefit for the tax dollars paid in by over 2 million B.C. residents.

A committee was chosen of Gordon Laarz and I from Trail, Nick Plotnikoff and Norm Husband from Creston and Joe Pagurut from Cranbrook to represent the gathered group and go to meet with Labor Minister King. Off to Victoria where we met with the Right to Work Association of Victoria before and after our meeting with Labor Minister King.

The two-hour meeting revealed that Mr. King was not aware of the devastating effect of his legislation and encouraged us to form an Association that would represent those Contractors that employ the majority of the Workers and so ICBA can thank the labor minister for this action albeit the BC Yukon Trades Council was not too pleased.

The Founding CEO for ICBA was Ralph Purdy and we enjoyed each other very much. I served as Founding President for the first two (2) years and then on the Board for a total of eight (8) years.

My experience with Verigin Industries Limited (ViL) was that the crew that was employed was mostly permanent as the projects undertaken by ViL provided employment almost year-round. It was beneficial to the company that our crews were 'company men' in that they provide company public relations as part of their employment so that 'word of mouth' would be the best advertising for being considered on any forthcoming project.

To this objective, ViL provided work clothes, boots, etc., and a fringe benefit package of dental, sick leave, life insurance as well as other items in the package. This worked well for ViL as the wives appreciated the security that this provided. So, when ICBA became a reality, I pursued that a portable fringe benefit package be provided amongst the 'open shop' firms so that when an employee would need to move from one firm to another, that his fringe benefit package could move with him.

In its infancy, ICBA could not find an underwriter for the Open shop sector. Brokers would pitch the members and the Association itself, but no one was interested in providing coverage. There was strong ICBA support to compete with the \$2.44 / hr check off that Union Contractors were forced to pay by their agreements with the construction unions.

ICBA Staff were able to secure an all-in cost at 36 cents / hour. ICBA now has 3,300 members and clients, and 110,000 Canadians in 7 provinces rely on these benefit plans. ICBA is now one of the largest group benefit firms in Western Canada.

Go to my blog for more information as this is a lengthy and detailed history that is being recorded in a book sponsored and published by the ICBA under the authorship of Kevin Hanson, LLB. Interviews have been held with Marilyn and I and many of the ICBA Founders in late summer 2017. The book should be published within the next 6 months or so.

Also, see my blog at [https://Independent Contractors and Businesses Association after 40 years](https://IndependentContractorsandBusinessesAssociationafter40years.com).

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