



BC Forest Safety

Safety is **good** business

2022 OMBUDSPERSON ANNUAL REPORT

**EVERY FORESTRY WORKER
GOES HOME SAFE - EVERY DAY**



2022 BC Forest Safety Ombudsperson Annual Report



This marks the 16th report of the BC Forest Safety Ombudsperson. As we approach the end of 2023, I will be concluding my term in this role. Although this report primarily focuses on the office's activities throughout 2022, I also want to take this moment to reflect on the progress and transformations that have occurred within the forest sector during my tenure as Ombudsperson.

While there is still much to be accomplished on improving safety outcomes for BC forest workers, their families and within BC communities, the journey of the forest industry since 2006 has been dynamically evolving with positive changes.

I never would have predicted that cultural shifts in the forest sector could have occurred in such a short window of time. We have moved from an era of intimidation, competitive interests, ad hoc training standards with a focus on financial metrics to one where there are now clear industry-wide standards for training, supervision, certification for many forestry occupations and an environment where people feel free to raise concerns. The level of professionalism in this industry has grown exponentially. Now, companies must obtain SAFE Certification, a requirement that has instilled a high level of professionalism that is shown in the performance of BC Forestry workers and companies, with results measured in very real human terms and outcomes.

The Ombudsperson's office has also evolved over the past 18 years. In the beginning, the majority of inquiries were primarily received from individual workers and contractors and required mediation or facilitation services at a micro-level. But as safety shifted into the operational culture of industry, the office's involvement expanded to the institutional level. This shift involved reporting and reviewing industry-wide concerns that impacted all stakeholders involved.

The 2007 review "Not Out of the Woods" specifically reported on the need for certification, training and recruitment within our industry. The "SAFE Companies" report was used to build a flagship initiative of the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) and provide guidance on how to improve upon the SAFE Companies process. The "Khaira Incident" report brought attention to a tragic situation and emphasized the necessity for the province to implement pre-qualification measures for companies. This approach aims to distinguish the competent and responsible performers from those, like Khaira.

Three essential reports, "No Longer the Road Less Travelled", "Helicopter Emergency Medical Services" and "Phase Congestion" are still referenced even today by governments, media, other professional associations and the public. These documents are still highly regarded for their valuable insights and recommendations. Their impact goes beyond improving safety outcomes for just forestry workers and their families; as they continue to be implemented, their benefits extend to the general public as well.

But my observations are not meant to imply that as an industry, the forest sector has reached the finish line - in this space there is no finish line - just continual improvement.

I have enjoyed my 17 years in the role of Ombudsperson and the contribution our office has made; but none of that would have been possible without the assistance, support and engagement of each participant and individual who make up the BCFSC. Their contributions have been instrumental in achieving these accomplishments.

Year in Review

2022 continued to see the same trends experienced in 2021 and 2020. Enquiries, concerns and questions continue to be the main focus from both the HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Services) and Resource Road Reports. The HEMS enquiries were tied specifically to several provincial initiatives centered on improving the delivery of rural health care. The main concern lies with the evacuation procedures and the initial transportation and point of entry for injured workers receiving emergency treatment at healthcare facilities. The office also responded to specific requests to support the expansion of the TEAAM (Technical Evacuation Advanced Aero Medical) initiative in and around the Prince George area.

In 2022, motor vehicle incidents on resource roads continued to be an area of interest and highlighted several of the recommendations of the 2007 Resource Road Report. Bamfield Road in particular continues to be a point of concern and our office remained actively engaged in supporting initiatives designed to improve the ongoing condition and maintenance of Bamfield Road.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased and large gatherings resumed again, the office received several enquiries about Regional Safety Conferences and concerns around them only being revived in more populated areas or on Vancouver Island.

Enquiries relating to Faller and Falling Supervision training and certification were also received by the office in 2022. Access to these courses were of significant interest and our office worked collaboratively with BCFSC to address and respond to those queries.

We also received WorkSafeBC enquiries mainly related to claims-related issues. As per protocol, these were forwarded directly to WorkSafeBC.



Outreach

This year our office attended both COFI and the TLA conventions and also participated in the BC Rural Linked Sectors events and meetings. The BC Rural Linked Sectors is an organization comprised of rural health medical practitioners and administrators with representatives from provincial and local governments. Their focus is to improve rural healthcare services and outcomes in rural and remote communities.

The Ombudsperson office also participated and supported the Felling Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC) by attending quarterly meetings.

Preview of 2023

2023 will be my final year in the position. The office will continue to participate in the various association AGM/Conventions as well as participate in FTAC. At the end of the year, a comprehensive review of the Ombudsperson office and role will be conducted to ensure that as events, activities, legislation and/or regulations evolve, the Ombudsperson Office also adapts and remains relevant to service the industry and help contribute to improving the safety outcomes in the forest sector. I will be assisting the BCFSC Executive in formulating a transition strategy for the office to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition process.

About the BC Forest Safety Council

The BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) is the health and safety association for forest harvesting, sawmills, and pellet manufacturing in BC. The BCFSC works with forest sector employers, workers, unions, contractors and provincial agencies to support implementing changes necessary to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries in the forest sector.

Telephone (toll free): 1-877-741-1060

Website: www.bcforestsafesafe.org Email: info@bcforestsafesafe.org



Roger Harris

About the BC Forest Safety Ombudsperson

The BC Forest Safety Ombudsperson is part of the BC Forest Safety Council and is mandated to investigate safety concerns and provide recommendations for improvement.

The Office of the Forest Safety Ombudsperson provides a safe, confidential environment for the discussion of issues and facilitates an impartial and timely resolution of concerns.

Contact

Telephone (toll free): 1-877-577-7766

Fax: 1-250-741-1068

Mailing Address:

Office of the Forest Safety
Ombudsperson
BC Forest Safety Council
Unit 8C - 2220 Bowen Road
Nanaimo, BC V9S 1H0

Email: harris@bcforestsafesafe.org

Website:

[www.bcforestsafesafe.org/
Ombudsperson.html](http://www.bcforestsafesafe.org/Ombudsperson.html)

The Forest Safety Ombudsperson's Office will endeavour to return all contacts within five (5) working days.



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