

2006 ABCFP

Membership Survey Results

2006 Members Survey - Qualitative Results

ABC FP members seem to care a great deal about their association. Over 1,000 members took the time to fill out the rather extensive membership and readership survey this past summer. That is a response rate of just over 20% -- incredibly high for this type of survey.

Results are listed in descending order with the themes arising most frequently listed at the top. Quotes appearing in the grey boxes are taken directly from member's comments in the survey.

Question 17 - Assuming you have children, would you recommend they pursue a career in forestry?

Sixty percent of the people who responded said they would not encourage their children to pursue a career in forestry. The three most common reasons were:

1. The long-term instability of the sector due to its cyclical nature, corporate mergers and downsizing, global market pressures, the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the impacts of climate change.

"Far too volatile. My 26 year career has been nothing but a continual series of layoffs, financial setbacks and being forced to move around the province like a travelling gypsy caravan. I have been laid off far too many jobs, and forced to lose money from moving, poor housing markets, etc. only to see someone else hired for the same position three months later because the employer finally realized that they actually needed the position."

"The high cost of energy, the high dollar, the uncertain market relationship with the US, the mountain pine beetle outbreak, the fact that BC has the highest paid forestry labour force in the world and countries like Russia are coming on line with a largely untapped wood supply make a bleak future for the industry in BC."

2. Pay is too low considering the level of education and training required, the stress and salaries in other sectors.

"Although it is a challenging, fulfilling and diverse career with many opportunities under the umbrella of forestry, remuneration is not on par with other fields that are equally as challenging (mining, oil and gas, aboriginal issues management)."

"Strictly from a financial perspective, the cost of attaining professional status from formal education through to technical experience and professional registration outweighs the rewards of financial success. After six years of education and over five years of experience, a doctor would make at least \$150,000/year. A logger makes over \$ 72,000. The average starting salary for an RPF is \$55,000. That salary is well below today's inflation rate and cost of living."

3. Lack of employment opportunities and job mobility.

"It has becoming harder and harder to make a decent income, pay seems to be dropping as consultants must underbid each other to get work. Forest companies are hiring foresters as temp employees rather than full-time to avoid paying benefits."

“Too many limitations as far as career advancement opportunities. Forestry limits where you can work unlike other professions such as engineering, nursing, teaching, law which can be practised in any location in the country or the city.”

Some of the other reasons given for discouraging their children from pursuing a career in forestry were:

- Forestry is a poorly understood and respected profession.
- Forest sector is in decline.
- Lack of environmental stewardship in forest management.
- Bureaucracy is eroding and taking the enjoyment out of the practice of forestry.
- Poor lifestyle including: being forced to live in remote areas, not enough work in the outdoors and poor working conditions.
- Children have already made another career choice.
- Too much risk and liability.
- Children’s perception is that forestry is not a progressive industry.

Forty percent of respondents said they would encourage their children to pursue careers in forestry. The three most common reasons were:

1. Forestry is an interesting, challenging and dynamic profession.

“I believe it is a satisfying career with potential in many varied areas of daily tasks, interfaces and knowledge. For example, one’s career could evolve towards business, biology, engineering, research, administration etc.”

“The diversity in the forest industry provides opportunities to peak interests, stimulate the mind and satisfy the needs for all types of people with different career objectives. From working on the ground level in the field to working in an office. The forest industry has opportunities to meet everyone’s needs.”

2. There will be many career opportunities to explore because of the competitive advantage of BC’s forest sector, agroforestry, the aging workforce, the lack of students entering post-secondary forestry programs and the current shortage of people working in the profession.

“Despite the short-term (20 years) problems that we are going to have due to the beetle epidemic, British Columbia has a great potential to compete on the world market with second-growth trees due to the huge forested area and our nearness to the largest market in the world.”

“Retirements and lack of succession in combination with growing stakeholders demands will soon culminate in an acute shortage of forest professionals.”

3. The lifestyle and work-life balance offered by the profession.

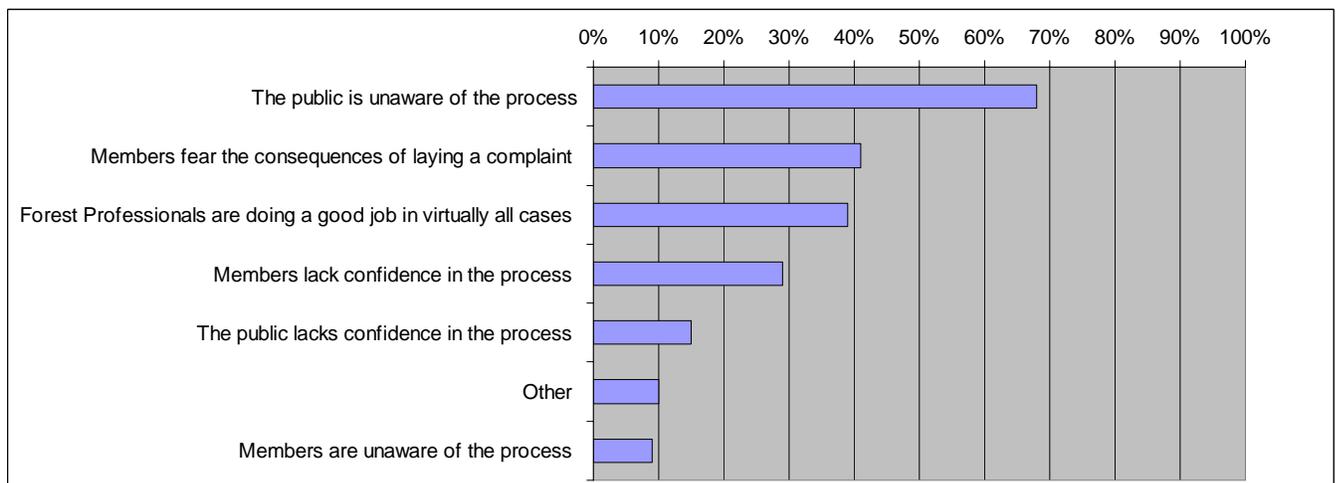
“Great lifestyle, balance of office and field (although too much field at first and not enough later in career), for those who want a challenging career balancing many objectives while maximizing the benefits from the forests for the public.”

Respondents also said that they would encourage their children to choose careers in forestry because:

- It is an opportunity to make a real difference in environmental management.
- Pay is good.
- It is an honourable profession.
- Forestry is a sustainable industry.
- There are great people working in forestry.
- They are proud of their profession.
- Their experience in the profession has been positive.
- Forestry is a family tradition.

Question 20: The low number of complaints against ABCFP members indicates that:

Chart 1: Percentage of respondents who felt the reasons listed below account for the small number of complaints received by the ABCFP.



The majority of respondents (68%) felt that the reason the ABCFP does not receive many complaints is because the public is unaware of the complaint resolution process. Only 9% felt the small number of complaints is because members are unaware of the process.

Ten percent of the respondents cited different reasons than those listed above for the small number of complaints received by the ABCFP including:

- Apathy.
- Process requires too much time and effort.
- Lack of support from the association.
- Conflict between corporate pressures and professional ethics.
- Members haven't embraced the idea of accountability and professional reliance.
- Process too bureaucratic and time consuming.
- Rules are not tough enough.
- A little of all of the reasons listed.
- Difficult to find a black and white case.
- The public is better informed

- Issues are dealt with as they come up.
- ABCFP has no power to pursue complaints.
- Issues resolve themselves.
- Not the best way to solve problems.
- Not enough impact on the individual.
- Difficult to define benchmarks for sound forest management.

Question 28 - What thoughts do you have on the ABCFP council and how it could be more effective?

The top three suggestions pertained to advocacy, act enforcement and member outreach.

1. The majority responses were suggestions that council reconsider its advocacy role. Most people wanted the ABCFP to increase its advocacy in the areas of:

- Public education.
- Environmentally sustainable forest policy.
- Visibility in the media.

“Increase level of advocacy. Develop regional councils of members and the public to provide forums for discussion, education, and problem-solving. Don't shy away from being proactive.”

“Need to engage the media, to educate the public about who we are, and what we do. Most people still think we are loggers, or handmaidens of the logging industry, or just have no idea. Many are unaware of the extent or the importance of the forest resource in BC, and the importance of forestry to their economic future. They don't know we are caring, competent professionals working in their interests. They don't know we are on par with doctors, lawyers, engineers. CMAs and other professions have advertised to elevate their profession, why haven't we?”

“Advocate the practice of professional forestry over the economic gain of government. To create an Act that places the economic gain of government above all else is not the practice of professional forestry. It is difficult to explain to the public what is going on today in regards to forestry - when economic gain is paramount over all other values, be it wildlife, soils, recreation, visuals etc.”

“Show the public that we really do care and are willing to stand up and say so. We can present alternative views but we need to become the first number the media all over BC call when they have questions.”

“Find RPF in each "Region" (old forest regions) who would be effective communicators for the ABCFP on ABCFP issues. Pay them a "consulting fee" to act as liaison. The fee would be negotiated. The benefit would be a more direct connection between professionals and their association and provide more support.

A smaller number of people felt that council should stay away from advocacy in certain areas like policy. There was a suggestion to create a separate organization to advocate for the profession.

“An advocacy organization should be separated (arm's length or completely separate) from the registration body. The registration body should simply take care of registration, and the

advocacy organization should be an optional membership.”

“I believe the council could do more work with the public but I don't think they should ever take on an advocate role with regards to policy because of the diversity of their members and they would definitely alienate some groups.”

2. Some respondents didn't feel that the discipline and complaint resolution processes were tough enough.

“In this era of increased professional reliance, the ABCFP must make their complaint and discipline process more robust and accessible. If they don't, the reliance on professionals is not achievable.”

“The ABCFP could be more effective by making it easier to go down the disciplinary route. FSPs are poorly written, consultation with stakeholders is not being done adequately (except FN), wildlife is not being managed appropriately and nothing is being done by the ABCFP to deal with this. More complaints would come into the ABCFP on these types of issues if there was an appetite by the ABCFP to peruse them or if the resolution process was less clunky, slow and useless.”

“Work with Forest Service Compliance and Enforcement staff to develop a performance monitoring system for professionals.”

“The ABCFP needs to be more proactive in raising the day to day standards of practice of members instead of relying on a reactive complaint process that seems designed to avoid the outcome of censure altogether pitting one professional against another.”

Some people said they wanted council to improve member outreach by making a better effort to connect with members living in remote areas of the province, in their work environments.

“As a member in an isolated and remote location, it is next to impossible for me to attend any of the functions put on by the ABCFP. I do not fault the ABCFP for this, but believe the association should try to visit every forest district (for lack of a better way to identify area) once every 2 years or so. These visits should be well advertised and each member in the district encouraged to go perhaps even by contacting the member by phone to ensure they come. This personal contact could focus a meeting agenda on topics relevant to the Forest Professionals in the district and would most likely get more people to the meeting. Truth is, most of us never hear from the ABCFP except to pay our yearly fee and read the monthly magazine.”

“Visit the membership in their working environments. See and hear them in real life. Hear the challenges, see the successes. Support the membership accordingly.”

“Need to reach the members more. When you don't see or hear from them you feel disconnected and not inclined to be involved.”

Some of the other suggestions offered for how council could improve its effectiveness were:

- Develop a stronger voice in government on forest policy, stewardship and enforcement issues.
- Look at the continuing competency program and consider:
 - Simplifying the process.
 - Making the process more relevant to practising members,

- Instituting mandatory continuing competency credits.
 - Bringing in peer reviewers from other parts of the world
- Review the enrolment process and consider:
 - Expanding the scope to include other disciplines.
 - Increasing the length of the articling period.
 - Making admission requirements for RFTs tougher.
 - Instituting a policy exam for members every few years.
- Reevaluate the scope of practice for RFTs.
- Support the professional independence of members when they are faced with conflicts between their employers and professional practice.
- Support continuing education by;
 - Providing more workshops on issues like FRPA.
 - Providing training with a technical focus.
 - Encouraging employers to support the professional development of members.
 - Providing distance education opportunities.
- Develop forest stewardship practice standards and a vision for BC's forests.
- Be more accountable to the targets and timelines set.
- Support the hiring of professionals in the forest sector.
- Relocate the ABCFP offices outside of the Lower Mainland
- Place more emphasis on professional reliance than advocacy.
- Put the public interest first and consider having a public advisory council.
- Change the council composition with suggestions to both increase and reduce industry representation.
- Increase the length of the president's term and consider making this a paid position.
- Hold the AGM outside of the Lower Mainland.
- Employ people with more industry experience, reduce the number of employees and hire more experienced front-line staff.
- Improve communications with members by increasing response time and asking for more feedback.
- Reduce membership fees.
- Develop partnerships with other forestry bodies.
- Cultivate more of a global forestry perspective.
- Make better use of volunteers.
- Develop a strong vision.
- Hire a First Nations liaison.

Question 49 - Please give us any general comments you may have.

The top three comments related to the survey itself, a need for the ABCFP to be more supportive of the professional independence of members and suggestions for improving the continuing competency program.

1. The majority of comments were about the survey. Many people said they were glad that we solicited their opinions in this survey.

"Communication is key and I appreciate that you have attempted to gather information in this

way via an emailed questionnaire, we are all very busy and this medium is effective, and therefore based on % response I would think that our membership is going to agree with more electronic forms of communicating.”

Some of the respondents felt that the survey was too long, too repetitive and that some of the questions were not applicable or were leading.

“Too many of the same questions worded in different ways in the survey. I lost my enthusiasm half way through. This took me 35 minutes (not the promised 20 minutes).”

“The absolute nature of some questions appears to skew responses. e.g. "The public perceives forest professionals to be ethical at all times". If "at all times" was omitted, I would answer "somewhat agree" but as written, I have to disagree. I do not understand the value of such a long, detailed survey. I won't take the time to do a similar survey in the future.”

Some suggestions to improve the survey were to make it shorter and only focus on a few key areas, include a comment box and an “I don't know,” option for all of the questions.

“Questions 21-26 do not allow for an "I don't know" response which assumes I should have all the background to answer detailed questions. That is simply not so. Thanks for the survey.”

“It would be nice to have a comment field beside every selectable box in the next survey. The questions being asked are important to the development of the association and the profession and so it's important to have the opportunity to rationalize our responses, so the association understands where they are coming from.”

2. Another common theme that arose was the need for the ABCFP to be more proactive in enforcing legislation. This involves supporting the professional independence of members when conflicts between professional practice and the wishes of their employer arise. Some of the respondents said they feared complaints were not being made because members are afraid of making any waves.

“So many foresters are caught between a rock and a hard place when it comes to their employer and what good forestry practice is - whether industrial, government or consulting.”

“Be more proactive regarding government policy, Acts and regulations. Make sure professional forestry comes before economic gain. Obviously economic gain is important but it should not be paramount over all other forest values. I believe our reputation is declining in the eyes of the public. Learn from the past - to give the majority of decision making power to industry has not in the past nor will it in the future ensure good forest stewardship.”

“Need a more confidential process for whistle blowers. Also need to be able to engage in disciplinary proceedings with Agrologists, many of whom are doing forestry work and passing themselves off as forest professionals.”

“The Association has to ensure that its members take their professional accountability responsibilities seriously - that is, utilize the complaints/discipline processes when appropriate - or face the potential loss of its status as a self-governing profession.”

3. A number of respondents also made suggestions and general comments about the Continuing Competency Program including:
- Institute a system to validate and certify member competency.
 - Make the current program less onerous.
 - Make practice reviews mandatory and more frequent.
 - Make questions more applicable to their situation.
 - Rethink the mandatory requirement of self-assessment.

“Competency in a documented concrete system will be a large future challenge. A systematic way to evaluate and certify competency in specific areas of practice is very important in my opinion. I see us going like the Engineers e.g. RPF silviculture, harvesting specific specializations attached to the practising RPF that are verified and documented by the association so clients are assured of competence in that area of practice.”

“Don't treat members like kids. Streamline competency requirements with guidelines and an element of trust. Most professionals have integrity. Those who don't will become apparent.”

“The practice of forestry in this province is too diverse to expect a "one size fits all" armature set of generalized questions regarding competency. If silviculturalists, or any other specialist group, see the need for a competency program, then they, as a group, should develop a program which is appropriate for their specialized field. I am involved in the marine transportation of logs. Most of the questions I am required to answer, before you accept my money each year, make no sense relative to my employment.”

Additional comments made were:

- For the ABCFP to increase its advocacy.
- Another person suggested that the profile of the profession could be raised by adding forest professionals to the list of those able to sign passports.
- For the ABCFP to reduce member fees and the cost of the AGM.
- That the registration exam was too difficult.
- Consider holding the exam at a different time of the year. A couple people said that fall was their busiest time at work.
- Concerns that entrance standard were too lax.
- A few people said they were in support of the staff changes at the ABCFP.
- Want the ABCFP to offer more professional development opportunities.
- Concern over the association's inaction over the beetle epidemic.
- The ABCFP shouldn't recruit into a sector that is in a downturn.
- Want more professional development opportunities.
- Encourages the ABCFP to facilitate member involvement in the oil and gas sector.
- ABCFP should consider enrolling more foreign trained professionals.

Comments about RFTs:

- Concerns about allowing techs to join the ABCFP
- More precisely define the scope of practice for RFTs.
- Some RFTs felt like they were forced into membership
- Concern about RFTs being awarded registration certificates without writing the exam.

Comments about the website:

- Include more legislation.
- Replace the ABCFP-Post with an online forum.

2006 Members Survey - Quantitative Results

There are a number of ways of looking at the data we collected. We have included a list of the top 10 and bottom 10 measures of how the association is performing in the eyes of members. This list remains virtually unchanged from the one provided to council at your last meeting.

The top ten are:

- **BC Forest Professional** magazine 71%
- Electronic communications (e.g. website, **The Increment** e-newsletter) 70%
- Annual general meeting 60%
- Communication with members 58%
- Performance of staff 51%
- Responding to members' enquiries in a timely manner 45%
- Admission/registration 45%
- Financial management 42%
- Print communications (e.g. annual report) 41%
- Being accessible and responding to members 39%

The bottom ten are:

- Consulting with and listening to members 12%
- *Foresters Act* compliance and enforcement 9%
- Advocacy regarding professional matters (e.g. advancing professional reliance) 8%
- Networks of Forest Professionals 2%
- Member benefits (e.g. affinity programs) 2%
- Relations with interest groups -7%
- Advocacy regarding forest stewardship matters (e.g. higher level planning, fires, inventory) -11%
- Relations with employer groups -16%
- Achieving public awareness of the profession -24%
- Visibility in the media -44%

These lists leave out some information in order to simplify the data. I have examined the same performance factors and presented them in a different way. Below you will find a listing of the factors based on how respondents felt about them (favourable, unfavourable or neutral). Anything interesting about the factors is noted.

The percentage after each factor is the percentage of respondents who ranked the factor favourably or unfavourably. Because I have removed the respondents who selected the more neutral level (3) or 'don't know,' unless otherwise stated, you can't determine the opposite rating from the number provided. For example, if a factor was rated 30% favourable, this simply means that 30% of the respondents ranked it positively, it doesn't mean that 70% ranked it unfavourably.

Factors more respondents ranked favourably (4 or 5) than unfavourably (1 or 2)

How well is the ABCFP performing the following areas:

- BC Forest Professional magazine **74%**
- Electronic communications (website, the Increment) **74%**

- Communication with members **65%**
- Annual General Meeting **49%**
- Being accessible and responding to members **47%**. A concern is the 14% of respondents who selected 'don't know.' Does this mean we haven't had any contact at all with 14% of our members?
- Integration of forest technologists **47%**
- Admissions/registration **45%**
- Services for members **45%**
- Print communications (annual report) **45%**
- Governance of the ABCFP **40%**
- Responding to members' enquiries in a timely manner **37%**. There were a large number of 'don't know' responses (39%) that could be seen as troubling.
- Continuing competency program **35%**
- Registration exam **35%**
- Performance of staff **34%**. Again, a high number (44%) of respondents selected 'don't know.'
- Equitable treatment of members **33%**
- Professional development **33%**
- Advocacy regarding professional matters **33%**
- Financial management **33%** with a large 40% number of 'don't know' responses.
- Performance of council **33%**
- Consulting with an listening to members **27%**
- Strategic planning **26%**
- *Foresters Act* compliance and enforcement **26%**
- Relations with other resource professions **24%**. There is a large proportion of respondents (39%) who selected 'don't know' and this probably reflects that this factor isn't meaningful to the majority of forest professionals.
- Committee operations and support **23%**. The large number (44%) of 'don't know' responses is probably related to the fact that only 19% of respondents volunteered for the association.
- Utilization of volunteers **22%**. This factor also had a high number (50%) of 'don't know' responses, which are probably related to the fact that only 19% of respondents volunteer.
- Complain resolution and discipline **21%**
- Practice Advisory Service **20%**

Factors more respondents ranked unfavourably (1 or 2) than favourably (4 or 5)

How well is the ABCFP performing the following areas:

- Visibility in the media **49%**
- Achieving public awareness of the profession **40%**. This is an improvement over the 2004 survey when 52% ranked it unfavourably.
- Advocacy regarding forest stewardship matters **29%**
- Relations with employer groups **21%**
- Relations with interest groups **18%**. There was a high number of respondents (43%) who selected 'don't know.'

Factors ranked neutrally (equal favourable and unfavourable results)

How well is the ABCFP performing the following areas:

- Network of Forest Professionals **18%** with 42% of respondents selecting 'don't know.' This relates to the fact that 93% of respondents say they are not involved in an NFP.
- Member benefits (affinity program) **17%**. This factor was almost neutral with **15%** of respondents ranking it unfavourably and 42% selecting 'don't know.'

Members were asked to select how much they agree with a number of statements. Agreement was determined by members ranking a statement as a 4 or 5, while disagreement was determined by a ranking of 1 or 2. The more neutral 3 responses were left out unless noted.

Statements respondents agreed with:

- I am aware of and adhere to the code of ethics **95%**
- I am aware of and adhere to the standards of professional practice **91%**
- The ABCFP should support members who feel professionally compromised by their employers **90%**
- The association should take a more active role in educating the public about good forest stewardship **81%**
- The association should take a more active role in advocating for forest policies that improve forest stewardship **77%**
- Forestry is an ethical profession **73%**
- The ABCFP code of ethics adequately addresses contemporary ethical issues facing the profession **68%**
- My employer respects my need to exercise my professional independence when necessary **67%**
- Faced with competing interests, I would put the public interest ahead of other interests **67%**
- My employer provides me with the support I need to maintain my competence through professional development **67%**
- I have never been asked to compromise my professional integrity **66%**
- Pressures from my employer or community have never compromised my ability to practise good forest stewardship **66%**
- Restricting the practice of forestry to forest professionals helps ensure proper stewardship of BC forest lands **63%**
- The current minimum two-year work experience requirement for enrolees is adequate **63%**
- Council should be empowered to take positions on forest policy issues on behalf of the members **61%**
- I support the self-assessment element of the continuing competency program **61%**
- Forest professionals are well qualified to meet today's forestry challenges **61%**
- If I believed a colleague was incompetent or unprofessional and we could not resolve the matter between ourselves, I would report it to the ABCFP **59%**
- The registration exam is an appropriate final step leading to registration **58%**
- All things considered, the quality of forest resources management in BC today is satisfactory **58%**
- I support the continuing competency program **57%**
- Forest professionals are as professional as doctors, lawyers and engineers **57%**
- In general, members can be relied upon to act ethically at all times **55%**
- Forest management could be improved through greater reliance on professional judgment **54%**

- I have few concerns about the competence of other members **53%**
- ABCFP programs adequately ensure members are competent upon registration **52%**
- Overall the ABCFP is doing a good job of fulfilling its mandate **52%**
- I support the scope of practice for Registered Forest Technologists **52%**
- The ABCFP is doing a good job of maintaining its independence from employer groups **50%**
- I support the voluntary peer review element of the continuing competency program **50%**
- I have never encountered discrimination in my career **50%**
- Members do a good job of balancing social, economic and environmental values **49%**
- The ABCFP is doing a better job overall that it was five years ago **47%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to ensure that those practising professional forestry are in fact forest professionals with the ABCFP **46%**
- I believe the public considers members to be competent **44%**
- ABCFP programs adequately ensure members are competent post-registration **44%**
- The ABCFP is doing a good job of promoting and supporting its members' professional independence **44%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to ensure that jobs involving the practice of professional forestry are filled by RPFs or RFTs as appropriate **39%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to address public policy related roles, rights and responsibilities for forest professionals **37%**
- The complaint resolution process adequately contributes to protection of the public interest **34%**. This statement was almost neutral as 31% of respondents disagreed with it.
- The ABCFP serves its members equally well regardless of where they reside **34%**. There were a large number of 3 responses 42%.
- Compared to five years ago, the quality of forest resources management in BC is improving **34%**
- The complaint process is fair and effective **32%**
- The ABCFP is moving in the right direction in regards to voluntary certification **30%**. Again, there was a large number 51% of the more neutral 3 responses.
- The ABCFP is doing enough to address First Nations forest management capacity building **28%**
- The ABCFP does enough to address discrimination against members in their careers **28%**

Statements respondents did not agree with:

- The ABCFP is doing enough to educate the public about forest policy issues **53%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to educate the public about the profession of forestry **52%**
- The public holds forest professionals in high regard **42%**
- The public perceives forest professionals to be ethical at all times **42%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to address public policy issues related to forest stewardship **41%**
- The ABCFP is doing enough to address national and international forestry issues **29%**

Statements that an equal (or almost equal) number of respondents ranked as agreed and disagreed:

- The complain process ensures forest professionals behave and practise appropriately
- I would belong to the ABCFP even if it weren't mandatory to practise professional forestry in BC