

# NEWS RELEASE

## BC Safety Ombudsman Appointed

**Vancouver, B.C.** – (March 16, 2006) – Roger Harris, former Skeena MLA and Minister of State for Forestry Operations, has been appointed Forest Safety Ombudsman by the BC Forest Safety Council. The position will enhance safety in B.C.'s forest industry as an impartial, confidential agent for change.

In appointing an Ombudsman, the B.C. Forest Safety Council is responding to concerns of workers, independent contractors and small firms who were hesitant to raise safety issues, since doing so might affect their employment or business. With the Forest Safety Ombudsman, safety issues and concerns can be raised with the confidence that they will be listened to and acted on.

As Ombudsman, Harris will provide a forum to hear about safety issues and solutions from those who work in forestry. "I hope to create an environment where people can talk to each other to air concerns and find solutions," he says.

Roger Harris started work in the forest sector at 18 as a logging camp dishwasher and worked his way up through the harvesting sector. He has been a board member for Local 1-71 of the IWA and an employee relations supervisor for MacMillan Bloedel.

In 1985, he started his own phase logging contract operation and fuel distribution business before entering provincial politics in 2001, serving as B.C. Forestry Operations minister. Harris became a pensioned worker after nearly severing his right hand in a chain saw accident while working as a faller 20 years ago.

"Roger Harris has had the full range of work experiences in B.C.'s forest industry from working in logging camps, working for the union, as a manager in a large forest company, having his own logging contracting company and as the government minister responsible forestry operations," says Jim Shepherd, CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council. "He is well respected throughout the industry and will be a major instrument for positive change."

Harris's appointment will begin in early April of this year and the office will be fully functional by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

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