

FIRESTORM 2003 – PROVINCIAL REVIEW

Public Meetings

Cranbrook

Part A

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to the 9th day of public hearing of Firestorm 2003. I am Gary Filmon and I am doing the review of the fires of this past summer in British Columbia. The process is intended to be one that's open and inclusive but wide-ranging, although I do have eight specific terms of reference, they basically fall into the areas of planning, preparation, response and recovery and so we cover the whole gamut of issues that have to do with the terrible forest fires of British Columbia experienced this summer.

This is not an exercise in finding scapegoats or pointing fingers; this is an exercise in listening to the people who were directly involved with the fires of 2003. People who have had personal experiences and knowledge that they want to share with the review process; and looking at things that were done well and also looking to see where we can improve on things that weren't done as well as they should have been. It's a process from my part of listening, learning, trying to understand all of the various elements that went into the firestorm and all of the things that people experienced. Learning from that, arriving at conclusions and making recommendations for the future, because the future is what it is all about.

I know from looking at forecasts that this was early on in a dry cycle. Weather patterns probably go in seven to ten year cycles. We are probably only three years into a dry cycle so that we know that we are looking forward to more hot, dry and probably very difficult weather for forest fire conditions. We know from the fact that California had their terrible fires after the ones that were experienced here that it is not an isolated incident.

World wide, there are very unusual weather conditions that are leading to this kind of weather circumstance that makes it very, very possible that we will be getting additional forest fires in the near term. And so I accepted a very short-term proposition to get a report in by the middle of February. I know it is going to be a very tight deadline, but the fact is that the government wants to be able to get any recommendations, whether they be for financial changes or whether they be for policy or process changes, or legislative changes – the government wants to be in position to make changes before the next forest fire season. And so that is why we are dealing with a relatively short timeline to get this report in.

After the public hearing process is over, I will be hearing from people in the forest industry, from the insurance industry, from tourism industry, wild life people, various departments and agencies of various levels of government who were involved this summer with the hope of getting everybody's input to the process – all the stakeholders, all those who have an interest in doing everything possible to make sure that we are prepared for the next time.

And so with that, I will just say thank you for coming today and I look forward to your participation. We have a considerable number of people who have registered to be able to make a presentation. We will be sitting basically from one until nine with a break for dinner. We will be a little bit flexible to make sure that all those who are here in the afternoon and want to be heard will be heard before we break for dinner, but we will be back at 7:00 at night for the evening portion.

If you have not registered and would like to do so, Don Zadrovick(?) is at the back and he has a list there that he is keeping and if you would like to add your name to that list, then you would be most welcome to do so.

So, thank you again and we will move to the first presenter, Peter Davidson.

I guess Peter Davidson isn't here yet so we will find out then if Don Mazur is here.

Okay.

How about Gundula Brigl.

Okay.

Ken Gauthier.

Susan Bond.

You are number one, Susan!

SB Do you mind if I take a second to get a glass of water?

GF Oh, no, please go ahead. Okay, why don't we do it that way since you were first on the list, Peter – so – I kept my remarks short because I was hopeful we could get an early start because we have a lot of people who want to present.

Okay, I think we are set up for you. So ... Susan, are you prepared? Great! You are just like my wife, you are better organized than I am.

I'm sorry, I didn't introduce Jim Sproul who is one of the administrators of the commission and he is here with me today to listen and take notes.

Susan Bond:

Peter will get copies – well I think everyone knows now that my name is Susan Bond. My colleague, Peter Moody is just giving you each a map that will accompany my brief, just to give you a sense of where it is I am talking about. I am here to represent the Kimberley Nature Park Society. Our brief today will focus on preventing interface wild fires. Specifically we want to address three of your terms of reference. Those three terms of reference are the roles and responsibilities of all levels of government to plan interface fires, risk assessment processes to determine the potential for interface fires, and mitigation strategies to reduce the potential for interface fires.

We aren't going to get into all the details today of interface fire risk, fire behaviour, fuel loading, or the economic, socio and environmental consequences of interrupting historic fire regimes. We expect by the time you have finished you will have learned most of what there is to know about those topics.

The timing of your review however coincided with the Nature Park Society's efforts to develop a fire management plan for the nature park. We recognized our responsibility to speak to the provincial government through you about what we are learning.

The Nature Park Society is a non-profit volunteer organization with 350 members. That is about 5% of Kimberley's total population of 6,500. We are the official stewards of the Kimberly Nature Park which is an 800 hectare parcel of largely undeveloped Crown land located entirely within city boundaries and adjacent to a number of neighbourhoods. Our stewardship role is recognized and encouraged by the City of Kimberly which holds the provincial licence of occupation over the area. Both the society and the city recognize that the Nature Park is an important community asset. It provides valuable wild life habitat and provides semi-wilderness recreational and educational opportunities for citizens and tourists. It is used year-round and contributes in a significant way to Kimberley's outdoor lifestyle and tourism dependent economy.

As I mentioned, the nature park measures just over 800 hectares. Kimberly itself is nearly 6,000 hectares of which 4,400 are forested. In other words, close to 75% of the city of Kimberly is covered with trees, either continuously or in stands interspersed with ski runs, golf courses, grasslands, roadways and the like. The city's residential neighbourhoods and commercial and industrial areas occupy the remaining 25%. We don't have a linear figure measuring the forest urban interface in the city but given the ratio of forested to non-forested land it's got to be a pretty big number.

Kimberly was lucky in 2003 but we have skirted fire disaster often enough in the past. In 1985 for instance the city was on evacuation alert for several

weeks when a wild fire burned in the watershed to the west of us. As recently as 2001 a wild fire ignited within half a kilometer of the downtown core. Fortunately quick action by the Protection Branch, air tankers nipped that one in the bud. But it was pretty darn close.

The Nature Park Society five-year park management plan which has already been adopted by the city and is now awaiting approval by Land and Water B.C., includes a commitment to develop a fire management plan that protects the community from potential wild fire while maintaining the conservation, recreation, and educational values of the area. We hope to develop this plan in 2003/04 in conjunction with the Kimberly fire department and provincial agencies. We have already done some of our homework. We have toured the nature park with British Columbia Fire Ecologist Bob Grey and Parks Canada Vegetation Management Specialist Rob Walker. We have sponsored a public presentation by Bob Grey. We have discussed fire management with the Ministry of Forests Protection Branch staff and we liaise on an on-going basis with the Kimberly fire department.

Our goal is to manage the fire risk in and around the nature park and if possible restore some of the areas threatened biodiversity.

As we researched the issues around fire management we realized that a plan for the nature park developed and implemented in isolation from the surrounding community would be akin to building a bridge that stops in mid-span. The park itself interfaces with the built-up parts of the community, all of which interfaces with Crown and private land outside municipal boundaries.

It became clear that any plan for the park must be an integral part of a fire management plan for the city as a whole. It also became evident that any community-based plan must work in conjunction with landscape level plans developed by regional districts or the province.

We are learning that resources do exist to help us develop a community based fire management plan, but those resources are widely scattered and we're spending a lot of time and some of our very limited funds discovering and accessing them. It is our understanding that very few municipalities or regional districts in this province have truly comprehensive fire management plans that address the primary interface issues of risk assessment and mitigation strategy. We are learning why.

It is an intensive exercise that doesn't produce instant results and has relatively high short term costs. And it's not very sexy so it doesn't grab public attention except in a year such as this has been when lives are lost, homes and businesses are destroyed, thousands are evacuated and the cost to taxpayers runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Once a fire management plan is in place a community needs the wherewithal to implement it. In the case of private land that may require public education programs to encourage property owners to create defensible space around their homes. In the case of Crown land it means having procedures and permissions in place that allow recommended treatments to be carried out on the ground. Even the best plan isn't worth a nickel if it can't be implemented because of provincial legislative and administrative obstacles to harvesting, thinning or burning trees. At the most fundamental level who is going to take the initiative. Who is going to do the work. Who is going to pay.

The Kimberly Nature Park Society advocates a coordinated action that provides central support from the province while maintaining local control. I think that is the key here – central support / local control. The society wants to work in partnership with the city of Kimberly to develop and implement a fire management plan to the extent that our personnel and financial resources allow. We expect private land owners, park neighbours such as the ski and golf resort, local forest companies, and Kimberly home owners to join the partnership because each of us has to assume responsibility and take action. But in order to move forward we need assistance from the province, as well as an assurance that the plan we develop can be implemented in such a way that meets local needs and fits with local values.

Having said all of that, we would like to make the following recommendations:

1. The province must establish a permanent fuel management program at the landscape stand and interface levels.
2. The province must provide a planning template and long term funding for communities to create, implement and maintain fire management plans. The template should be adaptable to each community's particular ecological and infrastructure circumstances and it should identify all existing resources and how to access them.
3. Fire management plans should include assessment of interface threats such as fuel build up, identification of values most in need of protection such as private property and parks and mitigation measures such as prescriptions to restore specific stands to historic structure and fire smart strategies for individual property owners or tenure holders. Plans should define responsibilities and include implementation and maintenance schedules based on identified priority areas and measurable goals. I should point out here that maintenance is probably as important as implementation. The trees don't stop growing.
4. The local community must have the final say in the details of the plan to ensure that important values such as view scapes, recreation and water supply are not compromised unnecessarily.
5. Where ever possible the plan must be used to restore habitat and biodiversity.

6. As measures to reduce fuels in an environmentally sensitive manner may not be profitable in the short term, but will have long term economic benefits. The government should subsidize fuel reduction efforts either directly through funding, possibly via stumpage revenues or the insurance premium tax or indirectly by providing access to expertise and resources. And finally,
7. The province should consider legislating special municipal interface fire zones that permit effective mitigation plans to be carried out in the manner specified by the plan and at least cost.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. It is our sincere hope that your recommendations to the provincial government will reflect the breadth of views presented to you and that the government will respond by carrying out your recommendations in a timely way. No doubt some recommended action may be taken in time for the 2004 fire season, but much of what needs to be done to make British Columbia fire smart requires focused, comprehensive and cooperative action over many years. The economic, social and environmental consequences of doing too little too late are just too great.

Thanks very much and if you do have questions, I'll try to answer them.

GF Thank you very much, Susan and I do have questions. So thank you for your presentation.

The whole issue of prescribed burns is one in which there appears to be a very significant consensus – this is my ninth day and whether the presentations come from environmentalists, whether they come from forestry people, whether they come from First Nations people, wild life people; the consensus seems to be there that prescribed burning and fuel reduction is something that needs to be done. The difficulty is that there are a whole lot of interests out there that in the past have not seemed to be supportive of it – in fact have opposed it – and I sense that some environmentalists have opposed it. I sense that people with health concerns, respiratory illnesses, and children with lung problems, tourism people and even parks regulations have prevented forestry people from doing what forestry people have always believed to be the best way of managing the forests. So, how do we get around that.

SB Well, I think part of it is public education and I think it is also, part of it is recognizing that prescribed burning is not the only tool that we can use in either ecosystem restoration or fuel management – whatever the goal is in the exercise. Prescribed burning certainly has its place, but there – we can harvest, we can thin, there are lots and lots of issues around each of those. What do we do with the trees we harvest if they are small diameter – is there a market for them. Hand thinning is pretty labour intensive and expensive and prescribed burning doesn't fit in every instance. So in the nature park for instance there are probably three biogeoclimatic zones within the Kimberly

Nature Park, one of which is the dry Ponderosa Pine or fire maintained ecosystem area. And we could probably do a limited sort of burn there, without too much danger, but it's only a small portion of the park – it's only a small portion of the city of Kimberly.

You know there are not a lot of places where a safe prescribed burn could be carried out. I am just saying this off the top of my head and I am no expert. But prescribed burning is getting a lot of attention because it makes a lot of smoke and flame and is controversial, but I don't think we should concentrate or we shouldn't focus on prescribed burning as the only tool that we have.

GF Okay, I'll readily admit I'm not an expert either, so I'm just asking questions from others, so ...

SB Yes, I think public education has to be used so that people understand that, yeah, smoke in the air isn't really good, but you know we have many, many, many days, weeks, very, very, very smoky air in this valley this summer, even for those of us who were many miles from the fires. A prescribed burn is never going to produce that kind of smoke for that length of time.

GF Yes, even the issue of thinning. It is my impression, I could be wrong and I will find out more because I intend to meet with the people from, for instance the parks area of government, there is a sense that people want parks to be maintained in a pristine form and that means no cutting, no logging, and no thinning. Now, I stand to be corrected on that and maybe they will correct me and say that they are not opposed to that. But there appears to be in certain instances that we have already examined, like the Okanagan Mountain Park area that things were just left as they were and people didn't go in and touch it for years.

SB I think you may find, Mr. Filmon, now that you have come to East Kootenay that we are a little different here than people in the rest of the province. We have had an eco system restoration program in the Rocky Mountain Trench for six years that includes prescribed burning. B.C. Parks in the East Kootenay have thinned, actually cut trees in parks here because they know that what they are doing is recreating what nature intended.

Certainly among naturalists or environmentalists there is not much argument that we have to manipulate nature now because we have been manipulating it for so long already that – so it may be that in East Kootenay, in the Rocky Mountain Trench, you might not find such hardened opinions as you have encountered elsewhere.

GF One of the other prohibitions is that if people are allowed to selectively log for the purposes of creating a better eco system that the money can't be used then to fund the parks. I mean recommendations have been made that you could take the money and actually have it pay for the work that you are doing

so that it would be a very minimal if not no cost to government, but there is a sense that there are quite a few interests that are opposed to that. Do you have any problem with that?

SB Using stumpage revenue from trees taken from parks to fund parks?

GF Right.

SB I don't have a problem with that. I think some of the stumpage revenue could be set aside to help communities implement fire management plans and do the work on the ground. So – I think what it boils down to as a province we have to recognize that we are up against some pretty serious situations here and if we are going to find ways to overcome obstacles and objections, then we are going to have to be creative, do what's possible as well as what is desirable.

GF Okay, when you talk about fire management plans, you know I met initially, just to get a sense of the information available from Ministry of Forests, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Provincial Emergency Program and so on and each of them gave me a binder about four inches thick with loads of information and things like Fire Smart are all there. There are brochures that are available to people to tell them how they can fireproof their own dwellings. Tell them what materials they can use; tell them what they should be doing to protect around the perimeter and so on. I don't think that you need to reinvent the wheel. It's all there. The point is, why don't people do it.

SB Yes, that's a good question. But with reference to all these resources being available and being out there, they are and there has been quite a bit done in the rural areas to address interface issues in the Thompson Okanagan and in the Kootenays. A Kootenay interface steering committee was established in 1994 and I think they are still at it, but I live out in the country myself and I talk to my neighbours about some of the things that we have done on our property and sometimes you get a nod – yeah – right – I'm doing the same thing, and other times you just get blank – you know. So it is an ongoing process. A lot of the effort to date has been directed at rural property owners and what we are considering now in our brief is a program that is concentrated more within the municipality, within the community. Because in a place like Kimberly where 75% of it is forested, there is just as much interface in town as there is out in the boonies.

So I think what we are suggesting is that the provincial government by establishing this planning template, just create a bibliography of resources if nothing else. I mean we have been going through this exercise for over a year now, and granted we are all volunteers we aren't working at it full time and we

...

(Tape over)

GF You refer here to even the best plan isn't worth a nickel for instance if it can't be implemented because of provincial legislative and administrative obstacles to harvesting, thinning or burning trees. What are the provincial legislative and administrative obstacles to doing that?

SB Well I suppose you could sum it up by saying that the only value that is really recognized when it comes to trees is merchantable value. You know that governs our legislation, our operating procedures in the woods, and sometimes we have to recognize that a tree's commercial value isn't – shouldn't be the first consideration. So I mean, I don't really know, I am not competent to discuss legislation or administrative obstacles in detail, I just know from talking to people who do know the rules that it can be very difficult to actually carry out a treatment on the ground. Because for instances, all these skinny little trees that we see growing in this Rocky Mountain Trench as a result of in growth are all considered merchantable timber in calculating the annual allowable cut. But there is no market for them. So, I mean, what is their value as timber as opposed to their value as obstacles to recreating the grasslands that they are supplanting.

Within the nature park for instance, I don't know what the figure is, but some of Tembec Timber Supply is contained in the Kimberly Nature Park. Maybe that shouldn't be there – maybe that should be ways that we can deal with – I mean Tembec doesn't want to lose any of their AAC but on the other hand they probably aren't interested in going in and chopping down trees in the nature park for their commercial value – but maybe we can classify them in some other way so they aren't part of Tembec's allowable cut but still be dealt with.

GF I have to say that my impression is that there are other values that come into play that prevent the kind of thinning and burning and other forestry management practices that Ministry of Forests would like to do. That oftentimes they are prevented from doing so by people whose values are recreation, tourism, environmental – issues of that nature. And that those are reasons why they often back off even though they would prefer to go in there and carry out some of these things.

SB So they come up against the attitude that every tree is a good tree. Well, I'll speak for myself, I certainly don't see it that way.

GF Okay, well I thank you very much for coming here today.

SB Well, thank you.

GF Now we have Peter Davidson.

Peter Davidson:

... and I have worked in this area for about fifteen years. ... know something, just enough to be dangerous according to Forestry people.

Anyway, my issues of concern were – I mean there are tons of them but I can only address a few in fifteen minutes.

Fuel management on private and public land, again – I forgot the name of the lady before me – mention the concern with fuel management. I have the same concern. It is related to how I think ecosystems should be managed, not just to a pure fuel management thing.

Access management, obviously during fire access is a critical thing and is there any plans for easy access to areas that heavy or dangerous fuel loads.

Expertise management, what kind of team should be assembled to plan for fire and then fight fire and then actually do the work and then mop up. Should they all be the same people, should they be different teams.

Public education is obviously a key. I think the lady previous mentioned that a lot of people would like to do the right thing. They may not know where the sources of information are. They don't necessarily know what to do. They don't actually maybe know that the Ministry of Forests Act says they are supposed to mitigate dangerous fuels on private land.

Then I had some consideration for environment during training and mobilization. In most fire fighting people are supposed to take S100 training. It's a preliminary fire fighting course. What doesn't seem to be included is any environmentalist use around fire fighting and so I would like these courses and people who are driving the bulldozers or the backhoes to consider soils and hydrology when building guards; consider sediment when crossing streams or wetlands, and consider sediment and mass wasting when building sumps for safe zones. Sumps are water sources for fire fighting. Safe zones are areas where fire fighters can stay presumably in the fire zone and not be burned up.

One of the key things I think is assessing fuel load, fuel type and hazard around urban centres before the fires actually happen. I think this is pretty critical so it does take fire management planning and I think with a wider field of experts than normally has occurred. The experts that I think should be included are hydrologists, soils people, and biologists, and you know some representatives from agriculture, whatever. I think you need a whole bunch of considerations that are necessarily considered. This is sort of pre-fire planning and prepares access to hazardous areas. If you have a high – an area identified as a high fuel hazard then you should plan your access points and your fire fighting points prior to the fire occurring. You should inform the public

and professionals how to reduce hazards and that was mentioned previously. I almost feel like I am repeating this lady.

Around Cranbrook the light green is lodgepole pine and dark green in Douglas fir. The river on the right is the Kooquinoosa(?) Reservoir, the little clear area – I don't have a pointer on the left – the city of Cranbrook is that clear brown area. Maybe I'll point my hand here. This is Cranbrook these are forest cutter polygons we can try and cover species on it. As you can tell, Cranbrook is surrounded by lodgepole pine and Douglas Fir.

Roughly forty-six percent of Cranbrook timber supply area is lodgepole pine and a good percentage of that is dying now. We have a major beetle outbreak going on because of three years of consecutive drought to stress the trees out and the rate of pine beetle infestation is increasing arithmetically in this area. So we have huge fuel loads immediately around the city. We also have, or had a Hemlock looper outbreak just on the east side of town in Douglas Fire. So, Cranbrook is basically surrounded by a torch. It is an accident waiting to happen.

One of the recommendations that I have is to develop fire regime codes for the biodeclamatic(?) zones and stand types as per Bob Grey and Company. I think you have probably heard about Bob Grey by now if you have been in the province for awhile. Anyway the codes just refer to the kind of frequency and intensity that fires had in the various biodeclamatic zones in the province. So it takes some work to decipher that, basically through dendricrinology(?) and research, but it is pretty necessary to understand what happened under natural disturbance regimes and then the idea is to try and imitate the regimes. The condition class reading referred to here is basically relating the condition of the forest now, or the forest stand, to what it was under natural disturbance and the idea is that if the stand has developed a whole bunch of in-growth and a whole bunch of under story fuel and it hasn't been burned at the frequency or intensity that it used to, it gets further, or higher and higher condition class numbers. So the forest becomes really hazardous as it gets further from the natural condition class. The lowest condition class is class one – I think I had that on the next – yes, class one here, fire frequency within one interval of historic frequency. That's the number of times a fire occurred over several hundred years. Native vegetation and hydrology are in historic range, that is trees, grass, shrubs – similar to what was there historically and hydrology stream flow and bed loads are similar. The risk of kiakakosis(?) components is low, like the risk of losing major types of vegetation is low.

In class two it is departing somewhat – quite a bit – from the historic level, at least one interval, that is the fire periodicity in the trench is 5 to 15 years it would mean that it's more than 15 years from a natural fire interval. In the case of the trench, it hasn't really burned for about seven years so we are at least three fire intervals away from the historic level; and that creates a lot larger fuel load and a lot more hazardous fire. Instead of in what's called

NDT4 areas – natural disturbance type four areas, fire frequency was high – five to 15 in the years in the bottom end of the trench, 15 to 25 mid-part and 25 to 50 years in the northern part of the trench. When you change that periodicity the fuels build up, the vegetation community changes and we go from stand – what is it called – low intensity fires to stand replacing fires, or under burn fires to stand replacing fires; so the nature of the fire changes.

Class three types – it's departed from historic level, the fire frequency, by several intervals – that means like more than two or three. Dramatic changes in size, frequency, intensity and severity of fires expected. Disturbance agents, native vegetation and hydrology are well outside of historic ranges.

So the concept is that once you get a long way from where you were historically, you are really setting yourself up for an intense stand replacing fire.

Oh, I have probably moved on too quick here. I should back up. Anyway, I believe that by returning somewhat to the natural stand type and condition that the risk of beetle infestations, disease and fire is considerably reduced. There was a lot more stability under a complex system and I think the objective is really to map the stands and understand where we are in terms of fuel risk to communities around your centres and anywhere for that matter. And try and imitate the type of regime that occurred there naturally, so you can keep the kind of vegetation and kind of stability that was in that community naturally. It's a different kind of thinking, but ...

Incidentally we did start restoration here in 1978 with the Ministry of Forests and B.C. Environment back then and it's been an ongoing process so actually – I slashed in parked twenty years ago – in Premier Lake Park for example. So there have been agreements to do this kind of thing for quite a while but not log necessarily. And that's a whole new thing that is probably developing.

Anyway the other part of my talk was just to mention some of the things that I thought should be included in planning, operation planning for a fire. I am saying consider methods for abating erosion and siltation when you are building guards. Like it's not hard to build – when you are building a guard to drop your blade and put a natural drainage – follow a natural drainage pattern. It's not hard – on the right hand slide – to knock some drainage over the edge so it doesn't run down the travel path for a long way and build up in huge sediment loads. So there are things you can do that are very simple to mitigate problems.

Consider stream crossings and sediment load delivery to streams. Is there any need to bulldoze down two or three feet when you could just take off the surface material and be just as effective and not do damage and cause sediment and siltation to streams immediately adjacent to this guard.

When you are building a road again, consider putting in drainage from the road so it doesn't run for hundred of meters and cause a huge sediment load. Or, on steep slopes put water bars on slopes so they don't cause massive erosion. These are just some practical things.

When you are building sumps, instead of building a sump right in the creek like the slide on the left, build it adjacent to the creek. It actually doesn't take any more time. The one on the right can be reclaimed in a couple of hours, the one on the left will take a couple of days and you'd have a heck of a lot of sediment load doing it. So there is a way to do it correctly.

Stream crossings, if you are going down a really muddy slope and a really wet slope in the interior cedar/hemlock zone and you come to a creek, don't just try to wade into the creek and sink your D-9 out of side, crib it or something before – try and build some kind of bridge. In this one two D-9's mucked around in a creek for a day – cribbed it all up to get out – it wasn't necessary, really.

On the right instead of pushing dirt in the creek, dirt could have been pushed back up, back up one way and back up the other and away you go. It wouldn't cause siltation. It would be just as accessible, and it doesn't take any more time.

On the left side is a fire guard. It's nice and wide. Very little soil damage, in all probability fairly effective – it's all tied into a lake so where is a fire going to go? The one on the right you can see the fire guard wasn't effective. If you look at the tree tops they are almost touching in the background and a lot of these guards were almost – the tree tops were almost touching – the fire doesn't have to skip much to jump over the guard and meanwhile look at the kind of damage you've done. So pick the areas you are going to build a guard and build an effective one.

And, that's about it.

I knew I only had fifteen minutes so I was trying to spare you.

GF Thank you very much, Peter. This is all very helpful I think from a biologist's perspective to get these kinds of pointers. One of the things that has been said at other hearing is that when land has been designated for parks, I would think primarily, that there are often old logging roads that were in there that were used in the past. And because they become a park they close them off, they don't allow the roads and they let them grow over – well in fact they don't let them grow over, they actually cover them over so they can't be used as a road access or a trail and that in the case of the fires of this summer that in many cases the places that created the biggest fire problems were ones where they really had very little access in there. So it was very difficult and that meant that when a small fire might have been contained if they had

access to it, it became a big fire before too long and because of the extreme fire conditions there was just no hope of containing it. It became a huge, huge blaze – so do you see – because your water lands and WLAF forests I guess – do you see that there should be a change of policy to not block off the roads and restore them so that they are not usable? What is your view on that?

PD Well, you are going to think I speak on both sides of my mouth. I am a firm advocate in access management but with planning up front. So the key is planning where your fuel loads are, your hazards are, plus your values. Somebody mentioned the values. What is the value to the community? What is the wild life value, what are the identified wild life values for example – you have got to do the plan up front and then get an agreement on access. I don't think it should just be haphazard – like geez, we've got a fire – let's go! I mean there should have been planning up front to address these issues. And I think most of the issues could be addressed.

GF You'd have to reevaluate that though, because the fuel load builds up over time and what may not be an area that you need access to today ten years from now might have a fuel build up, right?

PD That's absolutely true, but I think if it comes up as a condition class three and you are a long way from the natural regime, then you say well, we either log it, slash it, burn it, or we create access for it. One way or another we have got to address the problem. And I think that goes with the planning.

GF This public information, we have had two presentations and two reference to public information. It came up throughout many, many of our hearings thus far. Obviously there is a lot of knowledge out there, but it's not in the right hands. People who need it don't seem to have it. What is the best way to inform the public?

PD Well there are several ways, I know the City has a pamphlet that is handed – and Regional District both have Fire Safeing your own property handouts. I've got one in the mail – but one of the problems is nobody is enforcing the recommendations. It's not – well it's sort of law, but nobody is enforcing the law and that creates a huge problem I think if – for example pine beetle isn't addressed up my way, which is Gold Creek, we are right adjacent to a watershed. The watershed is pretty well straight lodgepole pine. It's all at high risk. If people don't address their private land then it gets to public land, then it can get to watershed and lead to all kinds of problems. So really there has to be legislation that is consistent and carried through – otherwise, I think we put a lot of things at risk.

I personally logged my property and four around me when I first moved up to Gold Creek. Because I recognized the hazard.

- GF My sense is that while there isn't very much in the way of regulations or laws actually, I am told there is only one municipality in the whole province that has building code restrictions for the type of materials that you can use when you build in the interface area, for instance.
- PD Right.
- GF And so, they are really just recommendations at the moment, and sitting pamphlets that perhaps aren't being read very often.
- PD That's right, so I would use multi-media. I would use TV, the advertiser, you know any media you can because not everybody uses one type of media.
- GF Reminds me a little bit of some parts of the world where they really do a big job on telling people what the hazards of not covering yourself properly in the sun. I am thinking down in the southern hemisphere. I was amazed to see ads on TV on a regular ongoing basis, signs up in all sorts of stores where you buy clothing and sun screen, and all these about the hazards of being out in the sun too much. You'd almost think it was overkill except that it is really important, so they do it – and so, maybe a similar thing here.
- PD Well I would say I think people recognized, especially after last summer, that it's important because a lot of people felt very much at risk, including me. And the question is do they have the technology, or the knowledge or the ability to carry through and who should carry through and where does the money come from to do this fuel abatement or risk abatement. And that – the infrastructure thing needs to be addressed – I work for government so I can't really comment, but it really does need to be addressed. I think the expertise is out there to do it. There are people that know about fuel loads and how to handle them, but it's not cheap and the lady mentioned the AAC (Annual Allowable Cuts) being used to address pine beetle and the fire salvage. To go in and proactively log areas on top of all the wood that is out there is almost impossible because we are more than five years' wood ahead and wood's only good for a couple of years when it's dead from fire or beetle.
- GF And you know maybe there is a role for private broadcasters, too. I don't think all of this has to be paid advertising. If people think it's a public service that's important, then shouldn't there be a cooperative agreement with public broadcasters and private broadcasters to do some of this. I won't ask ...
- PD If they exist – this is the Interior.
- GF Well, thank you very much Peter, we appreciate it.

Next, we have Bill Bennett the Member of the Legislature for East Kootenay.
Thank you very much, and welcome.

Bill Bennett:

Thank you, Mr. Filmon, thank you for coming to Cranbrook and welcome to the East Kootenay.

GF Thank you.

BB I am going to limit the comments that I am going to make here today to really one aspect of this whole forest fire discussion. I am not going to say anything about the way the forest fires were fought or not fought. There are other people who will talk about that, I assume. I am going to deal with the prevention side. I am going to deal with one aspect essentially of the fuel reduction issue and I am going to ...

(tape #3)

.. and also I am even going to concentrate it a bit more than that. I am going to deal with what I have experienced as the local MLA here as some of the government regulatory or policy impediments to advancing eco system restoration faster and on a larger scale than what we have been able to do to this point. I will start by saying that any comments I make about regulations or government policy for the most part relate to the Ministry of Forests and that's understandable, I guess. I don't want to leave the impression that I disagree with the whole regime of rules that we have here in this province for managing forests. The regime of rules we have has developed over the last fifty or sixty years because this province has depended to a large extent on the forest industry to sustain its economy. That's where we get a lot of our jobs. It is still that way in this province, it is still the most important industry in the province in terms of supporting the economy, creating jobs, especially in rural B.C. and we still receive huge amounts of revenue from the forest industry to pay for things like health care and education. So my comments are not intended to undermine in any general sort of way the rule regime that has developed over the last fifty years. But, I do intend to tell you about some of the rules that do impede grasslands restoration and therefore the reduction of forest fuels.

I am going to do that by dealing essentially with a case study. Some local ranchers last year put together an application to the Ministry of Forests to do a – what they called a range restoration project – just east and north of here, out closer to the Rocky Mountains in an area where they have some ranches. And their particular project – their initiative included – it was quite a diverse project, and included some land clearing and some actual tilling of the land and some irrigation and actually some domestic seed planting as well. I am not going to get into that, I don't think that is part of the discussion that I am going to have here today, anyway. But their application was to essentially create more grasslands, more forage including some domestic forage and what is interesting about their application as a case study is again the rules that they ran into that prevented them from getting approval to do what it was that they wanted to do. And if they had been allowed to go ahead with their

project, they not only would have created more forage for livestock and wild life, they would have reduced the forest fuels on the floor as well.

So, I think that again it is understandable that the rule regime in our forest management has developed the way it has, but it has essentially developed to facilitate the harvest, the processing, the regeneration, the sale of timber. That's what all of our rules focus on. If there is an overarching goal to all of the rules around forest management, the goal is to facilitate the harvest, the regeneration, the processing and the sale of timber. We don't have as a goal generally in our rules to restore eco systems or to reduce the fuels in our forests. So when you go to do that, that's when you start running into these rules.

The first one I want to tell you about is the direct awards versus competitive bids. This particular project, and I am using this project again only as a case study, not to argue the merits of the project – or I am not arguing that it should have been approved necessarily – but this particular project fell within the B.C. Timber Sales Program operating area. So I found that there was a mechanism under the Forest Act s.23, sub 2, that would allow a direct award if the volume of the timber was less than 2,000 sq. meters and all of this is in the written materials there. If the volume of timber involved was less than 2,000 sq. meters and there was only one application was made. And I will just read you how the Ministry of Forests responded with respect to the direct award issue.

They said in situations where the best use of the land has been judged to be something other than timber production, the normal process would see the Ministry of Forests selling the timber at auction to the highest bidder. The land would then be sold or dedicated to the determined best use.

That's a fairly bureaucratic response to a fairly entrepreneurial request, that the government think outside the box and try and allow these ranchers to do something different. Again, I don't argue that they should have been allowed to completely clear the land and till it and irrigate and so forth, but they did need, I think a direct award of the timber before they could go ahead with their project.

The Ministry essentially argues that there has to be a competitive award. When you get up to the volume of timber that this particular application included and it seems to me and many others around here that if a logging contractor bids on the timber, the logging contractor bids on the basis of extracting the merchantable timber from the site, doing what they normally are responsible to do whether that involves silva culture or cleaning up the site to some extent, but it doesn't involve removing the number of trees and doing the prescribed burning and so forth that you would do if you were restoring the eco system and if you were truly trying to get rid of the fuels that where there. So the competitive bidding system under the bidding sales

program today in my opinion and I am not, obviously, here on behalf of government, this is Bill Bennett here making a presentation as a citizen of the region.

If we are going to take the position that we do that these should be competitive bids then it seems to me that we have to consider imposing some different conditions on the bidders with respect to what they do there on the land. They should perhaps in certain specific situations in certain areas, if it is close to a community, for example, be required to remove more than the merchantable timber. In fact treat the site in a way that reduces the fuels and perhaps restores the site to its natural eco system condition.

Now you can't expect logging contractors to subsidize the costs of ecosystem restoration and the reduction of fuel, so – and I recognize that – so the answer to that, it seems to me, is to adjust your stumpage fees accordingly. If you are going to ask the contractor to do extra work, reduce the stumpage and get the job done that way. That is just one suggestion of getting around this problem of whether it can be a direct award or whether it has to be a competitive bid.

The next issue that I am going to raise for you and I just came in at the end and I think Peter was talking about the AAC – I want to talk a little bit about annual allowable issues and how that – how all the issues around AAC have prevented us in some situation from doing the ecosystem restoration that we thought was possible.

This particular project, the case study that I am using for this discussion, was in the timber sales program AAC. That apparently in the Cranbrook Timber Sale Program area is 88,458 sq. meters and the Ministry of Forests took the fairly, I think, reasonable position that if these ranchers were allowed to take that amount of timber off the AAC of the timber sales program that it would reduce the available timber from that program. True enough, but again if we are only going to allow our forest management to reflect the interests of the forest industry and not some of these other public goals that we should have, we are not going to get the fuel reduction or the ecosystem restoration that is necessary.

So, I would suggest that we either have to move the timber from the AAC, that is remove for purposes of ecosystem restoration and fuel reduction, we either have to just remove that from the AAC if there is enough timber out there to do that, or again back to my previous point – we've got to change the way we manage our timber sales program to get some of that ecosystem restoration done as part of the logging play.

Stumpage – this particular application applied for a two-bit stumpage, which is pretty low and that always appears to government like someone is asking for special treatment and sure enough when the Ministry of Forests

responded to the application, they essentially said this is not the practice of the Ministry of Forests or the government of British Columbia has never been in the practice to provide special stumpage rate. I won't read through all of the things that the Ministry of Forests said, but it's all the usual stuff that you would hear with respect to an application for low stumpage.

However, again, in terms of this rule regime that has developed in the province over the last fifty or sixty years, the rules around stumpage reflect the longstanding assumption that underlines most of our forest management rules and that is, that a tree taken is a tree taken for commercial purposes only. With a view of processing and sale for business profit, which is why most of our trees are taken. In this region, and I think in many regions in the dry forest, where they have dry forests in B.C. we want to remove trees for other purposes, with other public goals. And I think that in those kinds of situations I think we have to say to our American Friends who we seem to be worried about all the time. You know, we are providing 25 cent stumpage in this situation because we are protecting our communities, not because we are trying to give a logging contractor a break, but because we are actually going to protect our communities by doing this. And, I think we can go further, we can say all the revenues that would be generated from the removal of those trees would stay in the ecosystem restoration cycle. And you can do that fairly easily by having all the money paid to a trust that is managed by one of the NGOs, and the NGO that would be the logical choice in this area is the Rocky Mountain Trench National Resources Society. If they were handling the money in this, and the work that was being done out there was strictly for the purpose of ecosystem restoration and the reduction of fuels, it seems to me that we can make a pretty strong argument that we have to adjust our stumpage rates to allow this work to happen.

Export, dirty word in B.C., people don't like to see logs exported. I like to see the jobs obviously stay in B.C. and who wouldn't. However, in this area because of our proximity to the mills in Montana in particular, but also because of the generally poor quality wood that is found in the Rocky Mountain Trench, there are situations where exporting some of that wood makes perfect sense. In the case of this project, the proponents did their project based on two different scenarios – one selling the wood locally and two selling the wood in Montana. And, in the case of a lot of the wood it wouldn't have been sold locally because the mills here simply don't want it. It isn't the right species and it isn't the right size. Had they been allowed to export it to the U.S. they could have gotten rid of it all essentially and would have fetched a higher price and again, this is not money that would be going into somebody's back pocket, this is money that could stay within the ecosystem restoration cycle. So, again, I think that when it comes to ecosystem restoration and the reduction of fuels we have to think outside the box and I don't like clichés any more than anybody else, but I don't know how else to say it. We have to find ways to do things different. And if there is wood there that the local mills don't want and the proponents of people who want to

do this work, whether they be commercial interests, private sector interests, or whether they be NGOs, if they can take that wood to Montana and get some money for it and keep the money within the cycle then they should be allowed to do that and we should do a better job – as elected people like myself – of explaining to people why it is justified to take those logs to Montana.

The next point I want to make is with respect to the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan. That is the land use plan that applies to this region and the West Kootenay as well. There is an objective – objective number 8 in the higher level plan that is termed Fire Maintained Eco Systems. And I think it is worth just describing just what that Objective No. 8, Fire Maintained Eco Systems states. It states that Objective 8 indicates a higher level plan will restore and maintain the ecological integrity of fire-maintained eco systems and that treatments will contribute to the creation of a complex ecologically appropriate mosaic of habitats over the long term. And treatments in open range and open forest will remove excess, immature and under story trees and emphasize the retention of the oldest and/or largest trees.

Well there it is, there's exactly what we have to do in certain areas of the Rocky Mountain Trench and certain other areas of the dry forests in this province. We are actually fortunate enough – I don't know about other areas, we are fortunate enough to have a land use plan that is in law with a legal objective requiring us to do these things and I know we do our best. The ministries do their best given the resources they have to achieve that objective, but it seems to me that that particular objective could be used as a stronger encouragement again to think outside the box and perhaps to consider making our rules more flexible.

Market conditions is another point I just want to make very briefly. Unfortunately a lot of the ecosystem restoration that people have attempted to get done here in the past has had to wait because the local mills were not in a position where they really wanted the wood. The market conditions weren't right for the purchase of the wood. It seems to me again that if there are people that want to – that are prepared to put their own time and their own money into ecosystem restoration and they think they can do something with the wood, they should be allowed to do that. And that includes exporting the wood.

I want to make a quick point – the Forest Arranged Practices Act which I guess isn't quite yet in law – it's currently the Forest Practices Code – Section 79 and 80 of the Forest Practices Code deal with fuel hazard management so I think it's worth reminding this review that those sections already exist. I think they should probably be used more vigorously than what they have been. That legislation I would suggest to you could also be beefed up with some companion legislation granting the government the ability to declare a fuel hazard and to perhaps to dispose of the hazard at cost recovery or perhaps allowing some of the NGOs again to use the timber sale revenue through a

trust to pay for ecosystem restoration or fuel reduction. They have that type of legislation in the states, and particular I am thinking of the state of Washington. They have fairly strong nuisance laws, if you are creating a nuisance close to a community in terms of your forest management you are ordered to go clean it up. So I think we need to think about that as well.

And I am going to conclude. I got through this fairly quickly, but I will leave the written report there with you. I am going to conclude by repeating myself. I want to say again that it is not my impression to beat up on the forest industry here, I've got a respect for the way those fires were fought this year. I saw nothing but professional people working on the forest fires and I think that in terms of managing the forest we have done a really good job of developing a forest industry that has supported this province for many, many years. But we have I think overlooked as a province the impact of continuously suppressing these forest fires and now it is time to deal with that. So I think we have to consider some changes to legislation and regulation and policy – find some flexibility to meet some of these other important public goals that we are all here thinking about today.

So, thank you very much.

GF Thank you very much, Mr. Bennett. Just thinking in terms of the scenario that you are portraying, which is that the only people who are interested in doing ecosystem restoration or reducing fuel are people who have an ulterior interest in the forest for recreational, tourism, other purposes and so you are implying I guess that the forest industry is only there to get the logs out, make the money and take off. Do you think that – and correct me if I am putting words in your mouth – that is probably being unfair and being a little too blunt. But what I am really saying is I think in terms of land development, where municipalities enter into development agreements. The quid pro quo for somebody getting the right to put a subdivision into land is sometimes that they have to do landscaping, they have to plant trees, they have to pay for perimeter fencing, they have to do all sorts of things around the area that they may see as an extra cost to them and – having been a municipal politician myself – I know they balk at these things. But the reality is that that is the price of them getting a development agreement to develop that land and presumably make a profit. Does it not hold true, too, that if it is in the greater interest of the public to get ecosystem restoration and get fuel reduction and all that sort of thing, that we say, okay, that's part of your responsibility when you go in there and you get the right to cut those logs.

BB Well, there are a number of things there. First of all, with respect to the logging operations that are out there doing their thing in the forest, I made one specific suggestion on how the timber sales program could be re-jigged, I guess, to require the loggers to do some more of that work and in exchange for that receive a reduced stumpage rate and only the Ministry of Forests can

analyze that suggestion as to whether it has any validity or not. But to me it is worth thinking about.

I actually come to this whole thing from the point of view that our forest companies are struggling today. I don't think there is a lot of margin out there for them to be doing a lot of extra work, it just isn't there. So how do we get this work done short of either telling the licencees or the logging contractors they have to do it at their own cost, or coming up with a whole bundle of public money. Because I don't believe that either one of those things is going to happen or even should happen in the case of the licencees or logging contractors. They shouldn't have to subsidize this kind of work. I believe they do a pretty good job out on the land right now with the rules that are in place and I actually would not subscribe to your characterization of my presentation. I obviously have left that impression and didn't intend to.

Again I think it is an issue of where do we find the resources to get this done and I have come to the conclusion that there are some NGOs out there – I mean this Rocky Mountain Trench Natural Resources Society and the steering committee that they are a member of has the broadest coalition of people and groups that I have ever run into as a politician. I mean you like to run into these groups that have hunters on them, environmentalists, conservationists, the ranching industry, everybody is there and everybody knows that we have to do this ecosystem restoration. The only way we can think of to find the resources necessary to do this is to get the money from groups like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – which we do already. Those kinds of groups have been really great. A little bit – some money from the government – but then use the timber to pay for the cost of restoration and that's at the basis of my submission here today – is finding ways that we can actually use the timber to pay for the cost of the restoration, otherwise I am skeptical that we are going to do as much fuel removal or reduction as I think we should do. And the impediments to using the timber to pay for the cost of restoration are in those rules that I talked about. And that's the gist of my presentation.

GF Okay, all I am taking is a step further and saying well if it's good enough for these NGO groups to use the timber for the cost of restoration, what about the forestry people doing some of that too?

BB Absolutely, if we can do the same thing, Mr. Filmon, and again perhaps a stumpage reduction is going to be required to justify them having to do this, that's great. I'd be all in favour of it.

GF Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation.

BB You're welcome.

GF I interrupt for a public service announcement – there is a white Grand Am in the Parking Lot, KBH 385 with the lights on. If that belongs to anybody, you should go out there and turn off the lights.

Okay, next we have Gundula Brigl Good Afternoon and Welcome.

Gundula Brigl:

My name is Gundula Brigl and I am Emergency Program Coordinator for the Regional District of East Kootenay, areas A&B and between July 26th and September 19th I was the Emergency Operation Centre Director here in Cranbrook.

I am coming at this from the Emergency Management perspective. We dealt with a few fires before this – the Plumbob and the Lamb Creek started happening. There was the smaller one at the Plumbob, the Blairmore fire and the Wedge County in Montana. We had a small UC set up in Fernie to deal with those ones. Our aim was to provide site support in this case the Ministry of Forests and office of the Fire Commissioner. Now it's minimal what we did for them because they are quite self-sufficient, but we did provide quite a bit of support to the RCMP, Emergency Social Services, Ambulance Service and Health Authority. We established a 24 hour per day information line staffed by volunteers. We provided with ESS temporary lodging, food, information meetings, escorted entries for the evacuees. We set up an emergency operation centre here in town at the RCMP district building initially and as the scope increased we moved to a facility donated to us by Telus.

We had a lot of agencies that became part of the EOC. Before we were done we had over 30 agencies and 300 individuals directly involved with the EOC, that's outside of the fire fighting effort. These included groups as diverse as the Amateur Radio Society, Ambulance, B.C. Assessment, Hydro, B.C. Parks, CPR, Canada Post, City of Fernie, Cranbrook, Sparwood, Elkford, the hospital here, Ministry of Agriculture, Children and Families, Ministry of Transportation, Search and Rescue, Tarrasen Gas, Shaw Cable, the SPCA, and local media. We had many individuals and businesses that also came to support us in that time.

On August 27th with the fire potentially only two days away we went to unified management with the city of Cranbrook. I think under the circumstances it was as seamless as it could be that integration. The city of Cranbrook was part of the EOC from the start, Dietrich Anderson, the City Emergency Coordinator was there helping us out from the start. We had some of their clerks helping us out and we decided to move to unified management early so that we could prepare for the larger disaster that was possibly happening. So far we had just dealt with some of the outlying regions, fairly small numbers, but the potential was huge for it to come to town here.

Going to this unified management early allowed us to come together, come up with the right plans and really have a detailed plan of what was going to happen if we did have to respond here.

Some of the highlights in this situation were the volunteers. It was incredible what we had here. It has often been said that people pull together in an

emergency and that was the case here. People were eager and willing to help. They were willing to fit within the framework. We didn't have a lot of freelancing going on. It was really humbling to see those people work for us because their own houses were threatened. They were away from their families and they were under evacuation alerts often.

Emergency Social Services were here looking after other people. For example in Baines Lake we didn't have a team out there. They formed a team. They got the training, got people down and they were there 24 hours a day for the next week or so.

The housing and feeding of all the people that came to this community. So many people pulled together for that. There were donations for everything. Individual efforts – the diversity of people that came together was fantastic. You had retired air force colonels come together with housewives. I mean it's amazing, working side by side as equals.

What was key in this was the agency support. You have to have the right people to come together. There is a synergy that forms. You don't know beforehand what piece of the puzzle any one person is going to have so you have to bring them together. Lots of people had to leave their normal jobs, come together, leave all that behind and do something completely different. I think we achieved that. People left their jurisdictional hats at the door.

Beforehand, when you start the emergency planning, you look at all the agencies that normal respond to an emergency. You know, fire, police, ambulance, search and rescue – those types of people. But when you come into a situation like this you realize that there is much more involved. We cast the net wide and we did that early. We wanted to be inclusive and we wanted to be ready to support the site with any request. We had some pretty obscure ones that you just can't anticipate beforehand. So you have to have the team in place.

We had a liaison officer and she was a TEAMS member which is the Provincial Temporary Emergency – Jim can fill you in on that – but it's a team of provincial employees that come together in an emergency and assume some specific roles there. That was key in making contacts with all the agencies that we had to.

One of the things we did here, we set up an information line early. We did that on day one. We made it twenty-four hours a day and we staffed it with live operators. We always wanted people to have somewhere to call. We encouraged everybody to use that. We had local calls. We had calls from as far away as New Zealand. We wanted to make it the best source for timely factual information for the community and I think we succeeded in that.

We put the British Columbia Emergency Response Management System – BCERMS as it is called – to the test this summer. We have the guidelines with BCERMS and we had our own plans here in the East Kootenays and we implemented that and did not deviate from it. People knew what their roles were and they fulfilled them to the full extent. I mean the effort that people into these roles was amazing. We had a core of trained people beforehand and that was really important to us. Because, as new people came in they didn't know what the terminology was – that kind of thing – people could sort of take them by the hand and say – here's the plan, here's what your role is – this is what is expected of you. That made it so much easier to integrate all these people.

(tape #4)

So what this shows us is the system that we have in place now in B.C. to deal with emergencies works. It just needs to be better understood by the public and more training available. People need to know it, train in it and use it.

Some of the lessons we learned. Some of the key ones were staffing. You are looking for people to do all kinds of tasks under stressful situations. The public looks for some sort of leadership in these times and a lot of the responsibility for dealing with emergency management has shifted to local government. We take an all hazards approach and different agencies take lead responsibilities for specific situations.

This summer it was the Ministry of Forests and the office of the Fire Commissioner and they were strongly supported by the RCMP and Emergency Social Services.

In the case of the Regional District of East Kootenay, we started an Emergency Management committee in this area about three years ago. We combined volunteers, part-time contract employees, provincial agencies, First Nations and utilities into this committee. We trained together, we look at our plan, come up with resources. It's a real mix of people.

Some are compensated for being there, most of them aren't. They are committed to it. Lots of work has gone into it. One of the things in BCERMS is that responder safety comes first. You have to look after your own people first. That extends to the EOC. In order for people to do their best, their basic needs must be met and in an emergent situation we ask people to dedicate their lives fully to an indeterminate time and uncertain outcome. It is extremely stressful for all those people involved.

But what happens is you add to this a loss of income, uncertain about what will happen to the families and homes and you can place people at a serious risk for burnout or critical incidence stress.

As an emergency response management team we need to have personnel that allow us to staff more than one shift. You need to schedule for time off –

that kind of thing. The people that fill these roles must have the basic training, have to have local knowledge and they need to know who to talk to in the community.

Those people that we use to staff the EOC need to be picked on their skill sets, not on their affiliation with a certain agency. One of the guidelines is that we rely on provincial employees and also municipal employees and that's just not enough in an emergency situation. You need to call on volunteers, employees of Crown corporations, professionals, business people and just employees in the private sector. They are providing essential services, it is only fair that they be compensated. Volunteering shouldn't come at the price of loss of wages or loss of employment.

Information coordination, the key thing for us was to get the information to the people that needed it most. That was the local evacuees here. We wanted to also of course get the information that the national media wanted, but our key was always the local people here, as a matter of life safety for them.

Everything has to be accurate. That was absolutely key. Rumours are everywhere and as soon as you stomp one out another one comes along. So that was a big function that we did here.

All the agencies have their own information officers – when an emergency hits you need a lot of information officers – a lot of information workers. Those people need to be trained. There is good training available. They need to know the framework under which they work and how they work with all these other people that are coming in. It's not a place for egos. Again, you look at who has the skills to perform a certain function and place them there, and that is regardless of rank or position. The messages have to be clear, consistent and accurate.

Training, it is absolutely key that you have people who know what is expected of them beforehand. They can train other people on the fly.

Mapping, one of the things we ran into right at the start was everybody was talking a different language, everybody had different maps. When you are trying to coordinate the Ministry of Forests with the RCMP Search and Rescue and all the other agencies involved to get an evacuation happening in an hour or two, you need good maps, we need those ready immediately. They've got to be available and accessible on scales that we can use. They have to be customized and they have to be shared.

Action plans, things that we have to look at for the future. We have to have some sort of a public education campaign. It has to be on a number of levels, and deal with a number of topics.

General Emergency Preparedness, whether it is wild fire, earthquakes, flooding, whatever else; we all have to take some responsibility there and that's the next key. You need personal responsibility. That is one of the key messages that has to be out there. You can't just wait for somebody else to do it for you. Also, we need more volunteers in B.C. A lot of people do a lot of different things, they need a few more people to help them out.

So that's something I'd look to the province to do with major media. Get the word out. That can be supplemented with local hands on education strategies, public meetings, flyers, school presentations. In the case of wild fire we've got the fire smart program that's out in Canada. There is some good work that's been done, let's apply it some more.

Individual home assessments can be done, maybe with the work of some of the local governments. We learned a lot this summer about structural triage, what houses can be saved and which ones can't. That's some of the things we need to look seriously.

Coming back to personnel again, it's absolutely key that as emergency managers the ones coordinating all the activity, all the different response agencies, we have to have some personnel that we can draw from. It shouldn't be in a time of emergency that we have to deal with things like staffing and wages and that kind of thing.

You can grow an organization in emergency from basically nothing to a few hundreds or even thousands of workers so you need to have some sort of a framework to deal with support and maintenance of your staff. You have to take care of your employees, so some of these things that we have to look at is the wages, out of pocket expenses, making sure people take rest periods, days off, have WCB coverage, all that kind of thing.

You need to get the right skill sets. I shouldn't have to be limited by provincial guidelines that tell me I can only get these certain people to come and work for me. I've got to go to the people that have the skill sets to do the job for me. If they are in private business or volunteers, I should be able to call on them.

One of the things we have to ask ourselves – when is a volunteer not a volunteer. ESS Emergency Social Services is normally geared for 72 hour response. We had them working for three, four – six weeks steady this summer. The strain that is on families – it's just incredible. It's an essential service they provide. You have to give them some kind of support.

Lots of employees get seconded to an emergency response. They come from all kinds of different backgrounds. Some of them lose their job because they do that. Some of them lose wages to do that. Again, is that something we want for those people doing those essential services?

There was a model used this summer by the office of the Fire Commissioner where they were able to pull in people from volunteer fire departments and so on and paid them a wage. I think that should be expanded to emergency management services as well.

Training out there, there are a number of service providers that have some excellent educational programs for emergency management. One is the Justice Institute. There are other agencies like Emergency Patrol. There is lots of expertise in the province to deliver that. However, as with everything else, it is becoming less and less available as government scales back some of these things.

Again, what we saw this summer, you need those key trained people to be able to do any of this. You need to know the terminology so you have a framework to work with. You need to look at some funding to get that training out there. The training provision has to be decentralized. Right now some courses are only available in New Westminster. It's thousands of dollars to get somebody there and that's not effective.

Some of the awareness level courses, ICS100, EOC level 1 should be widely available to the community, as a matter of fact to the traditional emergency responder, they should be just about mandatory – I am talking police, fire, ambulance and rescue. They are not long courses but they at least expose you to the basic terminology and framework, so that's very helpful. Also those courses should be made available more widely just to members in the community who have an interest in emergency social services, amateur radio, all kinds of things.

The Justice Institute just came out with an emergency management certificate program. It's very expensive and cumbersome for people to get and we need that information out there right now so some support on that program would be helpful.

In Canada as a whole, and even North America, there is not much available in degrees and so on in Emergency Management. There is some need for higher level understanding and research into these matters. So the development of a Canadian University Degree in Emergency Management would be something that should be pursued.

When we look at setting up an emergency operation centre we are always scrambling for facilities. There are a lot of makeshift things that happen – we have a facility here with the RCMP which is working well for us but it can't handle the larger situations such as we had this summer. This year we were lucky, we had a facility that we could use from Telus. That might not be available to us next time. So it is always a scramble to get something going. Some support from provincial government on access to B.C. buildings would be helpful along those lines, as would be access to surplus government

equipment – old computers, office furniture, and all that kind of thing. Some guidelines as to what the minimum standards for EOCs should be would be useful as well. You have a huge variety, you have small municipalities, large municipalities – they all have to have an emergency operations centre but there is nothing really out there right now that tells you what is appropriate and for what level.

Emergency planning, right now emergency planning is a requirement only for municipalities, not necessarily all Regional Districts. In the case here we have established that, but lots of other places in B.C. don't have it.

Some of the things we need to look at are building codes and subdivision approval. I worked for the Ministry of Transportation Subdivision Approval in the Okanagan. I saw lots of recommendations come in from the Ministry of Forests as to what we should do in the wild land interface and we just took them as information, we didn't have the legislation to force people to follow them. That was a big problem. We have one way in/one way out roads all over the place and more of them coming into wilderness ski resorts it's the latest thing and that causes us huge problems in responding to these fires and other emergencies.

Adequate water sources, that's another thing.

Emergency communications, there is a Provincial Emergency Program radio channel but a lot of agencies don't really know it's out there or how to access it or how we should all come together in an emergency. So, communication is key when you are trying to look at and coordinate emergency response so we need to do some more work along those lines.

A lot of the funding that we get to establish the emergency operations centre comes through something called JEP – they have a lot of guidelines as to what we can charge and what we can't. A little bit of relaxation for communication equipment and computers and that kind of thing would be quite helpful.

One thing we found is a lot of agencies rely on cell phones. Some of them, like the Ministry of Forests and the RCMP and that, they have radio back up, but a lot of the other agencies – the thirty I was talking about – they just have cell phone, and lots of places here a cell phone isn't available. So anything we can do to help persuade the cell phone providers to give us that service would be extremely useful.

Mapping, again there is something – there are some good baseline provincial maps that area available that the Ministry of Sustained Resource Management I believe has developed. It is out there as a prototype. A lot of people don't know it is there. A lot of people don't know how to use it. If we could expand that and make people aware of it, we could work together much better in emergencies. Information is no good if it isn't shared.

In conclusion, dealing with the wild fire threatening B.C. and some of the other hazards it's not any one agency that is going to be the key in this, it's going to be all the people working together. We have had a lot talk about fuel production, that is certainly one key, but you have to look at all the different right of ways that we have out there. You have to have the Ministry of Transportation working together with the cut blocks established by the Ministry of Forests, you have to look at the fire guards, you have to look at the subdivision approvals. Local government, the land use planning, and the public education campaigns they can have. The utilities they have a lot of right of ways there too, that can tie into protection strategies.

They key is the homeowners. It's almost a cultural shift. They have made lifestyle choices to live out in the vernal(?) areas. I know I am one of them, and there is just not a lot of awareness of what you can do to reduce those threats. We need to improve that.

The building materials out there, there are lots of different choices – look at the insurance companies, are there some incentives they can offer for reducing the risks.

That's it.

GF Thank you very much, Gundula. There's just a few questions – this whole issue of building codes and subdivision approvals started to come up a bit in the last few meetings and I must say that I am surprised that there isn't more of a requirement on this. Do you see that as primarily a provincial responsibility or local, municipal responsibility.

GB Right now in most places outside of municipalities the subdivision approval authority is still the Ministry of Transportation. So, yes, it is provincial there. Some regional districts have taken it on, so it is the regional district there. Land use planning is a municipal issue.

GF But somewhere between those two there should perhaps be more attention paid to restricting the kinds of materials that you can build your house of if you are in an interface zone where you are at risk.

GB That is certainly one thing, the landscape material you can have – the subdivision planning again, the roads going in and out, water available for fire fighting purposes, all that kind of stuff needs to be looked at. We have guidelines for potable water, that kind of thing. We need that for wild fire mitigation as well.

GF The thing that I worry about with respect to guidelines is that they are not always followed.

- GB The first thing is guidelines – you can step it up from there.
- GF When you are bringing all these people together in an emergency setting, has there ever been any question as to who is in charge?
- GB No, not in the Emergency Operations Centre – again we use BCERM so it is fairly clear what the structure is there. There is some confusion about all the different agencies and how they integrate – we had the Ministry of Forests with the officer of the Fire Commissioner taking the lead role in this. So we have to separate what is the site and what site support sometimes. But no, I think that was fairly well handled here.
- GF I think you said that in East Kootenay Regional District you had an emergency management plan.
- GB Yes, we established that about three years ago.
- GF Again, does that plan say that the BCERMS takes precedence at a time of emergency, or how does that work?
- GB Yes, BCERMS is completely integrated in our plans.
- GF So do you see any difficulty in municipal governments accepting the authority of the provincial government if they were to legislate requirements for building in the interface zone?
- GB My role with the provincial government is Emergency Coordinator so I can't really speak to land use planning and that kind of thing.
- GF As a citizen do you see that municipalities would balk at being overridden shall we say by provincial governments in these areas?
- GB It all depends on how it's presented in these matters, I mean I think the municipalities clearly see what the implications are for these things. It's obvious what needs to be done, I don't see why they would balk.
- GF Thank you very much.
- GB Thank you.

GF Now, do we have Ken Gauthier here? Please come forward and have a seat.
Welcome.

Ken Gauthier:

Thank you. I have a written copy here that I will leave, so I will try and be fairly brief.

I am making a presentation on behalf of Tembec. Also with me I have Troy Romadnik(?) who is our Chief Forrester so he may be able to answer more of the professional questions.

My brief history on myself, I have some thirty-five years of involvement with the forest industry and in various stages of fire control. I spent seven years with the forest service and thirty-one years in the industry. I have been involved in a number of large fires and a fair amount of broadcast burning. I managed Tembec's 2003 participation in the land fire and four major fires in the Kootenay district. Our staff at Tembec have anywhere from twenty-five to thirty years in the industry, with many of them having much experience in fire control.

The recommendations that I will make is collective amongst most of involved at Tembec.

We supplied support for at least ten major fires last season and our staff extinguished numerous small fires, some of them that never even got into the records. Our up front cost is almost a million dollars in this situation and that does not include equipment, that's just for managing people and facilities, most of that claimable, by the way.

Our intention today is not to criticize the decisions made by the protection branch or the incident commanders as far as fire control is concerned. It is impossible to make those judgments and you weigh, and have knowledge of all of their assessments. What ultimately we want to make sure that we play our part and we feel that we could probably play a larger part than we have. We are the second largest private landowner in B.C. we have approximately 100,000 hectares under managed forest and we want to reaffirm at this time the cooperation we got from the protection branch in helping us find and provide initial attack on those private lands – again an excellent job.

Our role here is that we need to be part of this program. We depend on our forest for supplying our mills. Obviously the forests are our livelihood and not only us but many of the spin off businesses. Also, the time we spend fighting fires we are not getting logs to the mill so that is an obvious incentive to get in there, get out and get home. At the same time we want to make it clear that we don't want to take over the business of fighting fire from the protection branch. They are good at it and that's their business. But we feel if we were brought into the process at the right time and if our resources were utilized effectively, as I mentioned previously, our people know the ground intimately, probably better than anyone other than guide outfitters knowing their own

territories. So we know where to go, we know what is out there. Most of our people are aware of fuel types, terrain, access, the whole thing. We feel that if we were properly utilized we could reduce some of the cost to the government in fire control.

So to that end I have a number of recommendations which I will go through briefly. These are general recommendations. They do not deal in detail so I mean if the recommendation is considered worthy of consideration then the detail comes afterwards.

The first one is that we feel more time and funding of the Protection Branch should be directed to fire pre-organization or preparedness, whichever terminology you want to use there.

This is number two, the industry should be considered as a resource to be called on by the Forest Protection Branch as soon as it is evident that there will be a delay in actioning a fire.

Three, is reestablishment of a program similar to the old fire prevention officer program where pre-determined qualified people are designated to act on behalf of the Forest Protection Branch during a defined emergency. Subject to limitations, these people can sign off time sheets, receive new reports and such for the forest service protection branch.

Four, establish official liaison people within both the industry and protection branch that are a sufficient rank that can make major decisions during an emergency operation. So that we don't have junior people making decisions that are at a later date being overridden by more senior people. And we find that.

We need to also – there should be an established – and this may already be established, but because of the fact that we didn't know about it means there was a communications breakdown – is liaison with local utility people – such as hydro, natural gas, railroads.

Tembec was involved in constructing and laying out the contingency guards that were south of town or most of them anyway. We lost valuable time in trying to make contacts, finding out where gas lines were and we ended up unloading heavy equipment on top of gas lines and stuff like that which, you know – it's just not good stuff.

Number five – this kind of goes along with what Peter had also indicated – if there is any indication that this fire is going to be large enough for a salvage operation we ask that expertise either from B.C. Timber Sales or the licencees be consulted because we are the ones that end up with the salvage problem, the environmental cleanup and a lot of times some of the rehab. So, what we can end up with without that is you end up with road grades that are unsafe to

haul the salvage wood out of, you end up with situations where there are salvage logs that are almost impossible to get out, simply because there wasn't some pre-planning. At the same time I appreciate that under emergency situations it is tough to do some pre-planning, but it can be done. We have done some of it on the fires and it does work. If you want to get a water tender in, you'd better have somebody putting a road grade in because otherwise you are not going to get a truck in there. And the water tenders will run on the same roads as log trucks to extract salvage timber.

Six, the Forest Protection Branch should seek and encourage alternate methods of dealing with danger trees on the fire lines. There is a lag time there that they lose the opportunity due to this managing the danger trees – it shortens up the window where they can do actual effective fire fighting in the early hours when they first get in there.

Some of the equipment – as a matter of fact there is a local piece of equipment that was developed – I have a picture of it here – I will give it to you with my submission – whereby it is an excavator that packs water, the person is in a fully enclosed cab, he can dig and he can put fire out and he is not in danger. The danger tree situation is a real issue, it's a real problem for forest service and industry and it can – you can have delays up to six or eight or more hours before you get people on the ground after the heavy equipment has been through. We encourage the Protection Branch to encourage people to develop these and to use this type of equipment.

Seven, we recommend that contracts be established, I think it is a policy although it hasn't happened all the time in the past is that the Protection Branch establish and get the paperwork done up front as part of the fire preparedness plan so that when you send people in and you send heavy equipment in people understand what their obligations are, what their remuneration is going to be, and you are not sorting this out in the midst of an emergency situation.

The last presenter talked about the mapping. We were heavily involved in mapping. We have a state of the art GIS system and supplied much of the mapping for the Lamb fire and the interface area. However, no one wanted to agree on who was paying for the mapping costs and in some cases it was paid for and in some cases it wasn't. I think these are the kind of – we need these agreements up front. The technology is there. The power to do it is there. We just need this sorted out.

Eight kind of follow through with the same thing, the pre-organization or the fire preparedness plan should be a vehicle where we as industry and anyone else that is dealing with the Protection Branch, that all the processes be sorted out front – the claim processes – what is eligible, what's not – so we are not paying people for stuff where we think it is claimable and it isn't

claimable. It actually went quite well this year, I think by the end of October we had most of our claims in, however I've seen it go for a lot longer than that.

Nine is again the fuel loading issue. We recommend that interface fire control zones be established so that fuel reduction can be managed. Conversion of closed canopy forests can be converted to open grassland forest types. Prescribed burning and pre-planned fire guards, there is nothing worse than crawling over a person's private land with a D-8 and he doesn't know you are coming. This gets him a little excited to say the least.

Ecosystem management by prescribed burning should be carried out as part of forest management on a broad basis and specifically in the interface. What we have in the interface zone and the one that actually lies between us and the major fire – the land fire – is not specifically an open grassland trench type – it's a transition forest and it has a lot of closed canopy for some parts south of town, whether it's a kilometer or two kilometers changed into an open type forest land. And I think you could sustain it as open forest.

In conclusion, Tembec subscribes to the 10:00 a.m. fire control concept and although we operate and live in a fire driven eco system we believe subject to the safety of fire fighters, all wild fires should be actioned as soon as possible, using appropriate resources including those from the industry.

GF Thank you very much, Ken. When you say the 10:00 a.m. fire control concept. Can you describe that to me, please?

KG It's an old concept from the old school in that you action all fires with the objective of having it controlled by ten a.m. of the following day.

GF Okay, maybe you can enlighten us on something that I have heard at almost every

(tape #5)

... and they basically put in the work to get the thing under control because it is cool, the weather conditions are usually preferable, and humidity levels and so on. Have you heard anything in this area that people didn't get out early enough to get onto the fires?

KG Yes, it's a common subject of discussion. However, I appreciate the Ministry has to operate from an almost zero risk when it comes to safety and so – somehow that risk has to be managed a little tighter or a little higher so that you can expand that early morning window. I mean, absolutely right that morning is your most efficient and safe and whatever – I mean with the conditions that we had last year at one o'clock, basically you were looking for a place to hide. So, yes, but it is an issue that – I don't believe it's just an issue of getting up earlier, it's an issue of managing the safety and managing the safety and managing the whole program a little – and I don't have the answers here – I think that there needs to be a committee to sit down and see

- what options are available to resolve that problem. You know when you've got 600 men in camp and you've got to feed them all and you've got to get them all to pre-work conference and you've got to get them all to a safety meeting and this goes on and on. It's just a huge volume of handling – people management. So, yes, it needs to be addressed.
- GF I am acutely aware of the zero risk tolerance that was taken here and it is I think a great credit to everybody that there weren't lives lost in fighting the fires. Tragically, obviously everybody was very, very upset about the loss of some pilots in the process, but people on the ground were not put in harms way so to speak. And the question just is – is there any leeway there – are you losing any efficiency that could be gained by a little tightening up of the process?
- KG I think we have to look at how people are managed and time frames and I think we have to look to technology. Like I say some enclosed heavy equipment will allow you to work in that window a little earlier and so some of that needs to be looked at, too.
- GF We saw some thermal imaging pictures in Kelowna in which to the naked eye, they would be side by side photographs, one done with thermal imaging and one done to the same as the naked eye would see, and that was just complete smoke. You could not see where the fire line was inside the smoke. With the thermal imaging you could see right through the smoke and see the exact fire line. So you know it helped in the potential for people being sent into the wrong place, or sent in too close to the fire. Obviously that is really, really new stuff that just came forward that hadn't been used before and so it wasn't used, but it is now available and people were advocating it. It's one of those things that might help in the process.
- KG We supplied the mapping for the thermal image mapping and my only comment there was that apparently it is quite expensive and I didn't feel we were getting it often enough. It was only coming every number of days – I am not sure just what the spacing was, but pretty expensive – excellent technology.
- GF Obviously you are supportive of so many other stakeholders who are suggesting that prescribed burns, thinning and cleaning out the fuel load reduction – all of that sort of thing is essential to getting us into a better prepared state in the future.
- KG Absolutely and we as licencees, we do log fairly close to a number of communities and we haven't done – we have done very little prescribed burning simply because it high risk for industry and also the smoke issue. We struggle just to get our debris piles burned because of the smoke issue. Smoke management becomes a real issue but after last summer I think people might be acceptable to a little more smoke at a little lower level.

- GF What about the risk element in terms of insurance protection – there doesn't appear to be much leeway from the insurance industry – is that an issue that you can give any advice on?
- KG Yes, the deductible since 9/11 for industry are pretty high and that in itself makes us want to have good cooperation with the protection branch in order to keep our costs down. Because insurance premiums for us are extremely high and the deductibles are high so we are extremely interested in – like I say we are the largest land owner in the Interior of the province so we really want to make this work. We are neighbours in the Elk Valley.
- GF Did you feel that the Ministry utilized your equipment and people to the greatest extent they could have in fighting the fires?
- KG I think they did once we were there. Sometimes we felt we should have been there sooner. But in defence to the incident commanders it is a big, big job. I think this is where the pre-organization or the fire preparedness – I think there is where you document where you go in the community. It is no different in involving the city or any of the emergency agencies. There needs to be a plan and we need to be a part of that plan. We are on the land base more than anyone else. We use the land base more than anyone else. We have a pretty vested interest in the land base. So I know there is an interface committee in the Okanagan as a matter of fact they are just reconvening a symposium. Industry is not listed on that committee and they play a large part in the landscape, so ...
- GF And you'd have all sorts of equipment. You referred to one that was an excavator that packs water and things like that.
- KG Yes, we – there is some specialized equipment out there, but we have conventional fire fighting equipment of course. Most contractors are working for us. We are the largest licensee in the valley and so we have the contact, the supervision, the people that work with them, the layout people – that type of thing. So the resources are there – and they are utilized, don't for one minute think they are not being utilized. We are just saying that we think we should be coming into the game a little sooner.
- GF Okay, thank you very much, Ken.

GF Okay, I think we have a presentation from Larry Hall. Good afternoon, and welcome.

Larry Hall.

Thank you very much. Welcome to Cranbrook. I hope in your spare time you get a chance to have a look around. You must have at least five minutes.

I am speaking from the point of view of just the average Joe citizen although I did spend 35 years with the Ministry of Forests – about thirty of them I was involved in Forest Protection and I am going to touch on five points with you – the wild land urban interface, forest in-growth, the risk to Cranbrook from the Lamb Creek Fire, Emergency Management Resources and aircraft use on fire.

Now my presentation, I am going to skip through it, I am not going to touch on everything word for word that I've got in the copy that you've got. I'll shorten it up.

Under the wild land urban interface that I believe it was about 25 years ago that staff from the Forest Protection led the way in identifying this as a critical issue. Although homes were lost in previous interface fires, this issue never rated very high with top Ministry staff and little or no importance was attached to the wild and urban interface at the political level. Many good programs have been developed and implemented yet were always hampered by a lack of direction, recognition and ultimately a source of funding from the senior level of government and/or at the political level.

You were talking earlier, you asked a question of what could be done for public information – I believe that if the government – the Premier himself – got behind this kind of a program, the Minister of Forests, the Chief Forrester and the other executives said yes we are going to do something about it and we want people to recognize it – I think that importance would be attached to it just by them speaking for it.

The second one is forest in-growth – in the Rocky Mountain Trench where we live, little or no attention has been given to hazard abatement and fuel reduction to protect rural homes, ranches and municipalities. The trench is a fire maintained ecosystem which means that soils, plants, bird and animals evolve because of frequent low intensity fires that burned every three to fifteen years.

For seventy years we have been successful for the most part in keeping wild fire impact to a minimum in exactly the same fashion the impact had been kept to a minimum south and east of Kelowna and between Kamloops and the Barriere/Louis Creek area.

On the northern outskirts of Cranbrook there are several hundred hectares of fir forest that have been attacked by the false hemlock looper. No one, whether it was the Forest Service or the forest industry had the economic willpower to remove this infestation from our doorstep. Now, with abundant grass growth and dead trees loaded with ladder fuels, we have the makings of

a wild land urban interface fire waiting to take a run at the north end of Cranbrook. It is not a matter of if it will burn; it's a matter of when it will burn. To reduce the impact from wild fire the use of prescribed fire is needed to remove the under story about every twenty years and because of political level of government has not made fuel reduction and prescribed burning in the trench a priority we have another disaster waiting to happen.

Number three is the risk to Cranbrook from the Lamb Creek fire. In 1985 the Spen fire on the west side of Columbia Lake just an hour's drive north of here was stopped just short of destroying many homes. The speed at which this fire moved showed how quickly homes and lives are put at risk. The people of Cranbrook were not alerted to the fact that the Lamb Creek fire could have been on our doorstep within a few short hours and Cranbrook was never placed on evacuation notice or alert. To that I offer you a quote from the East Kootenay Weekly Extra "*Fox said the Lamb Creek fire posed more of a danger to Cranbrook and the outlying areas than many people realized.*" This article was published in the November 19th issue and was written by Jerry Warner. I have attached a copy of the article in my presentation for you.

I fail to understand why no notice was given because if the Lamb Creek fire had taken that final run towards Cranbrook pandemonium would have resulted. At the time, the seriousness of the threat was so downplayed that the okay was given for children to start school. Yet, in the same article as I quoted from above, it continues and I quote "*The first week of September was critical, the blaze poised to jump Highway 3 and sweep the Peavine(?) Valley towards the city.*" School started on Tuesday, September 2nd. which was the first week of September. Was it good luck or good management that we averted a disaster?

The evacuation plan for Cranbrook and surrounding area was kept a secret from the residents of Cranbrook. So when it's time to evacuate it would be the evacuee while fighting panic who would be learning what to do while trying to get out of the way of a raging forest fire. Just watch television and see how people act in wild fire evacuation. No one knows what to do and this is why people crash their cars in panic and then get burned to death. Because evacuations are not a learn-as-you-go process. Do we have evacuation plans for our schools? Of course we do. Do the principal, vice-principal and secretary keep this plan to themselves? Of course not. They tell all the teachers of the plan and they practice fire drills with the students, not only to make the students aware of what they need to do, but to make sure the plan works.

Our government can prepare and distribute plans ahead of time so people have a basic understanding of where to go, what to expect and how to act – the more knowledge that one has in the event of an emergency, the less the panic.

Number four, emergency management – now is the right time to incorporate all incident command emergencies into one Ministry – called the Ministry of incident command. The new Ministry should include Forestry Protection, the Provincial Emergency Program, Search and Rescue, Provincial Ambulance, the office of the Fire Commissioner and it must also include municipal and regional fire departments as a provincial resource and remove them from the jurisdiction of local governments. I believe this would streamline emergency response for all disasters, whether it be fire, floods, earthquakes, train derailments, oil spills, etc. I believe cost savings could be realized in the reduction of overhead, insurance costs, bulk purchasing and a better utilization of manpower and equipment. This would also provide for a single chain of command in a disaster.

At the present time each emergency organization has their own radio frequencies and thus communications are not the most efficient when working in a disaster situation. This would be rectified with one ministry.

Terminology between organizations is different – for example a request for a tanker gets you an aircraft with fire retardant from the Forest Service and a car filled with water from a fire department. I believe that amalgamation not only makes good business sense, it would make working on a disaster more efficient if the incident command team members were part of the same ministry and not fragmented by being part of another ministry or a municipality using different terminology.

Number five, aircraft use on wild fires. It appeared to me while watching the newscasts that the use of air tankers and helicopters on large fires that were not contained, that had fire behaviour in the rank 5 and 6 categories, the aircraft were being used as a show for the public and a photo op for the media. Having spent 30 years in wild fire fighting in B.C., the use of aircraft appeared to me to be a waste of money to the tune of millions of dollars. When I was involved in fire fighting air tankers were an initial attack resource on small fires and were used as support on large fires with a very specific objective and generally of short duration. Helicopter use also appeared to be more public relations than providing support to ground crews in rank 5 and 6 fires.

In summary I have provided you with five points to consider. The wild land urban interface program needs to be embraced by our government and make it common knowledge and proactively used by the people of B.C. Forest in-growth is a threat to improvements that can be mitigated through fuel reduction programs which requires a commitment from the politicians to make it happen.

The fire threat from the Lamb Creek fire was not communicated to the people of Cranbrook. The evacuation plan for Cranbrook and the surrounding area needs to be communicated to all the people, not just a few at the top.

Emergency management needs to be housed in one ministry called The Ministry of Incident Command. The use of aircraft on wild fires needs to be reevaluated.

Thank you.

GF Thank you very much, Larry. I appreciate all the thought you have put into your presentation. I am wondering whether, because the more I hear the more I realize that there are many people out there who are aware of the wild land urban interface risk that exists in many parts of the interior. Parts specifically that suffered tremendous damage and in fires in many parts of the interior this year and certainly there is lots of material available from various different sources – an organization that came in Kelowna was the Urban Development Institute who are people who are developers of subdivisions and they have got all these brochures out there that tell people what they should be doing to protect themselves. The Forestry people have it, the Provincial Emergency Program people have it; it's all out there. I am wondering whether there is a resistance for other reasons from really becoming an advocate for saying we've got to put some controls on this – the way in which our subdivisions are developed – the way we allow for certain materials to be used. I live in a log house with a cedar shake roof and lots of wood chips around for landscaping but I'm not in a fire zone, I'm not in an interface, so I guess I'm not at risk. But, I guess if I were out here, I'd have second thoughts about that kind of construction from the experience I am getting this year anyway.

I guess the question is, how do we get everybody thinking about the right things here? I am not convinced that it is strictly a matter that people don't care about it. I think there's got to be some resistance to imposing these restrictions on people.

LH Well, I think as I just said, I think one of important things is that the people at the top have to stand up and say this is important. They have in the time that I was in the Forest Services essentially remained silent. They didn't say don't do it and they didn't say go for it and I'll help and be the push. One of the things, like you talk about homes and everything – there are subdivisions that have covenants on them that require that only natural materials be used in building. Which means you put on a cedar shake roof, you don't put on a metal roof. You use natural wood sidings instead of using aluminum siding which might buy you a little bit of time. So there is ...

GF So you are building it out of fuel.

LH You are just adding to the fuel problem with a lot of things that are being done and I believe that rightly or wrongly the provincial government has got to step in and say these are the rules. That's what they are there for – to make rules for everyone instead of having piecemeal – the people in Kimberly say we can't use this kind of material but they can use it in Cranbrook, why can't I use

it here. So they play one off against the other. If there's one set of rules that's what everybody plays the game by.

GF That's a difficulty as I see it – somebody informed me that there is only one municipality that has building material restrictions in all of British Columbia so that means that you would create a disincentive for somebody to build in your municipality if you were the first or only one to enforce it. So these are things that need to be done almost province-wide – if you are in the interface zone. I mean obviously if you are in the middle of town and you are not in those circumstances this is different. But when you are building new subdivisions right into the forest, things must be different.

LH Except what happens when you have a cedar shake roof in the middle of town and your neighbour's house catches fire and it's throwing sparks onto your cedar shake roof –

GF Yes, well there was one home in Crawford Estates, at least one – there were probably more – but it was built out of all those fire resistant materials, metal roof, fire resistant siding, all those things, except they had a wood deck and it was the wooden deck that got caught with an ember coming probably several hundred meters by air and landing on the deck and of course people had been evacuated so there was no one there to stomp it out and the whole house burned.

LH Well I know for myself that I live within the city of Cranbrook that even from the Lamb Creek fire as far away as what it is, that there was ash and needles and chunks of bark as big as my thumb – Caribou moss that had burned off – was landing in my yard. And so I went through and I cleaned out my eaves troughs and I tidied up things around that I thought would be a problem to make sure that there was no problem. Because if that fire had taken a run towards Cranbrook we would have been – a lot of houses in Cranbrook would have burned even if the fire had stopped two miles from Cranbrook because there were just too many sparks and embers landing on roofs and burning.

GF We have had people bring forward photographs and slides and show us instances of the in-growth taking place and the changes obviously between the grassland and the forest and the way in which this whole thing is encroaching on each other and so I appreciate what you are saying on that. This quote that you have from the East Kootenay Weekly Extra where Fox said that the Lamb Creek fire posed more of a danger to Cranbrook and outlying areas than many people realized – who was Fox – do you know?

LH In the article which is in the back, it says Chief Fox of the Cranbrook fire department. But I just put in the quote exactly the way it was written.

GF Yes, I haven't read that yet, so ...

- LH But it's a little late for people to find out about it in the middle of November that things were a lot more serious than what a lot of people realized.
- GF The issue of the evacuation plans. I don't know what is the best way to get that across – firstly I guess the question is – is there an evacuation plan for every area of this city of Cranbrook or every other city and town in British Columbia. I suspect that there are for some and there aren't for others. So I guess step one is to make sure that everybody has an evacuation plan and the second thing is the best way to publicize it. You are right in saying that schools have evacuation alerts and they go and practice their evacuation with a fire drill every so often – so how do we do it in small communities.
- LH Well it's not practical to be able to do an evacuation drill in Cranbrook but it certainly is practical for them to say well let's take this neighbourhood and we'll talk to as many people as we can and say okay at 10:00 on Saturday morning we are going to have – we want all you people to get in your vehicles and we want you to go to a certain location – to see how it goes. And it's like I said – there has to be some information given out because we watch pictures on TV in California – those people are evacuating there and you can see the flames licking over the houses and they smash up the car and wind up burning to death.
- GF Yes, many people lost their lives.
- LH That exercise has to be gone through to ensure that people know. And it's like right now if there was an evacuation ordered even for us to get out of this part of Cranbrook you wouldn't know what to do. And I know where I am going to go, but I don't know if it's the right way to go. So if I know exactly what is required then I can help you or someone else who doesn't know to be able to evacuate the neighbourhood or wherever it happens to be. So I think it is important for that information to start filtering down. We have newspapers, we have television, we have all kinds of ways to get information to people so that at least some of the people understand and know what to do so they can help others.
- GF Well, you know, there are in addition to schools hospitals do evacuation drills, that sort of thing. I guess the question is finding a good way to do it, but you know there are organizations – block parents plans and other people who go out and sort of organize the area from time to time to do certain things and maybe this is just something that could be developed. I don't know – but it certainly is worth looking at.

The use of aircraft, this is the good thing about these hearings that I get different information in different locations and most of the time I am getting people saying they should have had more aircraft out there and that they needed more aircraft to fight the fire and if they had only had the Mars Martin aircraft we would have put the fire out – that sort of thing. And yet I have

listened to some – maybe that’s the wrong thing to say – some experts – but those like yourself who have had a lot of experience and one person said that in the old days there was a 30/30/30 requirement. Which was that if the relative humidity was less than 30%, if there were more than 30 kilometer winds, and if it was ...

(Tape #6)

... to fight the fire, so there are times I think pretty clearly when the bombers are ineffective. That’s what you are telling us, I guess.

LH That’s what I believe. And I believe that they were there more for show than for results. And it was something that was creeping into fire activity toward the end of my career and it appears that it’s a lot more. The other part that I believe about the use of quite a few of the Ministry of Forests resources in fighting fires that they have been oversold. People think that if you go out and if you drop 5,000 litres of water – now that’s a lot of water that I could have a lot of showers in that amount of water – if you drop it on a fire that’s got a front that’s 5 km wide, that wouldn’t take more than two or three of those things and you’d have it under control. That people really believe that these things are magic bullets – they are excellent for working on smaller fires, you have a problem with a large fire that has either jumped your guard or is getting out of hand – you can knock it down and gain control of it again. But to see them flogging away, hour after hour after hour, trying to stop a raging forest fire, to me I just see dollars going – and unfortunately they are my tax dollars.

GF Well, it’s another area of public education that we are going to have to deal with because there certainly is a prevailing opinion out there that that’s all you needed to do was put more of that equipment out there and yet I know from the figures that have been given that at one they had over 30 water bombers in this province along with over sixty helicopters dropping water and sometimes there was a concern about too many of them out there – that there might be accidents. So as I say there is certainly a lot of conflicting views, but I appreciate your putting forth your experiences to us, Larry. Thanks for coming.

LH Thank you.

GF And now we have Maurice Hansen. Okay, got them on the machine here?
Okay, we'll just get our technician here. I wouldn't be much help to you. Nicole here is our technical genius and today's her birthday – so treat her nicely. Shall we sing? You haven't heard me sing.

Maurice Hansen

... 15,000 hectares treated and the difference between the gross and the net is that some hectares are slashed, burned and spaced and that all is included in the larger total. The program then has prescribed burns 7,644 hectares, slashed and spaced 10,649 hectares and the harvesting has totally 3,552. So that gives you the total once again and the investment to date is \$2.1M. But the scale of the task is enormous. There was a tremendous amount of upfront planning done before we got to the point where this plan was implemented and when the dust all settled, out of the 250,000 hectares of Crown MDT4 fire maintained ecosystem in the trench, 140,000 or a little less was zoned as available for restoration. So, in six years we have knocked off roughly a little more than ten percent of the area. So our assessment that the ongoing in-growth plus the declining eco function as a consequence of that, plus the increasing fuel load equals and environmental and social crisis.

Now the problems with enlarging our program – well there are lots of them, but the four that I have settled on as worthy of your attention are here.

We need to grow the program first and the obstacles to that are that we have limited ability within the steering committee to trigger projects and that's because of the tenure system issues that Bill Bennett alluded to earlier. Usually the first operation that should occur in a restoration project is harvest and that's at the behest of the licensee which is dependent on the economics. So the restoration program largely is a program that follows any logging that does happen to take place within the zone of operation and we are not that capable of directing those harvests. So – that's not putting the blame on anyone, that's just the way it is. But that does limit the ability of the program to grow. If we could overcome that issue, then we have the problem with marketing of the material that is generated from these projects because as has already been mentioned a lot of the material is of poor quality and it's not something that has a ready market. And the third thing is financing because there hasn't been a restoration project to date that has paid for itself in any way. So, although there have been some examples where there has been some recovery, in general projects have to be financed from outside sources.

Those are the issues that have us restricted from growing a larger program. Now just briefly, the action plan that the Trench Society selected to act as kind of a pointy stick to try and drive this thing forward to bigger, better, faster cheaper restoration was a project site that we selected down towards Jaffray. It's 2,865 hectares and our vision was that it would be an all phase fully integrated three year project for that area, which is much larger than any project that has been undertaken to date. These are the assumptions that I worked on – we have a timber assessment under way right now but we don't have the numbers yet, so these are guesses more than solid numbers, but they are what I used to build this particular budget. Now if we assume that the timber assets on the site are available to offset the cost of the project, then

according to this somewhat blue sky budget, you could do an entire restoration project on the site and it would essentially break even.

If the timber assets, except for the non-quota material which would be the pulp, are not available, then the project is going to cost about \$370,000. So you can see the point that Bill was making about the ability to recycle dollars on a project in order to offset the cost. What we are trying to prevent is this kind of thing – we don't want to see those piles of ashes that used to be houses and we don't want to see the trench, particularly experiencing fires in the bottom picture which is obviously very intense and destructive.

So our recommendations are that government support a more aggressive comprehensive fire maintained ecosystem restoration in the trench and that the provincial fire risk management strategy, if it is established, that may be established – be implemented through the existing restoration program and with the steering committee in the leadership role.

Bill mentioned the Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan and I forgot to say that that is the guiding document for the restoration program and, three that the combined fire risk management and restoration zones in the trench and you could add the communities as well, be incorporated within an administrative vehicle that facilitates restoration and fuel management speed and effectiveness.

In conclusion I just want to make these points – historically the trench was a fire maintained ecosystem, that unmanaged forest in-growth poses high ecological wild fire risks, an ecosystem restoration program already operates in the trench, these operations automatically reduce risks of catastrophic wild fire, the program needs to grow to meet its goals and administrative and financial obstacles restrict the program. Any provincial fire risk management strategy and the existing trench restoration program should be a natural partnership because combined resources will result in greater benefits.

And apparently these were Smokey's last words.

Thank you.

GF Thank you very much, Maurice for your presentation. I am somewhat familiar with the trench, having spent every summer from grade 7 to grade 12 at Radium Hot Springs where my favourite aunt had a motel and she used to employ me over those summers and when things weren't too busy we'd go fishing for Rocky Mountain Whitefish in the headwaters of the Columbia and other times we'd go picking mushrooms because being from an Eastern European background she loved mushrooms and so did I. So that's what we used to do. Things are certainly changing, there's no question. I went for a walk through some of the area like you were showing me this morning with Bill

Bennett and there are lots of things that aren't examples of healthy forests right now with the in-growth problem.

I should have asked Bill earlier, but – and I think he did say it in his presentation – is the tenure – is it Crown land that you are dealing with primarily, or is it tenure where the forest rights are owned by private companies?

MH It's Crown land and the timber rights belong to the licencees, the tenure holders.

GF Okay, so the licencees then have the timber rights.

MH That's right.

GF And it's not economical for them to do the restoration is a concern and so it falls upon a public interest group like yours, a non-profit society to do the restoration, but you don't get the value out of it, so you've got to get somebody else to finance it.

MH That's correct. Perhaps I should have put a slide in there to show you the funding sources but the \$2.1M has come from a combination of government and non-government – mostly non-government – or, maybe quasi-government. But the model that a timber licencee follows when they are looking to do an operation, an economic one, and Bill already talked about stumpage and these kinds of things, so there is no model for eco system restoration per se, where you could look at a site and trigger an operation that would then be driven by that goal.

GF Well I think the one thing that I find very encouraging is the variety and number of stakeholders that you have involved. Because one of the things that I think is really going to be part of the solution is getting as many different stakeholders together to agree on a consensus basis on the fire risk management strategy – because there are all of these conflicting views about the costs and benefits of prescribed burns and other ways of dealing with all of these things. We are going to have to have a lot more people who buy into the strategy in order for it to become, I think, an acceptable strategy.

MH The one thing that maybe hasn't been mentioned is that there has been a communication program – the Trench Society has run two of them actually – but we publicized the benefits issues of just attempting to educate the public in the trench about the situation they are living in and so I guess it's not like everybody is just off the cabbage boat on this – there has been a lot of effort by a lot of people, both government and non-government in getting this thing to a point where it is going to make things happen. And you mentioned that we have a lot of groups in our organization and that's true and the whole idea was to try and acquire some power to get something done. But somebody said

after a concerted effort that he had about as much effect as if he had dropped a custard pie off a six foot stepladder. And some days I feel that's about the effect we've had even though we've got a group that theoretically should be able to wield some power. Now I'm getting a little too cynical because we have come a long way with this thing since – in the last ten years. But we really are still waiting for a breakthrough where we can grow this restoration program and make better, faster, cheaper restoration. The key, as far as I am concerned lies in the way the land is tenured or not tenured as the case may be and on the recommendations I made, the main one is centered on being able to access the ground to do operations that are necessary under the idea of restoration of fuel management.

That is the key thing. I think you can do that in a number of ways. One of the ideas that has been talked about is the community forest licence idea – that is one administrative vehicle that has been talked about and what others – well, there are partnerships with the licences, there is maybe a number of things that you could cook up, but at the moment we are looking for a model that already exists and that will meet the needs and they don't always fit that well. But the community forest may be adaptable.

GF Well thank you very much, I appreciate your presentation.

GF Next we have Carmen Purdy. Thank you very much. Good afternoon and welcome.

Carmen Purdy

Good afternoon. Thank you very much for coming to Cranbrook. One of the best places on earth, I might add. It is interesting that you were here in your early years. I have been here all my life, all sixty-three, going on sixty-four years and I've walked most of the mountains and done a number of things, as you can see by my biography on the front page there. I was on the Sandy Peel(?) Commission with a Forest Resources Commission in British Columbia for three years, which was very interesting – doing the same things that you are doing today and I want to tell you I don't envy you your job. It's a difficult one. You'll get lots of information. I was interested to hear the previous speaker's comments about the forest and the tenure system. The trees are actually owned by the Crown and the Crown can dictate where they want the trees cut. Although the forest industry has tenure here, they do not always have the choice of where they have to cut. So that question should be clear that although they have tenure, unless it's private land of course and they've got enough of that. I worked for that company for thirty years, so I kind of have an idea that the trees belong to the Crown, belong to the people, and the people can determine where they are going to cut.

In the fires in 1985 Crestbrook(?) decided they weren't going to cut the burned timber and the Forest Service came forward and told them if they hadn't cut the burned timber off the fires we had then, about 120,000 acres of fires, that we would lose our forest licence. And so they have the ultimate hammer as to where trees are cut and how they are cut and you know, there is always something that can be compensating for the cutting process to the company.

Today I read a bit about going back in history, and I think we have to go back before we can go ahead. In 1808 David Thompson was coming through here and he said the valley was filled – he was around Moyie Lake and there was 150' from the ground up, beautiful timber. The whole valley was full of it and a beautiful crown on top. Now to a logger that would be three forty footers and the top off, but to him it was a valley bottom that was filled with those kinds of trees, and it was a fire-maintained ecosystem. Bailey Groman(?) came into Canal Flats. He drove the first steam mill into this country, where the country burned in 1985 Bailey Groman barged a sawmill down the Columbia, or up the Columbia to Canal Flats and was cutting 100,000 board feet a day. That was a big day, we cut 100,000 board feet an hour now in our mills.

CP Rail then took over Canal Flats in the 1900s and in the 1930s we began to burn because it was – this is the first time for a long time that I have heard about fuel on the forest – for a long time it has been referred to as 'coarse woody debris' and that we needed it. But, when the fire system was going, we didn't have a whole bunch of that on the forest floor in the East Kootenays, especially in the trench. In a lot of the ridge now that we want woody debris, coarse woody debris was not a part of the system. And coarse woody debris in

the old days was burned up through spring fires and fall fires by the forest companies in order that they would reduce the fuel load. In the 1930s, this year we had less than a 75,000 acre fire. but in the 1930s and 1931 I think it was there was a lightening strike on Lincladder(?) Creek and in those days if a fire went over \$1,000 they had to go to the government and Order in Council in order to get more money to fight the fire. So, this fire went up over the top of Lincladder into the Gilnockie, came down the ridge and burned across the Kootenay River, jumped the Elk River across the flats and burned out Mount Broadwood. At that point it was a 75,000 acre fire. If that fire took off today it would burn out several houses, several farms and several communities; and then it started up the next spring and burned out Ram Creek. So those are the kinds of fires we had. We hadn't had fires since the 1940s basically. In fact in 1941 they shut down the Lumberton Sawmill because there was no wood left. They didn't shut it down because they wanted to. And since then the forest has grown from Yahk to Cranbrook and if Tembec cut wood nowhere else, they would be able to have 17 years of cut. That's about 17.5 million cubic meters of wood from here to Yahk and we filled in with a fire dependent species being Jack Pine and we prevented fires from happening in the Larch and Spruce stands.

1985 fires – we did a post-mortem on them, similar to what we are doing now and there were several recommendations made in the 1985 fires that would have probably – if it had been followed – some of the communities especially would have been fire proofed. Canal Flats was evacuated. I was a part of that. I was a Safety Officer for the company for awhile but I was at that time managing industrial relations at our pulp operations. My job was to ensure our pulp mill didn't burn down from the Skookumchuk fire. It was interesting – I lived in Kimberly, Kimberly was going to be the next evacuated town, but Canal Flats was evacuated to Kimberly and we were all going to Lethbridge – I knew where we were going if it got over the top. So that fire really put us into a post-mortem fire role.

But I want to talk a bit – my main reason for being here today and I won't read all of what I put together, but it is interesting I think, something you could read tonight before you go to bed.

In 1997 we had a fire on the Moyie River. It's south of Cranbrook and it was one of those fires like Lamb Creek and it could have come north, and it could have come north fast. They didn't have a way to access it, but it was a Stone Creek access plan and they went in through Stone Creek and the Stone Creek Road had been built in 1961. I hunted there for 22 years, 23 years, 30 years – I still hunt there – 40 years – with my kids and my grandchildren now. And it's kind of interesting the Little Moyie fire that came over Stone Creek and they put the fire out over time and then they came back out and for some reason, unknown to me – they took an excavator in there and they ripped up every damn culvert and cross ditched that road every 100 feet. A road that I had been using forever, for access – to hunt, to fish, to pick mushrooms, to

pick berries – just to enjoy that country. There is lots of potential for fire still on the Little Moyie River and on Stone Creek and Sundown Creek. We have all kinds of reasons for fire in there, mainly the mountain pine beetle and the coarse woody debris, which is now called fuel, on the forest floor.

Semlin Creek – the Semlin Creek fire just south of us lit up and it lit up the town of Cranbrook. It took them two and one-half days to access the fire because the year before they had gone in and done the same thing as they had done on Stone Creek. They cross ditched the road. They pulled the culverts – for whatever reasons – and pulled the bridges. They could have prevented the Semlin Creek fire expanding to the size it had and threatening Cranbrook when it took off.

Lamb Creek – here we are today. You'd think we would have learned something about what was going on. We destroyed access in Lamb Creek, we pulled bridges and roads and in order to cut that fire off so that it wouldn't have ever expanded to the size that it was – we destroyed access and it took them two days to put the road back in shape so they could get equipment around to the back side of the fire and by then the fire had escaped.

Now I am not criticizing those who fought the fire. I am criticizing what we do in terms of how we manage our forests in this province. I am not only talking about the East Kootenays and the West Kootenays, I am not talking about across the board because some of this is happening in other jurisdictions and I think it has to be addressed.

The extent of forestation and reforestation in an industrial nation, industrialized nations in recent decades is striking. In fact such large scale of expansion of forests has no equal in recorded history. They claim that we are losing our forests, but we're not. Forests are expanding at rate of two to three million acres a year in North America and have been for the last twenty years. What we read isn't true. We are having more forests. We do have more forests and we have more problems with it and a lot of it has to do with access.

No initiative has done more to change British Columbia's forests' long term future than access destruction in my opinion. I can take you to places, and I am in the bush all the time. I can take you to places where access has been destroyed as recently as two months ago. In places where it should not have been destroyed and if we had a fire in the back end of those places this year, we would again have the opportunity to lose Cranbrook because the firestorms and the fire patterns that come out of the States, up the valleys and right through Moyie and right into Cranbrook. Those systems are being destroyed – those access systems are being destroyed.

Access to resources has created fears among the more suggestible. All predictions are negative. Most are proven incorrect – the rest are highly controversial. For some reason continually crying wolf has been successful.

Access continues to be destroyed. Companies themselves destroy access. Government right now claims they have no money to do it. But companies do it because of the liability question. Well the liability if the forest burns and they can't get at it because of forest access closures should then rest with them, in my view. Because they are the ones that destroyed the access and that's the reason the fire got out of control in the first place.

I look at places like Sweden that have been roaded for 700 years. I don't ever read of Sweden burning up the same way we do. Not in the same terms. Not losing homes, not losing buildings; they have access. They have way more moose than we do, like they kill 120,000 moose over there – and I am a hunter – they killed 156,000 last year because they've got too many moose. It's not about wild life and access – there is a major argument there, but I won't go there.

Wealth is squandered because the environmental regulatory agencies make decisions in a political environment. The most cost-effective decisions are always made in an economic environment, shielded from regulatory and media spotlight. The economic future of the forest in British Columbia depends on a large number of factors however significant. Economic gains can be realized by increasing the volume and the value of forests in the province. To obtain these gains greater emphasis must be placed on many factors, some of which are – an adequate of quality fibre, increased research budgets, increased investments on intensive forestry projects, and increased access to our forests.

I listened to some of the statements that this wood, this trench wood is uneconomic. It depends who is doing it and how it is done. I myself am involved with over 32,000 acres of acquisition for wild life and other uses. It's a multiple use system that we try to use the lands on. We are going to log about 20,000 cubic meters of trench wood. We are going to do it in January and February and we hope to make a profit of around \$600,000 on those 20,000 cubic meters of wood. We are going to do it with contractors, we are going to do it under the regulations of the province, we are going to do it very lightly, and we are going to do it like somebody was working on your eye. Because it is an environmental thing for us, but it means we are going to open up a pretty good sized area for other uses and mainly for wild life because that's why we bought the land in the first place.

Well maintained access to our forest lands is essential. It is not only essential for future health of B.C.'s economy and forests, but for the goal of giving our forests a chance to grow at an optimum potential. Access is required for other things as well – harvesting equipment use, environmental impacts, transportation, protection of fire especially; disease especially; insects and environmental impacts. There is a long list of things here, I won't go over all of them. I have thirteen of them, I think, or fourteen.

One of the points I want to really emphasize though because of access forestry is not the only industry in B.C. that requires access to Crown lands and resources. Mining, oil and gas, fishing, ranching, agriculture, recreation, tourism, trapping, berry picking, mushroom picking, hunters, hikers, horse users – the list is here. We've got quad users, skidoo users – everybody uses the bush here – everybody. And we have tank traps ...

(Tape #7)

... how we can protect them. It's about communities and what we should be doing around those communities to ensure that they are safe. In fact we do have catastrophic – and I don't call them catastrophic, they are natural – wild fires that can be catastrophic, worse than anything that we can see. We haven't seen the big ones yet. The ones we've seen this summer are really minor. You know, Smokey the Bear – from my friend's take, should be called Pyro Bear – we've got to put a new name on him. We've got to start doing some burning.

B.C. Resource industries share healthy productive relationships with most users. Relationships that have been strengthened by land resource use planning exercises and we mentioned those here today. As B.C.'s largest resource industry, Forestry has worked particularly hard to build bridges and in the last ten years they have worked particularly hard to tear them down. I can't understand why they do that. And sure it's activities do not impinge on the rights of others to earn a living. It's all Crown land here, you know, and it's generally tax dollars that pay for the building of those roads. Those roads are absolutely essential in forest health and in maintaining really, really safe fire systems within the province.

I guess we can talk about tourism; we can talk about sharing common values on the land. I can talk about a number of these things that I put down here but I really want to talk about the public and what we want. We want access to our Crown lands because we believe that access is not only maintaining safety for our forests, we promote wise use and multiple uses of our Crown lands for all citizens and that requires access to the land base. We maintain that access closures affect our lifestyles both economically and historically. We believe that destruction of infrastructure roads is detrimental to protecting our forests and our wild life and I think that is the most important thing I have to say here today is that it is detrimental to protecting our forests and wild life – but, more importantly, our communities and the people who reside in them.

I will stop there because I have a number of things here – I have included a letter on the back because the middle fork of the White – I heard that they are going to reduce that to rubble. The road once, in fact they cleaned up – I have been assured that it isn't going to happen unless the companies themselves can take it out. And I don't think that's right. I don't think that's right.

So, I guess that's it.

GF Thank you very much, Carmen. It is a very interesting presentation you are making here and we have been hearing in other places about the destruction of access and I think it was the Wild Life Federation in Kelowna that raised the issue and that these things had all been done to give access in there. That there were roads built for logging purposes and other things and that there has been a consistent policy to get rid of access.

Why on earth would the private companies be destroying access? You said it was a liability issue.

CP They talk about it as being a liability issues in terms of if they maintain the access, keep the access there after they have pulled out of their logging shows then they are required to go back and make sure culverts are clean, that there are no washouts, and that the road is graded periodically and that it is kept up to a standard of forestry roads – that’s the problem. They don’t have the money to do that. I think there are other reasons, but that is the main one. I think the liability issue should really be when somebody breaks their back on a skidoo because they have cross ditched a road and there is no signage – you know it’s like a tank trap. Or, somebody goes through and hits a barrier that is covered with snow, or a cable and takes their head off on a quad. I think those should be the liability issues that they should be concerned about.

But they are concerned about the real dollars – what it costs to maintain roads over time. They have that responsibility. But I think those things can be changed. I think that they have – the Forest Service itself now is claiming they are not taking roads out, they have a wilderness road policy where they put a sign up ‘use at your own risk’ sort of thing, and they allow that to happen in some cases.

In my valley where I trap on the south side – small business, and the Forestry are maintaining those roads. On the north side it’s Tembec – on the north side the roads are beat up, on the south side they are having more of this is a wilderness road, use at your own risk. And most people who use the bush, like myself, go clean out the culverts, we clean out the ditches, cut the snags off the road. We look after it, maintain it over time. The road I used in Stone Creek is a good example. We maintained that road for twenty years since logging, since they pulled their logging shows out of there and it was in reasonable shape until they came in to fight a fire and took it out in total, 13 kilometers of it.

GF Others have suggested that they want to limit access by any vehicular traffic so that it is kind of more pristine for other people, but then of course when it grows in so think that you can’t get either human beings or beasts through there, it’s not doing anybody any good, is it?

CP Well we have 4.5 million acres of parks and lockups in the Kootenays. If people want pristine they can take a walk in the park. About half, well fifty percent of British Columbia is de facto wilderness anyway. You know, we have got to look at the economic side of it. Klamath(?) Sound for example – I remember a former premier here talking about not one job would be lost – 1500 IWA jobs lost at Klamath – I call it Crackpot Sound – but it's those kinds of things and decisions that influence people here and in the future for British Columbia. I don't think there is any short supply of places that are remote in this area.

GF Okay, thank you very much.

CP Thanks.