

philosophy of the office

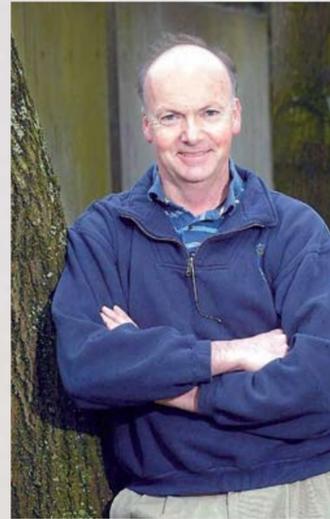
Although too early to tell whether the recommendations from this second report will result in concrete changes, the report itself has been well received and we are optimistic that at least some of its recommendations will be implemented in the weeks and months to come, making travel on these roads less dangerous.

Raising awareness, fostering communication

As important as the reports themselves is the process involved. There isn't a corner of this province I haven't visited. And in every city, town and village, I've been able to raise awareness of this office and get to know the people. I've come away from these visits all too aware of the fact that lives and careers are at stake, which makes what this office does all the more urgent.

Industry more aware of safety responsibility

Making the forest industry a safe industry—where injuries and deaths are the exception rather than the rule—is a long-term prospect requiring the collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders who haven't always trusted one another. That said, there's been some real progress made. The industry itself is more aware of its responsibility when it comes to safety and the subject is now on the public's radar.



Our job is to keep the industry pointed in the right direction by:

- > facilitating fair, timely solutions to disputes;
- > identifying major industry issues and addressing them through objective analyses; and,
- > providing support for systems change.

R.H.

ROGER HARRIS
OMBUDSMAN

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Roger Harris
BC Forest Safety Ombudsman

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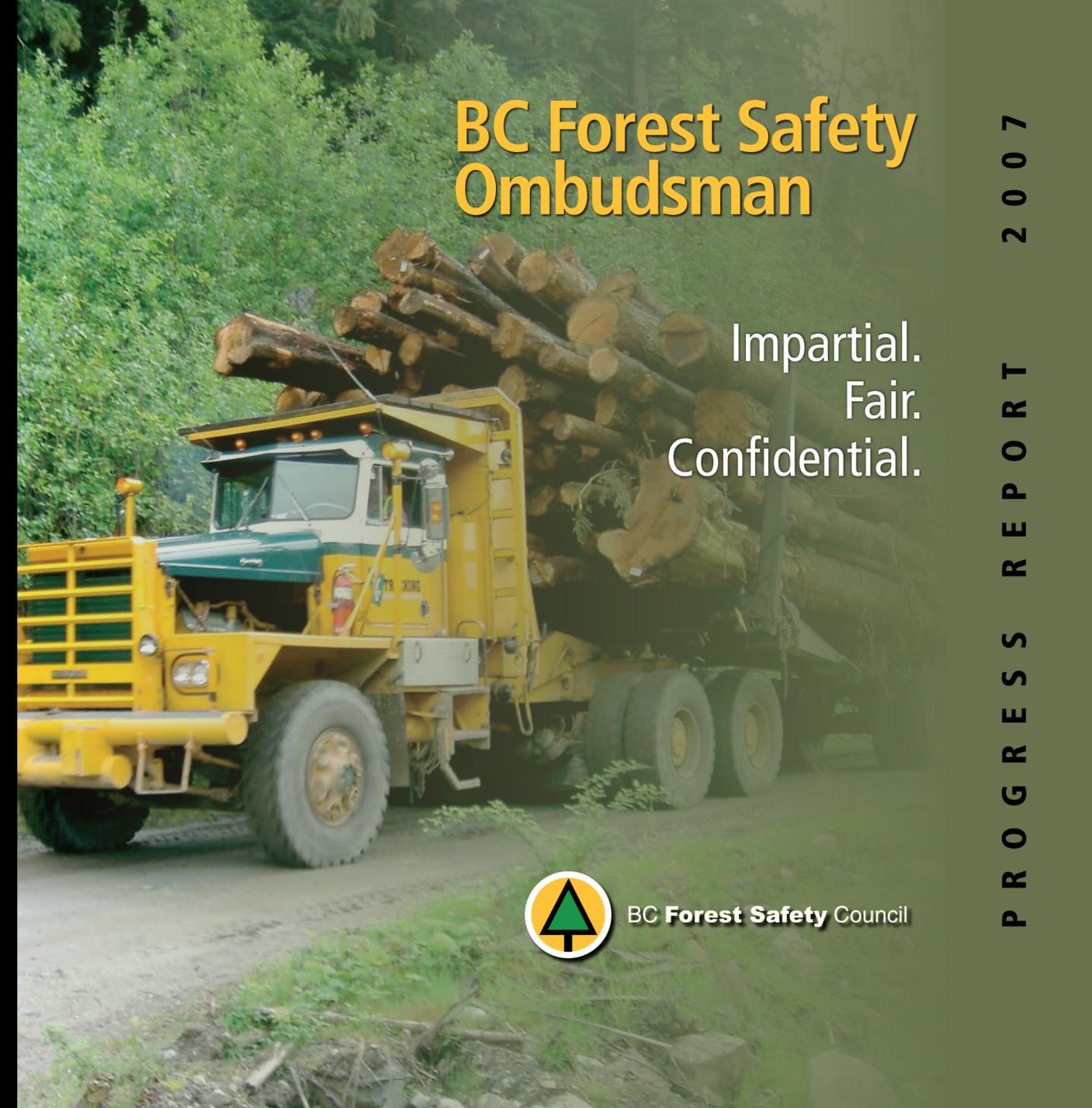
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PROGRESS REPORT 2007

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PROGRESS REPORT 2007

Reflections on the role and

FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

When this office was created, our mandate was to mediate safety-related disputes between the various sectors of the forest industry, while protecting the individuals and organizations involved in those disputes. The idea was that, being an independent, impartial body, we could chip away at one of the tougher barriers to safety on the job: the culture of silence generated by an economic imbalance between partners.

Addressing the issues through objective analyses

While our mandate hasn't changed, our approach to fulfilling it has evolved. We've moved away from a strictly accounting method of inquiries to a process we believe has broader, deeper impact—objective analyses.

Early on, it became clear that behind the specific disputes were broader, more complex issues requiring an industry-wide response. When we conducted our first full-scale review on retention, training and certification, we found a crisis situation—a “train wreck waiting to happen,” one manager called it. Several of the recommendations made in the resulting document, called Not Out of the Woods, have now been implemented and these, as well as the recommendations from our second review on resource roads, are discussed in detail in the inside pages of this report.

The latter report, titled No Longer the Road Less Travelled, was completed in early 2008, in response to a significant number of inquiries voicing concerns about the design, construction, maintenance, cycle-time, management and regulation of these roads.

Guiding principles

1. Impartiality in all respects, both in practice and in perception of practice;
2. Fair and timely process;
3. Confidentiality for companies and workers in order to identify real safety problems and find workable solutions to these safety problems; and,
4. Coordination of action given the number of other organizations involved in safety in BC. In particular, the Ombudsman will work closely with WorkSafeBC, given its mandate to enhance safety in BC.

Year in review

OUR SECOND YEAR

Our second year of operation was more gratifying than our first in that we saw concrete gains made as a result of the efforts of all stakeholders in the forest sector, including our office.

First report leads to concrete changes

In particular, the volume of calls we received on recruitment, training and certification, and on resource road safety led to two full-scale reviews of those issues. Some of the recommendations in our first report on training and certification have now been implemented. These are discussed in more detail later in this report, but I will say here that this is very good news, not only to this office, but also to the industry itself, which will be a little safer as a result.

Second full-scale report released

We released our second report on resource roads in late January of 2008 and we're pleased to see that the Ministry of Forests and Range will be including our recommendations in its Forest Safety Action Plans. We're confident our recommendations will help the



Ministry in its efforts to enhance worker safety in this province.

Raising awareness through targeted media campaigns

The media exposure received by the two reports far exceeded our expectations. Based on a detailed media analysis conducted by Peak Communicators, it appears the reports themselves along with our efforts to raise forest workplace safety resonated within the media and the public.

Getting to know our stakeholders

Over the last two years, I've visited every region of the province and spoken to countless forest workers, contractors, companies and organizations. This continued to be a priority last year, and will remain high on the priority list in the upcoming months. After all, we can't reasonably expect to be the voice for fair solutions without knowing for whom we speak.

We're making a difference...

...one report at a time

The first major issue we took on in a full-scale review was retention, training and certification. What we found was disturbing: a looming labour shortage, coupled with a significant drop in company-led training. We made 15 recommendations to industry, the BC Forest Safety Council, WorkSafeBC and various levels of government and we're pleased to report that some of these have already been implemented:

- > We recommended the Auditor General (AG), in his report on forest industry safety, look at WorkSafeBC's mandate around worker disability management. While the AG didn't directly address this issue, his report did recommend a more integrated and collaborative approach among agencies, regulators and industry.
- > Of the five recommendations aimed at Faller Certification, we've seen steady progress, with the introduction of a Faller Supervisor Training program, a certification renewal requirement and processes that ensure ongoing program review.
- > Progress has been made on the issue of resource road safety. The BC Trucking Association is working with ICBC and the Forest Safety Council to develop criteria for upgrading Class 1 Licenses, and Forestry TruckSafe is developing standard measures for off-highway truck driver certification.

- > The BC Forest Safety Council has taken a first step toward developing industry definitions, endorsement models and curriculum for delivering the industry's non-certified trades by starting to identify the job categories that require attention.

We still have some way to go of course. A stakeholder session on the subject of stress has yet to take place. And we're disappointed that the provincial government hasn't yet responded to our recommendation that it take a larger, more participatory role in new faller training programs.

In our second full-scale review, on resource road safety, we made 17 recommendations to government, the BC Forest Safety Council and WorkSafeBC. Among them, that:

- > The provincial government establish a new highway designation for resource roads serving as primary or secondary access for communities;
- > Commercial vehicles traveling on these roads be subject to the same compliance and enforcement as those traveling on BC's regular highways;
- > Road Safety Management Groups responsible for managing all activities on the resource roads be created;
- > The BC Forest Safety Council develop an Industrial Drivers Endorsement Program for operators of light-service industrial vehicles operating on resource roads; and,
- > WorkSafeBC incorporate individual cycle-time reporting as required documentation for log-haul truck drivers.

Although we can't predict whether the recommendations from this second report will result in concrete changes, the report itself has been well received. At the very least, the process of review has established a framework for real discussion on this critical subject.

...one inquiry at a time

The pie chart below shows the number of inquiries received by our office in 2007 and how they break down by issue.

This past year, BC Timber Sales was especially helpful in responding to inquiries on BC's road systems. As a result of such inquiries, they oversaw structural changes on three separate road systems in the Interior, as well as modification to a dry-land sort in the northwest.

We received a number of calls regarding WorkSafeBC's appeal process for claim adjudication. While we don't get directly involved with claims adjudication, we do refer inquiries through the proper appeal channels. We referred five inquiries to the WorkSafeBC Ombudsman and are now watching closely the outcome of those decisions.

We had one inquiry involving a bridge collapse, which is still being investigated, and two inquiries regarding contractor/sub-contractor relations that remain outstanding.

We've found that some of the issues raised through inquiries to our office don't lend themselves to the mediation process, and we're currently reviewing how we can more effectively manage these.

Our office is now receiving an increasing number of general calls from individuals, the public, municipal leaders and media outlets on a range of safety related issues. This is a positive sign. It means there's a growing awareness of our office within the public as an appropriate venue for raising forest safety concerns.

The table below gives some indication of the types of inquiries we had during 2007/08. Both of our reviews dealt with issues pertaining to resource roads, faller programs and training.

ISSUES RAISED	INQUIRIES	ACTIVE
Resource Roads	14	2
WorkSafeBC (WSBC)	7	9
Faller Program	3	0
Contractor Relationships	1	5
Training	4	0
General	15	2
TOTAL	44	18



What's next?

Ultimately, we'd like to see a situation where there's no need for this office, where there's a forum for open discussion and dialogue within the industry itself. But we recognize this is something that will have to evolve over time, because it requires a fundamental shift in the way people think and the way corporate relationships are structured.

Still, we're moving in the right direction. And now that we have the office in full operation and the internal processes and systems in place, we can turn our attention more fully outward.

We'll continue to refine the administration of the office and our caseload to ensure timely responses.

We'll continue to take calls from those who need an impartial third-party and be a voice for fair solutions on their behalf.

I will once again make it a priority to get out of this office, to travel to communities all across this province, to raise awareness of what we do and how we can work with our stakeholders to make the industry safer.

Lastly, we'll continue to analyze the critical issues and concerns that are voiced to this office, so as to keep forest safety top of mind within the industry and the public. We are planning at least one full-scale report in the coming year, much like the two we've already done on training and certification and BC's resource roads. We won't know what the focus is until we've fully analyzed our caseload and received full input from our stakeholders.

While we have a busy time ahead of us, we're confident we'll be able to build on the momentum of the last two years and continue to move forward.