

FIRESTORM 2003 – PROVINCIAL REVIEW

Public Meetings

Penticton

(Part B)

Now I still have Neil Campbell on the list – is Neil Campbell here, by chance? Yes.
Welcome. So far so good.

Neil Campbell:

I can't say as I will be real comfortable talking into one of these so I will just practice here for a sec.

My name is Neil Campbell. I have worked with the B.C. Forest Service since 1975, both on staff and since 1989 as a private contractor. I own and operate Wildfire Consulting Limited; the services provided include fire suppression and chain saw training to both the public service and the private sector. I hold a professional teaching certificate and am currently enrolled in the Occupational Health and Safety Program at BCIT. I have an average of 91% attained in Distance Education courses completed to date.

In May of this year I attended a pilot project put on by the Workers' Compensation Board and under their proposed B.C. Faller Training standard I was tested and evaluated by two professional fallers who now work with the WCB. I received a score of 98% on the written exam and 92.3% on the field evaluation. Just to give you an idea of who I am and where I am coming from.

I would like to comment on behalf of Forest Industry workers who are obligated to suppress wild fires. This obligation is written under the Forest Practices Code. In 1998 the B.C. Occupational Health and Safety Regulations included in Part 26, Forestry Operation Section 26.19, Section 1 reads "before fighting a fire workers must be trained in their fire fighting duties in accordance with a standard acceptable to the Board and be physically capable of performing those duties safely and effectively." Section 2 states "workers required to fight fires must be retrained annually." Section 3 "the employer must keep training records for each worker required to fight fires for except under emergency conditions a worker engaged in fire fighting must wear pants, a long-sleeved shirt of cotton, wool, denim or flame-resistant material." That's all part of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

The training standard determined to be acceptable to the Board is the basic Forest Fire Suppression and Safety Course, commonly known as S100. One of the basic fundamentals of the S100 course is the 10:00 a.m. concept. This refers to and I quote. "Every effort is made to control the wild fire by 10:00 a.m. of the day following discovery. By controlling fires before 10:00 a.m. when high temperatures and low humidity start to increase rates of spread fire fighters can suppress fires more easily with a greater chance of success."

In our local area here in the Okanagan-Similkameen in the last few years we have had a number of large fires. I moved here in 1988 from Northern B.C. where prevalence of larger fires was somewhat less, so I have seen a lot more big fire action in this part of the world than I did up north in my recent history. In some of those years, 1998 and 2003 come to mind. All forestry operations were shut down due to extreme fire hazard. The shut downs made a volume of experienced forest workers and their heavy equipment available to assist the Ministry of Forests personnel in forest fire suppression. Most of these forest

workers have been trained locally on an annual basis. Until recently most of these workers were trained on their own time and often at their own expense.

Once fires grow to a certain size or reach a level of complexity the Ministry of Forest protection program will commit a management team to the fire and will often set up a camp. In some of these situations there has been a noticeable trend away from the fundamental use of the early morning hours, specifically the hours from 4:30 to 0800. The loss of these prime hours has a negative effect on both production and safety. Three to four hours represents a significant portion of a 12-hour shift. Additionally, a 12-hour shift starting at say 0600 ends at 1800 hours, exposing workers to more of the critical burning period at the hot part of the day.

If I may, I would like to recommend the following.

One would be to review the command structure, specifically the plans and operations section currently in use by the Ministry of Forests to accommodate more effective use of the early morning hours. An early shift of experienced line locators, heavy equipment operators, danger tree assessors and fallers could make safe and efficient use of the early mornings.

My second recommendation would be to encourage the Forest Industry Safety Association to revise and update the S100 training course to reflect current strategies and tactics. Many S100 instructors, myself included, have made our own revisions based on personal wants and needs. This however detracts from the consistency in delivery which should be expected from any legislated training.

Thank you.

GF Thank you very much, Neil. It wouldn't surprise you, I am sure, to know that the recommendation about the use of the early morning hours has been made by a significant number of people who have appeared before us so far. I am not aware of the reasons why in so many cases the forest fires weren't actioned early on in the morning hours when they are cool; it is obviously something we are going to have to get to the bottom of. Thank you for that.

With respect to the course updating, I gather that you are saying that the tactics used have been changed over time, improved in some ways, and modern techniques or the current technique are different from those that are being taught in the course – is that right?

NC In some ways, yes, the course itself as it stands right out of the box – it was a course that was put together by the Ministry of Forests and made available for us as qualified instructors – was really just a summary of a series of courses that were created through the '80s and the '90s. So even when it first was implemented in 1998, that's when the regulation came into effect, the S100

course was basically born from old material. A lot of the visual slide material that we have to work with is outdated so right away when you are putting an image on the screen, you tend to lose a bit of credibility when you are showing a machine that you probably wouldn't see in the bush these days. So part of that is the issue on the updating. Another part may be to accommodate some of the trends that we tend to see happening. I still think we want to work towards – you know training towards using the early morning hours but I just felt in the training that I do locally with the private forest industry workers, if things would maintain the level at which they have been, where the early morning hours have not been utilized to their full potential, I might have a hard time standing in front of these guys year after years still saying this is the best way to do it. When in fact it seems – and there are some reasons why it hasn't been happening all the times. Some of them are good reasons. I just would have a hard time saying one thing in a training program but then on the other hand not seeing those concepts put into practice on a regular basis. Yes, just in order to kind of justify the training that goes on, you want to be able to practice what you preach I guess would be the main thing that I am looking for. I am only as credible as what my presentations are and the practices that I also get involved with. If I train guys in the early season and say this is what we are going to be doing and in the actual doing of the fire suppression, we are not following those guidelines, it is just a little bit of inconsistency that I'm not comfortable with. And of course that impacts my business and it me a little bit more meaningful to bring these points up. But my business is not my main point. I would just like to make the best use of whatever resources we have and all work together as a team.

GF What is the name of the agency that is in charge of the course?

NC It is Forestry Industry Safety Association. They have a mandate to provide – oh I can't think of it off hand, but they are a non-profit organization based out of Prince George. They go under the acronym FISA and they administer the course by providing instruction and subsidy to the companies that are eligible for subsidy. So they are a pretty integral part of putting me to work doing the S100 course and we have made a proposal towards them to update, but no comment back. So I thought it would just be an opportunity to continue to prod in that direction.

GF Okay, thank you very much.

NC Thank you.

Now we have covered all of the presentations that people have registered for this afternoon, but I am happy to hear from others if you would like to come forward. If there is a desire to make a presentation on the part of somebody who hasn't registered, then by all means that's why we are here. We are coming back this evening at 7:00 o'clock and we have a number of people registered for the evening session so you are also welcome to come to that. But, is there anyone else who would like to come forward? Sir?

Welcome

Phil Lawton:

My name is Phil Lawton and I am just I guess a regular resident, a retiree who has moved here. We moved here in May of this year, just before the fire season started. We are not terribly familiar with the area. During the fire period there were a substantial number of tourists in Penticton of the Ironman in part, the Ironman race.

My real concerns were the relative lack of information I was able to get about what was happening and what might happen, and what the hell we would do if it did happen, as a resident, to get out of the area. If – I recall the night that the first series of houses were burned in Kelowna, and then the following night. I personally was quite concerned about our safety. We live up in the West Bench area, it's on the other side of the lake from the Kelowna fires, but you know we were hearing about how the fires can jump the lake. And then the Vaseux Lake fire started south of us and we were able to see that. And that's the one that really concerned me because it could have come up across the Indian Reserve and I heard that the Chief of the Indian Band was very concerned about it.

Now one of the things that bothered me on the availability of information was I subscribe to the Star Choice Satellite System and the Star Choice Satellite System does not broadcast any local stations, specifically CHBC in Kelowna. CHBC was broadcasting the daily new conferences and they were actually doing fairly well from the times that I was able to see it. That would have partly allayed my concerns. I did quite frankly find out later and have set it up – I was able to get bunny ears and find a way to jimmy my system to do it. But the fact of the matter is that the station was not available, not available in a clear way for any of us. And I think if you think about our area here there are many people living in the rural areas and they will use satellite TV rather than cable and so they won't have access to that.

I got thinking about the old emergency systems that we used to have years ago and the way that it was designed was that if there was an emergency everybody would be able to tune in here or there. Well, you know I was able to get Halifax TV and Newfoundland TV, but I couldn't get the local one. So that was one of the issues. I noticed that the government's legislative TV channel was available and I noticed all it was doing was circulating tape that was just showing who the members were – there was nothing on, I guess the legislature wasn't sitting. And it occurred to me that in an emergency situation, like I think the fire situation was – there should have been an easy way to adapt over and rebroadcast, for example CHBC on that, or to broadcast other emergency messages. A kind of a parallel thing to that was how – what routes are available out of this area – in the even that there had been a mass evacuation – now fortunately there wasn't – but with all the number of people that were in town, and being unfamiliar maybe with the area, it could have been quite chaotic getting out of here.

I draw your attention to the remark of people that were evacuated in Kelowna and some of them reported on TV that it took them a couple of hours to get down from where they were into downtown Kelowna where they were supposed to go. I recall that night when the lightening was coming on and there could have been fires starting in Summerland, in fact there were some out in that area. What would have happened if the highway going north – what is it – 97 – had been closed. Already the highway going south was closed from the White Lake Road. Some of us who were new to the area wouldn't have known where the White Lake Road went in any event. I looked at the B.C. government maps and they don't show a lot of the additional routes out of the area, albeit they are gravel roads, and what not. So that is another area that I was concerned about – just how people would know how to get out of the area unless they were longer time residents. It didn't comfort me to think that, well, if the fire turned around then they would tell us how to get out of here, because there really aren't that many routes out of this valley. I thought some of these things, particularly if I wasn't able to get local stations and radio reception wasn't great in the hills either.

I guess I am suggesting that a) something be done with respect to the Star Choice situation. I am not sure what the situation is with respect to the Bell Express Vu, but I think it might carry the CHBC. I did write to the president of Star Choice and of course I got no response. Somebody did call me and say that – well you know if you get enough of your neighbours calling in and saying we are demanding this service and that service, maybe we will consider it. But that's not what I am really getting at. This was an emergency situation and the technology – which is changing dramatically – is working against the old type of broadcast system. That and the fact that I think the provincial road maps could be a little big bigger, you know use both sides and show more of the roads. I am from Alberta and I know that our map in Alberta also didn't show many of the roads and it must have been the same in Manitoba too, I don't know that for a fact. But these are fairly simple things to do and each of us could have those maps and find ways to get out.

So I was really concerned about those kinds of areas and the number of people who were here and just what would happen in a chaotic situation. You know – if we had to get out of here.

GF I appreciate that very much. Now, can you just give us the spelling of your name?

PL Yes – Lawton and the first name was Philip. And I live in the West Bench area which is just up in the hills outside of Penticton.

GF I had it Laughton –

PL Oh, everybody does. The simple way.

GF They always spell mine Philmon. Anyway – thanks very much, Phil.

PL Can I clarify anything there?

GF Just about radio – I can understand the problem with Star Choice and that may be a little more difficult to deal with, but were there any known radio stations that broadcast the up to date information?

PL There were a couple of stations, one is here in town and I have forgotten the call letters for it, but I found the reception of it was quite spotty and I only live about three or four kilometers from here. I ended up listening quite a bit to the standard broadcasting station out of Kelowna and it was – they did a marvelous job of really just talking the whole time through, and people calling in and whatnot.

It was primarily focused on the situation – I found – on the situation in Kelowna, whereas I was really concerned about the Vaseux Lake fire. So in terms of the daily news broadcasts, the few that I saw with Kevin – what's his name – out of Kelowna, I thought were marvelous presentations. CBC would show them and then cut them off during the question and answer period which I thought was the most interesting part. So I thought they were very good and I just want to put in a plug for the little yellow planes, I thought they were marvelous, and really working hard, as a casual observer.

GF You know it is interesting, is there such a thing as an emergency route map for the lower Okanagan Valley?

PL Well if there is I wasn't aware of it. I was reading the paper every day and I came to the news – they had on Saturday here that they – after the Vaseux Lake fire started and I guess it was the day after all the houses burned in Kelowna – they had a news conference here and I actually went in and I guess they thought I was just a reporter because they let me sit in there. But you know there was no indication that there were any – like route maps available that people should have – or here's even a list of the ways to get out of the community and if you have to go north or south or which way. I wasn't aware of that. It was kind of assumed that – my impression was it was assumed that we would all know which is not true when you have two or three thousand tourists in here at the same time as a lot of us. Or, secondly that if the need came we would get it out and you would know that you had to move – well that's pretty late at that point. That's panic sitting in.

I had my car all ready to go. I was kind of in this planning mode. I had a number of dogs to move and things like that. So I just – you know – found it difficult to find out just where do you go? I am not familiar with the mountains enough to know whether you can go that way or that way.

Oh and if you recall there was a fire down at Osoyoos and there were a couple of other routes along Highway 3 was fairly well closed off in a number of sections and then the highway that goes up through Radium, I think even it was closed at the time. So you know they are the only routes that I knew.

GF Okay, thank you very much.

PL Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity.

Okay, now is there any other person that would like to come forward? Please, Sir.

Graham Baker

Graham Baker, Naramata Fire Chief. I understand what the gentleman has just been talking about. The problem is with the regional district is there is no plan in place and lot of the issues that I have heard about, that side of it could be taken care of if we did regional planning. The problem here is – well it's not just here, it's a problem in general. The directors believe that it is a provincial problem and I guess it is, really, and they are concerned about the cost of drawing up these plans. There's got to be some incentive for the regional districts to be able to draw up these plans. They are important. We have just heard that from the gentleman. All these issues could be taken care of at that point.

I was down in Vancouver at the office of the Fire Commissioners review last week and we came up with some really good viable information which you will get a copy of. As far as the – what I see from our side is – Mitch did an excellent presentation there and he was really true, he was really honest about it. As far as the Fire Commissioners office goes, they know there were problems but trying to fix it and the only way that will fix it is if the political will is there. If the political will isn't there, then we ain't going anywhere and we really need people to make that known to the politicians that we need to emergency plan – we need to get the offices – the office of the Fire Commissioner up and running properly and we need them also to be in constant – how can I put it – closer to PEP and closer to the Forestry so that they are all speaking the same language. That way I think we can all get on a lot better.

Other than that, I think everybody did a helluva job with what we had.

GF I appreciate your coming forward Chief Baker. You know, we have had an opportunity to meet at some length with the OFC as well as the MOF and certainly I think at the upper levels they were in close contact throughout the process, but I think I understand – I mean I have to be honest with you, one of the previous speakers indicated that their entire budget is \$1.7M a year, I think for the office of the Fire Commissioner.

GB Yes, it was a ministry on its way out because they were getting out of suppression altogether and just going as a policy type office. And it ain't going to work for the fire service because we need some leadership in there somewhere. And I think it comes from there down through the fire services in situations like this.

The only other thing I would like to say is as far as local politicians go, is looking into regional fire fighting so we can take down some of those borders, so we can go beyond the districts. And it is something that I have always been supportive of and I think it is something that really should be looked at. And the sharing of resources as well.

GF Well, I – you have given us some food for thought which actually coincides with quite a bit of other information that is being put forward. There is no question that there are huge gaps in terms of coverage for fire fighting and where there aren't municipal jurisdictions in place, there aren't fire fighters in place. So it is a significant gap. Thank you very much.

GB Thank you.

Are there other presenters who would like to come forward this afternoon? Sir.
Welcome.

David Perry

Thank you very much. Mr. Filmon my name is David Perry, I am Mayor of Penticton. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you. I will make my points relatively brief.

There are three issues that I wanted to draw to the attention of the commission, jurisdiction issues, infrastructure and the operation of the Emergency Operations Centre. I am sure you have heard similar concerns, perhaps, in your travels. I think it is necessary to let you know from our perspective on the local level the kinds of experiences that we had.

With respect to the jurisdictional issues and as you are aware we were in between two significant fires – the Okanagan Mountain fire to the north threatening Naramata a jurisdiction in our regional district, and the Vaseux lake fire to the south which threatened Okanagan Falls and other rural areas, also part of the regional district to the south. So, unlike our experience in 1994 where we were the centre of a major fire, the Garnet fire, which impacted our community directly and we lost houses related to that. This was a little different situation but nonetheless had the potential to be an equal catastrophe, if not greater on that scale.

Our initial concern was with the issue of jurisdiction and it was not clear from the outset as to who was going to be in charge, whether the regional district of the Okanagan-Similkameen or Penticton as the largest municipality in that jurisdiction. In our view this needs to be clarified at the provincial level. There needs to be a strict and clear determination as to who takes on that responsibility and if it is the largest municipality in the regional district that takes that on, that is clear, but we were thrust into this difficult situation. We were forced through circumstances to ramp up our staff very quickly on the Thursday night of the advancement of the fire and we really had no choice in that regard. We were not clear as to what the jurisdictional issues are, we assumed it was the regional district that was to take on that responsibility, but clearly as I will mention in my concluding comments you needed to step to the plate and fill a void and we did that and we are very proud of that.

As I just heard the Fire Chief from Naramata say and emphasize, we find very quickly whether it is floods or toxic spills or fires, there are no boundary issues for those kinds of disasters so we also should establish a process that creates a fluid component with respect to that. We shouldn't be stopped or inhibited or have time delays in any way with respect to that. It needs to be clear as to where the jurisdictional responsibilities lie. We overcame that in a very quick manner and set up an emergency operation centre and to all reports it operated very effectively. We were able to overcome that but certainly for the future it would help if those levels were clear.

The second is a bit of a local issue. I am going to make an appeal – we will aim it at the federal government and we will leave the provincial government

off the hook at this point in time. We have an infrastructure problem in our areas that are adjacent to the interfaced area. So to put it concisely, previous councils put pipe in the ground to service our agricultural area that is no longer adequate for fire protection and those are now areas of increasing growths that are adjacent to the interface. We are appealing to other levels of government to provide infrastructure funding opportunities for such disaster situations that would allow us to ensure that we have adequate water supply in the areas to the north and to the south of our community that border on the interface. Because, that is and will become absolutely critical.

The residents of Naramata Road who are intimately familiar with this situation lived in fear of their properties during this particular period of time and they had every right to express concern about that. They continue to express concern to members of city council. I have a letter with me today from Stockwell Day, our MP, showing that they have met with him and I know they have met with our MLA. We are attempting to proceed with an upgrade to that water supply issue as quickly as we can, but obviously we are limited with dollars and planning capabilities in that regard.

As we see the potential and we hear the potential from those experienced in the environmental end for these kinds of situations returning to the interface areas we need to ensure that we have adequate infrastructure out there to meet those needs in an emergency situation. So, point made.

The third is with respect to the Emergency Operation Centre. I have got to be blunt here it was of very great concern to us about the provincial people parachuting in with what I will call a mandate to spend money at all costs. That concerned us significantly and so we very quickly attempted to put controls in place and were successful in putting controls in place to ensure that that money was spent in a responsible manner. But it was of some shock to us as politicians and also to staff to see the willingness of emergency operation people to want to spend money without controls. So we were able to interfere with that process. There was some politicking that went on but we were successful in establishing a control process to the extent where I have a copy of a recent issue of the Chartered Accountants Magazine and two of our local accountants are written up in that magazine under the heading "Okanagan CGAs Fight Fire with Software" – because they developed a software program for the Emergency Operation Centre which tracked those dollars and allowed them to control very rigorously where those dollar expenditures were occurring.

And so I am not sure what the answer is to that – whether the local people, because it is their involvement need more authority with respect to that – I am not going to suggest that, but there was a real difference between the attitude of the provincial people that came in and appeared to have no limits on what they were prepared to do, as to the local people that were brought on in an emergency situation from a staffing point of view. To that end I am very proud

of not only our local city accountants and community accountants that got involved in that process, but our local city hall staff in general that went forward with that mentality of working for the taxpayer and assuring that even in an emergency situation the taxpayers were getting the best bang for their buck as it were.

That is the third point. The final point I would like to make is a celebratory one and that is in spite of difficulties that we might have encountered here, community pulls together and that was a mandate through that entire operation and it certainly happened on the local level. The community rose to the challenge on all different levels, they met that challenge and they pulled together in time of crises. So, I am particularly proud of the residents, not only of Penticton, but the residents of Naramata and the residents of the Okanagan Falls area to the south that pulled together and cooperated to ensure that we did our best to beat back this threat to our communities.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

GF Thank you very much, Your Worship, I appreciate your comments. The issue of who was in charge is an issue that has occurred on other presentations and I am not familiar with the regional district concept because we don't have that in Manitoba. So that is going to be one of the issues that is going to have to be sorted out because I am a believer of delegating responsibility to those who are closest to the action and competent to deal with it. Local municipalities are the lead agency in Manitoba in emergency circumstances. Situations such as was referred to in the Naramata fire department would be absolutely acceptable and part of the emergency plan because they are the people on the spot. They are the people who know their area, they are the people who know where all the resources are, have the inventory of things at their disposal and so on. And, the only thing that is required then, is a constantly updated plan – emergency plan for the municipality and they implement it, they take charge, with an understanding that there is provincial direction. So that there is somebody out there who is coordinating so that we don't step on each other's toes or run into each other trying to do the same job. But, there is this concept of gaps here because of the regional setup where you don't have incorporated municipalities and so you have vast areas that just simply are not covered. That is a serious problem that has got to be dealt with.

It's an interesting thing that you put forward as to – you know, if there isn't an organization plan that specified who is in charge, then invariably a leader comes to the fore who takes charge and people just generally follow that person. It's fascinating and very heartwarming to see those people step up to the plate, so to speak. It shouldn't be left to chance, though. That's an issue.

I am not sure that this is the right forum, I have certainly made note of your comments and everything that is said here today is part of the public record

and will be attached as part of the public record to my report. I am not sure that I am going to be your negotiator to get you infrastructure money, though. That's something I think that is going to be left up to other people and obviously you have your avenues of approach to the provincial and federal governments. I think it's fair to say that throughout this country I don't think there is any province in which there isn't a serious infrastructure deficit and I will be interested – and I don't want to get political here – but I will be interested in seeing whether or not Mr. Martin's new approach includes significant investment in infrastructure, because as Premier, when he was Finance Minister he turned us down cold, so we will see what happens. I don't want to get political here.

DP But we hear you.

GF The issue here of provincial people parachuting in with a mandate to spend money and no limits on spending – I am curious if you have a theory as to why all of a sudden people would come in here with a mandate to spend and there be no checks and balances or limits on their spending. What is your view on that?

DP I don't have a view on that except that I guess there are departments that have that kind of latitude but it was somewhat stunning to us to see that taking place on the local level. And it gives rise into a feeder syndrome, where groups come forwards saying, well we have an opportunity to benefit from this for our organization so we are going to get on the gravy train too – and its not an entirely healthy experience. So I am not sure what it was like in other areas, maybe Penticton was just the anomaly and they want to spend a lot of money here, which we welcome under different circumstances. But it was something that I felt obliged to mention. Because we were really tasked to provide the services to wrestle control of that away and ensure that things were being conducted in an efficient manner and it didn't result quite in fist-fights on the fire hall floor, but there were certainly lots of backroom dialogue going on with respect to that. So it is just a recommendation that I am sure you will carry back to the province that our government is very fiscally responsible, that is their driving force and so I am sure they will be concerned about that kind of thing. Money needs to be spent in times of emergency, but it still needs to be spent in a responsible manner would be our position.

GF Yes, that just makes good common sense. I will say I am only half-way through the public consultation process that I have not heard anybody say that money was being denied them. That hasn't yet been said by anybody. So I will be interested to see if I hear that in the next five days of consultation, but nobody has alleged that money was withheld that should have been spent. The positive side to that, as I am interpreting it, is that the government did say these fires are a number one priority, people's lives and properties are at risk and we are going to do everything we can to ensure that we fight it. That's a positive side of things. The other side of things, of course is that under any

circumstances there should be controls and discretion and judgments where questions are asked – do we really need to do this, or is this really an extravagance under the circumstances.

Again, I appreciate your comments on that because it is something we will certainly look into. Thank you very much for coming.

DP Thank you very much.

Okay, is there anyone else who would like to come forward? Seeing none, I will repeat ... tape over ...

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, a number of our speakers are here and so we will get started early if we may. I would just like to welcome some of you back and others of you here this evening and we have a presentation firstly from Dan Donahoe. Please come forward, and welcome.

Dan Donohoe:

Good evening. I live on Shelake(?) Road. I have lived there for twenty-three years. I stayed through the entire fire and I just had a couple of comments to make. First of all I think having been there firsthand and staying there through the whole thing, that everybody did a wonderful job. The main reason I am here is the comments I heard on the radio directed towards the Fire Commissioners office in regard to the gel.

I believe my house was the very first house in the whole fire that the gel was used on. At that time I was out working with the Gorman Brothers fire crew. We started from the corner of my property and heading east the Chute(?) Lake was used as a guard and from my property we headed down to Okanagan Lake and within six hours we had a guard put in about five or six kilometers. When I got back, my house was covered in gel, top to bottom. Which, I wasn't supposed to be there so I didn't say anything. There was the guy that said it's very easy to come off and blah blah blah, and I would just like to tell you a few stories about this gel.

It doesn't come off very easy. I've never had a house claim in my life, just to get it off was \$11,000. It pulled all the finish off the buildings, at least \$15,000 next year. I've lived out there like I said 23 years and it's always been the onus is on you to look after your place. I had sprinklers on the roof, the sprinklers were going three to four days, non-stop. I had my own backup pump in the creek, my own system set up, and about a week after the gel was applied the fire headed to Kelowna and that was the main centre. I phoned the Fire Commissioners office and talked to a man whose main job – he is the chief in Kamloops and he gave me the name of the gel guy.

Anyhow, to make a long story short, I am not so sure this stuff is a great product. It works great in a text book situation. When we were out there, the gel only works when it is moist. In 30 to 35 degree temperatures it would dry out every three hours. It was virtually impossible for me working around the clock to keep both buildings in the gel in an active state. How practical that is, I know in my case it isn't. Second of all taking it off is bad news. I think prevention is the big thing and as a perk to the Forest Service, they have had Forest interface seminars with us at Chute Lake – it was a number of years ago, but Dennis Gaudry(?) and Jim Moddishaw(?) put them on. Since then I know myself and many neighbours have tried our best to clear around and blah, blah, blah. The park was the big stumbling block. There was – they weren't allowed to let a natural fire burn in there and there was no logging allowed and that's basically the two comments I have is the gel. My sister's house burned in Kelowna, it was gelled. It was gelled immediately before the firestorm so I am definitely not sold on the gel.

GF Thank you very much, Dan. The sprinklers on your roof, they are on the exterior of the roof?

DD I have always had – I made steel brackets and they were fastened to the roof. I have hoses coiled up that reach five integral spots – one on my shop, four on the house and all I have to do is throw a ladder up, climb up, put the sprinkler pipe in the stands and turn them on. I figured in most cases I would lose power so I had a backup on to pump at my well site that would achieve the same thing. So I could turn this on and leave. After a long, hard discussion with the guy that sells the gel, who is obviously promoting the gel, at the end of the conversation when I asked him to come out and show me how to take this gel off, he said that a log house with sprinklers on the roof should never have been gelled.

GF Do the sprinklers in any way leak so that you have water damage inside?

DD No.

GF So it just goes around the exterior.

DD After four days I was actually concerned with the saturation of the ground, and I was turning them off in the evening. It was a shake roof, the shakes were soaked right through. Not only that, the grass is wet, everything is wet around it. It's easy to clean up, too.

GF Well, thank you very much for your comments, Dan, I appreciate it.

The next presentation is from Debra Silk. Welcome. Would you like us to sit out there, or are these the copies of the presentation.

Debra Silk:

It probably looks better on the screen.

GF Okay, sure.

DS Well first of all I just also wanted to say from one Manitoban to another, welcome and thank you for taking this arduous project on. I am going to speak tonight about my summer vacation.

I am the PET services coordinator for the emergency social services, City of Penticton. We also cover the south Okanagan and we have been through a couple of fires in this province before. My experience in this power point presentation is also with a group called Noah's Wish. Since the finish of all the fires, we actually have started a national emergency animal rescue team and I will speak about that a little bit more later.

This particular photograph in Kelowna is one of the famous Steve Devris(?) photos that I think everybody has seen. Our team which has a base in Penticton and Summerland of 17 people started off on standby in the Winthrop and Farewell Creek fire. This particular picture in Anarkis(?) Mountain. There are actually three aircraft in that picture and our focus of course is on emergency animal rescue. The only province that we experienced in Osoyoos was, like everybody else, a lack of information coming forward on the fire. We were particularly lucky in that the Brand Inspector lived quite high up so we could just call him seven times a day and he would tell us where the fires were. In Osoyoos we only had one dog to intake and that is Smoky the Dog, now a spokesperson for all forest fires. And Smoky I am pleased to say that he is moving to the United States on December 13th. One of the things that we do when we take in animals during a disaster is we guarantee them a home. Not an easy task, especially for a rotti-lab cross. I just threw this in there because between all these fires while we were waiting for the Winthrop fire to activate, we ended up with a gas leak in Penticton and just to show you – here we were next door at the community centre. We only had one dog there, too and of course he had a home.

Then on August first we heard on CBC radio that Barriere was burning to the ground so we called our friends and associates in Barriere to find out exactly the status of what was happening. We couldn't find anybody there, ended up calling Pre-ops(?) in Kamloops and it really has to go on record that the Provincial Emergency Program staff – all the people in Pre-Ops that we dealt with were amazingly helpful when it concerned animals.

A lot of the people at Pre-ops were new to a fire of this magnitude. I mean it was something none of us had ever seen before. And the people in charge to respond to a disaster like this was the Kamloops SPCA. We were asked to contact them and at that particular time they said that no help was needed. But, because we had been through a couple of disasters like this before, we

just sort of persevered and bugged everybody and then finally the Kamloops SPCA, the manager there asked us if we would cover the northern flank of the fire. We had secured a site at 100 Mile Ranch in 100 Mile House and then four of us were deployed to go out to that particular ranch. There was an ESS reception centre set up in 100 Mile House and a lot of evacuees from Barriere, Darfield, Littlefort and Clearwater. Actually because they went north they ended up in 100 Mile House and some of them actually went the loop through Cache Creek and down to Kamloops.

We started off with about seven or eight volunteers, a strong volunteer team at the ranch and we were two hours away from the fire which was good as far as cattle and horses and other livestock went. But, because the Strawberry Hill fire started also, we slowly lost all of our volunteers and we ended up with four strong volunteers and at this particular site we absolutely learned the importance of convergent volunteers. And convergent volunteers are people that we call the local people who know the area, know the land, know all the gullies, know where all the livestock are. They have the horse trailers and we've always maintained that it is your horse people for animals who are going to make or break your disaster.

This is where we lived. This is our team actually on the last day. There are four of our team members, plus all the local people who were helping us on a daily basis. We lived in this old historical ranch barn. Lots of stables, it doesn't look like much from the outside, but it actually had showers and it was a nice bunk house. So as far as disasters go we were pretty lucky.

We had a lot of puppies. During the day we had fences and we made kennels for them outside. At night we put them in the stables but as you can see we had to – there was no way that was going to hold that little puppy or the seven more of him – so we had to put hay bales up there.

This particular photograph, little mini horses – these horses were evacuated twice. I think you can see on this particular shot you can see some water droplets. It actually started raining that night. That was one of the problems that we experienced at the range – we had what we called a rumour board and every time we heard rumours we would write them up. When we heard that the fire went north past Bonaparte Lake the decided to put in an evacuation order for the Lake District area and it caused quite a kafuffle because we had a lot of animals that were evacuated to that area. It wasn't actually in any particular danger, and they probably didn't even need to be put on an evacuation alert, and within 24 hours that was certainly corrected, but there was a lot of Kafuffle on this particular night. There was an emergency meeting the next night and the evacuation order was rescinded.

Although in our title we call ourselves the Emergency Animal Rescue, most of our work is actually feed, transporting and sheltering animals during a disaster. This is just a couple of shots – I think that's a Corola Statler(?) shot.

Here we have two of our volunteers. A lot of cattle in the Barriere area. On the right you see one of our volunteers, Janet, who was feeding her own animals before she was allowed to go out on any search and rescue.

We now know the difference between a Chestnut and a Sorrel and probably a lot of people don't. Because of the magnitude of the number of horses that were in that particular area, rather than in taking all the animals at the ranch, we would send our volunteers out to where they were being billeted and do all the paperwork there.

We made some mistakes and we have learned from our mistakes. But we made some big mistakes and I have to put this in here just because the Ministry of Agriculture told us that we were allowed to order 30 tons of hay and I asked the hauler how much it was and he said \$145, and I am a city person so I called our treasurer and I said Anne, can you cut a cheque for \$145. So that is just to show the Ministry of Ag guys that we learn from our mistakes too, because it is \$145 a round bale. I never could understand why those guys made any money.

We were on a working ranch so we had to be up and at 'em by six o'clock in the morning and we were very mindful of the fact that it was a working ranch. This particular shot – I came back to the Okanagan, I think it was on August the 4th or 5th and we told a lot of the people here what we were doing and they realized that we were really short of hay. We had a lot of livestock up in that area and we were – and if they hay wasn't burned, we were having trouble getting it and we ended up getting those thirty bales from Alberta. So the people of the Okanagan all pitched in and at 2:00 o'clock one morning this hauler arrived and phoned us and said we have hay for you from the Okanagan. So it's just a nice hospitality shot there.

These were two cats that were forfeited by their family because they had five cats and these two youngsters – their home was burned down in the Kamloops area and we ended up finding them a home.

This is an orphan squirrel. One of the evacuees, as they were evacuating something happened to the mother squirrel and they ended up bringing in six little babies. Normally our policy is not to handle wild life but before we could get these little guys to a rehab centre, we had to make sure they were eating on their own and healthy. So we thought we would colour-code their legs with jiffy markers, but little squirrels pee all the time and they certainly lost their pinks and blues and green colours. So we had them actually eating on their own in about four days and then they went up to the rehab centre in Williams Lake.

We had some perfect guests like our sheep. And here is Rosy the dog who is actually sad to leave the ranch. One of our policies is not to use volunteers who are under 19 years of age in British Columbia. Our experience in 100

Mile was a little bit different because we didn't have the resources that they had in Kamloops and Kelowna to call on the corporate community and the amount of volunteers. And these two youngsters were coming by every day and mucking out stables and paddocks and doing a lot of work around the ranch, not with animals. And then finally we were so short of people that we asked their parents, and we asked the guardians of the dogs if these youngsters could do doggie walking for us and they were just invaluable. The same goes for some of our retirees.

This gentleman would show up every morning at 7:00 o'clock just so that he had something important to do for the day. He didn't even know on day six whether or not his home had been burned in Barriere so he was a little – by day six we were finding that people were absolutely frantic and we would go to public meetings. The emotions were starting to get real raw.

Here we had put out a call for fencing and this fencing had actually come to us from Williams Lake and we just set it up in a triangular fashion along the fences.

Going home days – this dog had been with us from day one. It wasn't unusual for us and this was a problem that we experienced in this particular area – if our people were to go onto a property and there would be 40 dogs and then maybe two doors later they would go onto a property and there would be 60 dogs. A lot of the people who are working on our team are animal welfare people and when we go in under emergency social services, we are working under the Emergency Act and it is very clear to our people what Act they are going in under. At no time do you do an investigation or you make any judgments and it didn't take our people long to get into that. Although, personally it was probably very difficult for them and it was something that we do vent amongst ourselves.

I can tell you that although some of the homes had forty dogs, some of them were also quite pristine and the dogs were in excellent condition. In one particular home there were a number of dog kennels and cat kennels ready to go in horse trailers which were already attached to trucks and ready to go at a moment's notice if necessary. That wasn't always the case.

This particular dog, Razz was an eleven year old shepherd that grew up with those three girls and they lost their home in Louis Creek. Although they were sad, of course, that they lost their home, they were going through a lot of emotional problems just with their mom and dad, but they were just interested in making sure their dog was okay.

At the ranch we did an animal intake. I think it was 84 horses, 109 cows, 19 bulls, two sheep, 33 dogs, 17 cats, six squirrels, and three birds. We worked very closely with the Ministry of Agriculture. Hay allotment was a big concern. Mortality was probably our biggest issue in the Barriere area. By day three we

wanted to get our teams in behind the roadblocks to start doing carcass removal as well as some burials on property. The Ministry of Agriculture was 100% cooperative in getting us the information we needed for the logistics of accomplishing that. What we found was that a lot of the local people handled some of the mortality which, in our experience, it probably should be people from outside the area because we now know that we are experiencing some of those people who handled the mortality issues are having some negative feedback from that, from themselves.

Probably one of the biggest impacts of animals in the Barriere and the McLure fire is the cattle and to the best of our knowledge right now and with the help of the Cattlemen's Association at one time we thought we had lost 600 head. We now believe that number is between 80 and 100, and it probably won't be for a couple of years before we actually find out the exact numbers.

One of the things that we have learned from the Kelowna fire was a lot of the cattle had burnt feet – burnt hooves – melted hooves and were destroyed as result of that. One of the things we learned in the Kelowna fire was that they actually can recover depending on the extent of their injuries – which is quite a surprise.

I think we came back from Barriere on August 12th to a much needed rest, and then Kelowna happened. And we were all watching that fire and I have to admit I was as guilty as everybody else in saying they've got everything under control. We just didn't ever think it was going to happen here again. We have all see these pictures.

So the animals that we dealt with in Kelowna were chickens, goats, alpacas, horses, cattle, llamas and birds. It was absolutely amazing to us in the Mission area in Kelowna and in that interface area how many chickens there were.

One of the – our first night, I think it was early evening on the 22nd we had a call from a dog kennel. A lot of people have heard of our team before, probably under a different name, but a lot of the emergency personnel haven't ever worked with us before. In order for us to get in behind road blocks we have to establish credibility and work with the RCMP who is always in charge of an evacuated area. There was no way anyone was going to get through those roadblocks and it took us seven hang-ups before the staff sergeant finally relented and asked us what our plan was for this particular kennel. He gave us four minutes to go in and remove fifteen dogs. We went in with three trucks and I think it took us eleven minutes. The RCMP was happy, though, with that.

Another thing that we have to do when there is a disaster of this magnitude is – because a lot of the people were not in their homes in this particular area on August 22nd and August 23rd – we don't whether cats were in houses or

out of houses so a lot of cats went missing and cat trapping does become a priority.

On that top shot you can see that boat – all around it it's completely charred and in that boat is a full tank of gas.

I don't know whether you can see on the bottom, the giraffes on the bottom slide there. I think it was the fire fighters who put those for the photo op.

Stanley the Cat – is what we call a miracle because Stanley – we had a rescue request to go in and get Stanley from one address and my partner and I ended up going to the wrong address, quite a different location, picked up a cat we thought was Stanley and by the time we got back to Parkinson's Rec Centre, it turned out it was Stanley and Stanley had the wrong house too.

We also had – one of our guests was Bennie, a turtle, who responded quite well to people's voices and we had our volunteers actually take him out on the grass and just go for walks.

We also had six fish. The six fish were actually brought by Bennie's guardian, but they fell in love with the six fish too so they became pets.

In Kelowna it is thoroughbred country and unfortunately where the fire was there was – I'm sorry, I don't have the stats, but I know there were over 70 thoroughbreds. We were very lucky that we had the full cooperation of the Bennett ranch, both Bennett ranches, actually on the west side of Kelowna as well as near the airport so that we could house a lot of the animals. It was a little scary sometimes going over the bridge because you had to use whatever horse trailers you could, and putting thoroughbreds into an Arabian two-horse angle haul, and if you are the car behind there it can be a little bit scary for you.

And then, on the first full moon after the fire we just decided to take the opportunity to show the full moon and hopefully everybody will have a new beginning.

That's it for my PowerPoint – if you want so I don't have to keep turning my neck.

We found the difference in the different cities and the set-ups in the different cities quite diverse, quite different. We fell in under emergency social services, we were hoping that with your help people will take the animal situation a bit more seriously. We have – the Department of Agriculture – there is no way anybody can ever expect any Department of Agriculture to handle all the hobby horses in today's world. If they can handle the commercial properties in any kind of a disaster I think even that sometimes can be pushing it.

Wherever you look now in any community you will have a lot of people who have horses or some sort of livestock but they may not have horse trailers. I am not sure who should have the responsibility of looking after those animals, but one of the things that we are experiencing now constantly is a lot of people will not leave their property if their animals can't go with them. It's becoming a nightmare for us just because in a lot of the interface areas there could be one road in and if they ever have to be evacuated through air or through rough terrain, there is no way out for a lot of animals and a lot of people will not leave.

One of the things we experienced in the Garnet fire in 1994, and we are seeing it constantly, is people will sneak in to get their animals. So if somebody doesn't address this formally, we are going to probably have more nightmares in future. We are finding more and more people want to stay on their property. Our advice to everybody with any kind of animals is if you have anything from budgies to elephants, you move them at evacuation alert time, or possibly even fire watch time. Any animal that is difficult to move, we are asking people to move them at evacuation alert. Even during the Mt. Ida(?) fire when we evacuated the rehab centre up at Keytoo(?) wildlife refuge it seemed like much ado about nothing – but it could have been so much worse if we hadn't acted. So although, you know, you may have casualties in moving, if the fire was to go through – once an evacuation order comes down, nobody can help people. Because, once those roadblocks go up ,,,

Now the team we have set up which has become a national team – we are starting here in Penticton in the south Okanagan. We have worked and met with Mr. Motishaw(?) who is helping us develop a nice forestry course for our people and the human search and rescue people – citizens on patrol. Because we have got to get behind those roadblocks a lot earlier than we are – and, in order to do that we have got to build up our credibility with the emergency people like the RCMP and Forestry. We take it very seriously with safety of course being our biggest issue.

Flood season starts in February, goes to May and we are already working on boating courses starting in January just to have a little bit – developing policy and procedure because there is nothing actually in Canada at this stage.

We found the lack of information in the Winthrop fire and the Osoyoos fire frustrating. The abundance of information in Penticton and I think a lot of that we are finding is that a lot of our people here have been through the Garnet fire, so they have learned how to acquire information. Our ESS director and the City of Penticton have been 100% supportive for animal issues in this area and we are very lucky because we are one of the few teams in the province that have that support.

We need the support for the other ESS directors. We would like to fall under Emergency Social Services because we are doing a service for the evacuees.

We had tremendous help from a lot of the corporate communities – corporate sponsors like Telus, I know they are getting a lot of bad press lately but they certainly been wonderful with the animal team and the evacuees.

I think that's it. That ends my presentation.

GF Thank you very much Debra. This is an area that we have not heard about previously and so we really appreciate you coming here and sharing these experiences with us. Can you tell me just a bit about where your funding comes from? Are you a totally volunteer organization?

DS We are totally a volunteer organization. We will be approaching the corporate community. We have worked with a number of animal charities. In Kelowna we also worked with the SPCA. I actually do a course for Emergency Social Services Association and we have gone to a number of communities throughout the province and where we recommend where you have SPCAs and humane societies within your community, you use them not as the disaster response team because they have enough to do and they are always working under a lot of pressure anyway. But use them as part of your search and rescue team and as part of your emergency sheltering. We find your volunteers, the commitment you get from your volunteers in every community – that certainly came to the forefront this summer – the people are there to help and they are quite dedicated and they want to help. It just needs to get organized. They are there and they do want to help.

With your permission, our experience in Kelowna was a bit different and I am having troubles finishing that report and I have two meetings this week that we are meeting with the ESS director in Kelowna. With your permission, I would like to submit that to you when that is complete if you don't mind? That report you have there is my report on Barriere, so I think it's a 13 page report – Kelowna will be as lengthy.

GF Okay, how many people are involved in your organization? We have 17 in the south Okanagan as a core group and that is from before August. We have a number of people who came on as convergent volunteers and we have just gone through our debriefing with the Ministry of Agriculture as well as our team debriefing on November 18th. We can easily double that just with the convergent volunteers. Every day we are getting phone calls from people who want to help. We are taking next summer and the summer after very seriously because there is a lot of fuel on those forest floors. There are a lot of people who have a lot of livestock that will have to get out. We are working on a number of evacuation plans with a lot of the smaller communities. We get a lot of our training through Emergency Social Services but we are really grass-roots, developing a lot of the training ourselves. We are meeting with a company down in Vancouver on boating and safety. So we are learning as we go and through a lot of experience.

The convergent volunteer factor though is people being a part of our search and rescue team, whereas before the summer I felt that we should be bringing in teams maybe a complete disaster response team from another area. We are really finding we need the local people, not totally 100% but certainly on every team that goes out you want some local people there. And also for your mapping, for all of your search and rescue efforts you need those local people.

GF The losses you spoke of were principally large animals, cattle and horses. Were there many losses in the animal pets?

DS Many – more so in Kelowna, and that is because a lot of those people could not get back into their houses and they are probably statistics that we are never going to have in accurate amount because people who can't talk about it and if they have indoor cats – a lot of houses burned down in Kelowna that did have housecats and people will not and cannot talk about it. Maybe in time they will be able to, they are just not able to now. To my knowledge, in Kelowna we lost two dogs, we lost another dog, an older dog, stress related afterwards. We lost two horses in Kelowna. One was a trailering accident and one was from where we had to put some of the thoroughbreds at a cattle ranch and the cattle ranching fencing is much lower. One of the horses went right through the fence and he had to be shot. And we almost lost a third, and she is quite injured but she is going to make it. In Kelowna we had, I think it was 33 cattle that we were worried about. We had one fellow who had tenure up in Okanagan Mountain Park just above there and he did have some burned cows and burned hooves and udders, but he did take twelve of them to his home and they have healed, contrary to our veterinarians and experience. None of us have ever been through this before. So, unless you are watching Little House on the Prairie, you don't know. So we are learning as we go.

Birds, we lost a lot of chickens. A lot of the chicken loss, any fowl loss was probably due more to dehydration. We could not get into Barriere, Agate Bay, Louis Creek early enough and we should have been able to get in earlier if we had the credibility that we really need. This is something we are certainly going to have to work on, but we need people to listen to us, too. Safety being the biggest issue. Because feeding – water, they need water.

GF And that is an issue that I think there will be some disagreement on – the timing – I don't know what you see as the solution, but clearly when people are evacuated then they don't want others to go in and put themselves in harms way. So do you see it as being a process that needs to be done as soon as an evacuation alert is given, before people are ordered to evacuate. Is that when you see as the right time?

DS Absolutely, and then when an evacuation order is given, where roadblocks are already up and maybe the human search and rescue team is already in there,

knocking on doors and telling people they have to leave – we want to be in there at that time as well because then we can help them with their animals.

GF Okay. I think that's all the questions I have. Thank you very, very much.

DS Thank you.

Our next presenter is Dan Ashton of the Regional District.

Dan Ashton:

Thank you very much for coming.

GF You are welcome and welcome to you.

DA I apologize for the weather that we have presented you with today. Normally our weather would be able to fix up those sniffles that you have at this time of year. But unfortunately winter has set in here.

GF I was very excited to be able to say when I landed in Kelowna yesterday that we didn't have any snow in Winnipeg and you had snow here. But now we have snow in Winnipeg I understand, today.

DA Well the difference to Winnipeg and here is ours melted, yours probably didn't.

Our thanks to the province and yourselves for taking the time to listen to all those who are involved in the wild fire situation in British Columbia this past summer. The openness and willingness to listen will make a difference in case of a future situation of the magnitude of emergency which was faced by so many.

Our remarks within our submission are not meant to be critical, but are meant to give constructive criticism to a situation that should not be repeated within the status quo. Please accept our thoughts and ideas on how to make the future situation – excuse me, I will retract that. Please accept our thoughts and ideas on how to make future situations better for all those who will be involved in one way or another. On behalf of myself and the Regional District again thank you for this process it has been much appreciated. I will be giving you a submission tonight, a four page submission.

I will not burden you with reading through it, however I do want to bring one thing to your attention and it is item three in the submission, and I will quote. It says local government administration should be involved in the planning and initial response process, however it is unreasonable to expect local government to continue to divert various employees to the emergency for extended periods of time. PEP does not reimburse local governments for its costs incurred by local government staff during normal working hours. This is unreasonable considering the length of time the various emergencies may present. Even though the fires did have an effect economically, normal day to day operations of the day to day municipalities and regional districts had to continue with staff shortage being a very severe problem. Myself, I sit as a councilor at the City of Penticton and I also chair the Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen and basically the core of the city of Penticton was stripped and put into the EOC centre. In doing so the onus on those that remained was to try and continue with the day to day operation and it was a very difficult process because business continues, even though the fires were

on the hillsides, the ongoing business of the municipality and the regional district had to continue.

People still wanted to build houses, wanted to take out building permits, there were land fill issues to look at, water and sewage engineering to look after. Those are the things that we are faced with and you can't bring staff in for that in the training, where it was felt that more emergency preparedness staff could be made available in the situation once it got to an extended period of time.

So again, thank you very much for tonight. That was just one point that I wanted to bring forward that I thought was quite important and again if you would accept, I have given you four copies here. If there is anything else that is required, we would be more than pleased to pass along any assistance.

GF Thank you very much. I think it might be of interest for us to just hear the whole report. It sounds as though it is not that long – four pages – would you mind going through it with us?

DA I can Sir, but to be honest with you if you don't mind, I know there are other people who are waiting. You have had a long day and so I would, if it's possible, submit it to you. There are some comments in there that I am sure that you will take to heart and again I just don't want to tie you up, I see other people who are waiting.

GF Okay, well thank you very much for coming.

DA Are there any questions of the Regional District, or ...

GF Well there has been comments made I think in the course of today about, I guess the confusion as to whether or not this was an issue in which the lead agency at the local level was the regional district or whether it was the city of Penticton, this being the largest municipal jurisdiction within the regional district. So, what is your view on that?

DA Well again I am torn between being a councilor and Chair at the Regional District. Yes, the city is the largest jurisdictional governance body within the fire system that we had but again I would point out that there was not only the Okanagan Lake, Okanagan Park fire. We had the Vaseux fire and we also had the Anarkis fire in rapid succession so it was a very taxing situation for all. As a region district, we run a very tight and lean ship and we did not have the manpower or the ability to staff an EOC centre. Penticton came to the rescue, being the largest contributor to the regional district system at 42%. They stepped up to the plate, but it is a bone of contention between the regional district and the city of Penticton. As a regional district we are thankful that they were there and had that ability to do it as we were unable to fulfill what I would say is our obligation at the time.

- GF Are there parts of the regional district that don't have any fire coverage?
- DA Yes and no emergency planning either which is a situation that brings the province in as opposed to bringing the municipal or regional emergency planning into it.
- GF What do you see as the best way to address that?
- DA Well speaking on behalf of myself and not the area directors or some that feel that they do not have the capability to mount a full emergency ...

(tape 4)

... there are areas within it that fit within the parameters of the availability of funding to some very poor nations in the world and they would have to look to the province. They just do not have the capacity to step up to the plate and fulfill the obligations of emergency preparedness.

- GF Is there a role for mutual aid agreements to cover these areas that don't have services?
- DA That may be one way to address it, but here again I would bring into – when you get to a situation which none of us hope is ever repeated in the size and the length and duration, even having a municipality like the city of Penticton which is quite a large municipality, the depth of availability of staffing isn't even there. People were just working around the clock as what we have seen the expenditures coming in and the combination of fires was very expensive. And the numbers that I am hearing thrown around these days are \$700,000 and we ourselves are hoping that if it ever did happen in the future there would be some availability to control some of those costs. However, when you get in a situation like that you have to do what you can with the best resources that you have. And sometimes you end up stepping up to the plate and paying a little bit more, I think, for services than what you should have under different circumstances.
- GF I think one of the reasons that we are doing this review is that I don't think we are going to be lucky enough not to have something like this happen again in the not too distant future, and it is not that I have a crystal ball, but it is just the weather patterns are such that you only need to look to California bursting out and this isn't an isolated incident. We are in a dry cycle, early on, and there is every expectation that we could have it happen again. And it could happen next year or the year after. So, I do think that we need to have a strategy and not just hope that it doesn't happen.
- DA I guess it is one thing to stick your head in the sand and there is one thing to be prepared. On the preparedness of emergency programs, yes I think that is

something that we have to look at and we have to look at it through mutual consideration or provincial consideration but, there again, situations in wild land interface areas we have to look at dry burning and things that we have wanted to address before – in park areas, etc., and those are things that are going to have to come front and centre. There are those that will be stepping up to the plate I am quite sure to complain about fires in early spring or late fall in regard to the pollution and valley smoke, but all one has to do is to think back to what happened this particular summer and realize that it is probably far better to have a prescribed burn than to have a wild fire situation like what Penticton – touch wood – did not face to the extent that others did. However Penticton in 1994 had the one up on the hill and you know that is not that far back in our memory to realize how close it was and how it could happen again on the opposite side. That is one thing that I have to say is that the Penticton Indian Band was very progressive in coming forward and so was the province and the city of Penticton and the regional district to help with emergency prepared plans for themselves.

That was one good thing that came out of this, some of these plans were updated to the effect that if there is a future incident there will be a lot more available resources instantly at somebody's fingertips than what there was as we walked through this situation.

- GF Okay, but it is your position that basically a town or a city like Penticton can't be expected to bear the brunt of the responsibility for the entire regional district, basically.
- DA No, and it shouldn't have to. But again there will have to be planning and mutual cooperation between all areas to do it. It was the duration that was the hard thing. It wasn't something that just rolled in and rolled out of town. This went on and on and the ramping up process – it's one man's perspective – mine, that the ramping up process took its time to reach its peak but it also took its time to de-ramp and there were some of us who were wondering could this not just have been excised and cut off. And hindsight is an exact science so that's why I am glad again to be able to look at all aspects of what transpired here, and hopefully come up with something that is better than what we had to deal with last time.
- GF Okay, thank you very much.
- DA Thank you .
- GF Thank you. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Now we have a presentation from Grant Thompson. I guess Mr. Thompson is not here, so is Bob Gibbard here? Welcome Mr. Gibbard.

Bob Gibbard:

I must preface my remarks in this when I say 'we' I am referring to my wife and I, we are not speaking for those of us who live at Glen Fir and after listening to some of the other things here this evening I am wondering if I should have stayed home.

Good evening and thank you for letting me sound off about some aspects of the Okanagan Mountain fire. Our home is in the Glen Fir area north of Chute creek. The fire was stopped a few hundred yards north of our home. Good management by the fire crews in building a fire guard, good luck by Mother Nature in that the wind changed direction, and a good decision by the fire crews to back light the fire guard probably saved the homes in the Glen Fir area. As a further precaution, some of our homes were gelled. For all this we are very thankful and appreciate all the efforts put in during the fire crisis. The rehab work undertaken after the fire has been to a high standard and we have no complaints.

There are two or three areas where I think there could be some improvement – nothing overly major. A public meeting was held in Penticton after the North Naramata, Indian Rock, Paradise Ranch and Glen Fir areas were evacuated. A lot of fear, worry and frustration were vented at the meeting and the majority of people came away feeling it was almost a waste of time. The people on the panel were knowledgeable in their areas of jurisdiction and I felt they were doing an extremely good job of covering their backsides. No one seemed to be sure where the fire front was, or they wouldn't say. There seemed to be a great lack of any concrete information that the people at the meeting were seeking. I found this hard to handle. A map was available showing the fire front but maps aren't always accurate. Perhaps to get around this, would it not be possible to compile information from fire crew bosses when they come off the fire lines. These reports could be made available to affected property owners as information current at a specific time. At least in this way we could know the proximity of a fire to our home, even if the information was only given once a day.

After the fire was under control and we had returned home, access was still restricted to local residents. Previous to the fire outbreak, the government had closed all back country roads to travel by anyone due to the high fire hazard. Shortly after our return home this travel ban was lifted, yet the local check point was still in place. It appeared that one arm of government didn't know what the other was doing. Even the lady on the check point didn't know the travel ban had been lifted. After a couple of weeks someone from Forestry delivered a number of public notices to be given out to the users of the Chute Lake Road and the local residents.

The notice listed a number of dangers and a number of regulations to worry about. I, individually, felt that the notice was nothing more than a bureaucratic way of covering Forestry's backside. If this kind of notice is necessary, why not

post a large sign on the road? I believe the handout was a waste of time and bordering on an insult to anyone with any common sense.

Lastly, I believe the fire was a result of a number of factors, one of which is the fuel load in the bush. There is probably 70 years of fuel loading out there due to the policy of putting out every fire. Prior to the 1930s fire did thin the forests and remove the fuel loads every ten to thirty years. Many old timers spoke of the smoky summers and falls prior to fire control and Smoky the Bear. It is my hope that the policy makers will have the courage to implement the practice of controlled burns in the Ponderosa Pine/grassland areas up into the Douglas Fir areas. This would reduce wild fire chances and intensity and improve wild life habitat. In the present state we are running a very high risk of another summer like the past one unless changes in policy are undertaken in the very near future.

Thank you very much for your patients and endeavors in this – or your efforts in this endeavour.

GF Thank you very much Mr. Gibbard. I wonder if I could just ask a few questions. The information on affected properties, certainly that is a common theme that we are getting. People want to be informed, they want to have a better communication, especially when they are not sure – having been evacuated – whether their properties are still standing and that sort of thing. I think that there is certainly a great deal of merit in that and the question I guess becomes one of practicality. How often you can get updates and would it be sufficient to have a daily update for you because I don't think that we can ask people who are in charge of the operations to be spending several times a day just giving updates. We want them to do their work, but I know our experience in the floods in 1997 was once a day on a regular basis everybody got the absolute updates as to where everything stood – right from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

BG Myself, I would and I think most of us would be happy but you know as individually my wife and I would be pleased to know that at 9:00 o'clock at night we could get an update that was, say, as of 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, or noon hour, or whatever it is as my comments in there – you know possibly when the fire bosses come off, when the crews come off, you know at that hour if the fire was so far down the hill, or within a quarter mile of residences, I think it would – granted it would bring some worries too, but it would also get rid of the vast feeling of not knowing what is going on. There was the map at the meeting – it was one of these taken by – you know – satellites or whatever they are – you know, it is a thermal type map, but when you transpose those onto a land base map the accuracy isn't as much or isn't as good as getting it from somebody in the field. So our thought was that once a day would be great, as of such and such a time. And I mean I don't think a person could ask for more than that.

At least I wouldn't be looking for more than that.

GF Okay, thank you. The check point in place after the travel ban had been lifted, it sounds strange but anyway – two different departments?

BG I have no idea. It seemed to be somewhat vague. I mean the lady said oh yes, it's because of danger of – you know the trucks coming up and down the road and whatnot, but I – whether it was Forestry or whether it was Highways who put it in or what – but I mean she was unaware. I mean they had lifted the travel ban, so in effect the road was open and yet – I mean she didn't have a big barricade, I know some of the locals were just roaring right through, refusing to stop and acknowledge – because basically that's what it boiled down to. We would stop, you know, my wife and I, and we would even stop to chat a bit, but there didn't seem to be any jurisdiction who said you shall not travel up and down this road unless you are local, or something. Because people would go up along the rail grade and get onto Chute Lake Road, you know – and it was an odd situation and then the hand out notice towards the end. It was totally laughable as far as I was concerned.

GF What was that handout about?

BG It listed all the dangers of falling trees, of ash slides, mud slides if there was a rain event, etc., etc., I mean any of us who lived up there, we were fairly aware of that. I mean anybody with any common sense would be aware of that. And then the regulations were – you know the WCB regulations and hazards – the workplace regulations and what not. Well, unless you are involved in them, I mean if you were logging or something like that then you would be aware of those, but the average citizen isn't – I mean I don't know what they all are. I am not about to try and learn them all either. But it was – in my books it was just a total waste of time and money and it really didn't change anything. You know I think if somebody was trying to cover their backside and that is the feeling that I got out of it is that – it's what I call a CYA.

GF To be fair I think if there were dangers there that people might not be aware of some of those things bear watching.

BG Yes, but I think a sign posted on the roadside that once you pass this point this is what's there. And I mean it catches everybody and – I mean lots of people I think just took that note and crumpled it up and threw it in the fire when they got home.

GF Maybe they could have had the lady at the check point hand them out or something.

BG Well she was handing them out but she said I don't know anything about these. She said man arrived from Forestry and gave them to me.

- GF On the issue of controlled burns, certainly I think you are stating something that most people have been stating and I think this is an issue that needs a great deal more public education because there were clearly reasons why they weren't being done. It wasn't the Ministry of Forests who didn't want to do it, it was public outcry really.
- BG This is very true and society in this valley has the vision, or has the idealistic idea that it was a smoke-free world here prior to the coming of the White man, but that's not the case. It burned off. My father-in-law arrived here in 1926 and he said he was talking with orchardists who had been here for 10 or 15 years before him and he said they complained that many years they had a hard time colouring up their apples because of the amount of smoke that was in the atmosphere. It wasn't getting the sunlight and whatnot. So this is nothing new and society wants a smoke-free atmosphere but under controlled burn conditions when the indices are right, I mean it's pretty, it can be minimal, that's not saying it won't be there. But what we had this summer was a darn sight worse. If we are going to do it under controlled conditions I think we are going to have to bite the bullet and say well that's too bad, we are going to have to live with it, or we'll live with something even worse.
- GF Thank you very much, Mr. Gibbard.
- BG Do you want a copy?
- GF Yes, please could we have a copy? Thank you very much, nice to meet you.

Now, are there any others who would like to come forward? We have exhausted all the names that are on our list unless Grant Thompson has come in the room. If not, please come forward, Sir.

Warren Lee:

My name is Warren Lee, I worked in the Forest industry for probably fifteen years, ten as a professional contractor. Some good points, some bad points. I learned a lot this summer. I was on the Garnet fire and probably four fires this year – just my own opinions on some things that go on and hoping that we could progress from them. I was just going to give my opinion on some things that went on.

It seemed like that things were so busy that it seemed that we had a lot of untrained leaders out there. When you went to work every morning you had the proper ICS set-up but when you got out onto the field it seemed like it all fell apart out there. Also there seemed to be too many untrained workers. I always understood you should have an S100 course which is a WCB requirement to be on the fire line and there were a lot of fire fighters from municipalities and stuff like that working out, and army individuals and a lot of these people had no fire line training at all. They didn't know what any of the equipment was and they didn't have any idea what containment was and starting on the outside of a fire and working your way in. A lot of them were in 600 to 800 feet with fires burning behind them. Sometimes it got a little scary trying to talk to people and a lot of us from the logging industry, whatever, who had been at fires during the fast get out there and it's like you've got to talk to some of these guys and say hey, you know, you can't just run in the bush. Also there was burned off trees and stuff and people were running underneath these things without a proper debrief in the beginning to set them what the safety standards are. And some of them even with that were going out there.

But, anyway, I'll carry on as fast as I can here. It varied a lot from fire to fire. some of them had good structure. Just about every one of them had poor maps or no maps which is not a hard thing to get. I mean all you've got to do is find out whose cutting permit it is and you can go to the local Weyerhaeuser or Gormans or whatever and just walk in and say, I don't care what it costs, get me these maps. I want good coloured detail maps. I want to know where the new roads are, the old roads are and what's activated and what's not. I didn't see that happen on pretty much any fire that I was on. There were terrible maps. By the time you got the maps in it was getting tough.

A lot of them didn't have check in and check out containments. Like these main roads, there needs to be somebody there to check people in when they drive in and check people out when they drive off the hill. There was some lack of structure there.

Once again I will repeat, a lot of workers going into unsafe areas. Poor communications. There were a lot of outfits that didn't have radios and every crew should have had radios whether they were those little Radio Shack ones or not. Even if they weren't the greatest radios and having structure as to what frequencies was used where – there was room for improvement there.

And, like I said, once again a lot of the maps that were supplied were poor – just black and white. I had quite a few maps drawn out to me on a napkin. Some fires had good morning debriefs with weather reports and other ones nobody even saw a thing of them. Those are very important every morning. There should be a little briefing in the morning, then the weather report. And then it shouldn't just be the boss that has that knowledge – on some of the more organized fires it was actually discussed with every fire fighter before they went out on their shift what that was. Everybody said it was done, but I would say probably 60% of the time it was not done. And like I said, check in systems need improvement.

There were some good things that I noticed this year. They were using the fleur(?) which is the flying infrared systems where they fly over with a helicopter when they are doing mop-up and finding hot spots on the ground. They were using GPS coordinates so that you could chase these hot spots down. It worked out really good for most of the people, but there are things that – a lot of people don't know anything about GPSs and they are packing them around. If you don't run the right map datum on them, you are lost. You could be half a kilometer out.

I was surprised how many helicopter pilots did not know which map datum they were using. The army was packing GPSs and did not know what map datum they were using. Some people from the Forest Service – mostly sub-contractors or whatever and I am not picking on anybody in particular. But also, these fire departments that were there, a lot of guys were packing GPSs just because they bought them and they were cool, but nobody had a clue how to use them.

And danger tree fallers and assessors. A lot of guys were out there doing a good job but there were a lot of \$200 pickups fly by night guys just getting in on the job. But you know, you can have danger trees or hotspots and you can pick these things out. You can GPS them. You can hand them to another person that has never been there before and they can walk right up to that spot, the trouble spot. Whether you should or shouldn't be there – it could be documented. Those coordinates can be given over the radio. Anyway there were some good things that did come out that I saw.

I listened to the lady here talk about animal stuff. Some good points – it's only my opinion but I don't think people should have more animals than they can look after and if they should, they should have a little committee where one community belongs to a club and if you have a fire coming towards your cows, well you should move them to somebody else's ranch. Maybe like have a big brother – block brother kind of thing where you can move your cows to another area and you have it pre-determined a year before.

But one thing I noticed is when you are fighting fires and doing mop-up a lot of the natural habitat, like the deer and stuff like that, all their creeks were run

dry and everything else. It was sort of out of their control. And, seeing all the other inefficiencies I don't think – it might be something to consider, just having plastic roles where a guy could dig a hole, throw some plastic down and pump a bit of water on it every once in a while. But animals seemed like they were dehydrated, wandering around and that would be very inexpensive just to have some kind of plastic thing where you could dig a hole, throw a thing on the ground and maybe somewhere near the water holes you could pump some water in – when you had adequate, not necessarily when you are fighting the fire front – that's totally not a priority, but maybe a couple of days after when the animals are wandering around through the mop-up stages – you've pumped all the water out of the ground – there is nowhere for them to go to in the creeks because all that water has been taken up above and down below. Just a thought – like some metal containers or something to have some water in them so if they wanted to sneak over at night to get a drink of water, they could.

Anyhow, that is pretty much everything I wanted to get off my chest. But I noticed the paying of people – like I am a contract on the fire – it was better this year, big time. It's the same hoops we had to jump through in the past, but it gives somebody thumbs up when whoever was in control of the paying. I have waited six months in the past for a lot of money. Anyhow this year it was better, it was the same stuff – but there was no set thing from district to district, everything changed. I have a skidder, I have ATV's, I fall danger trees and I asses, but there was so much change in the way that everybody ran things. Like how my skidder was paid or how my fallers were paid and what was paid here and what was paid there, and it creates a lot more paperwork for you guys. It would be good if there was a little bit of structure there and everybody ran on the same page. Because if you went from Vernon district to Kamloops district or Penticton, you'd have all these different rates and really, to keep your own paperwork in order and in order to go to bat for yourself so that you do get paid it all – so it would be good if there was a little more structure.

Anyhow, that's all I've got to say. Thank you.

GF Thank you very much.

We don't have any others on the list, other than Grant Thompson if he is here? Okay, is there someone else who would like to speak? Welcome.

Maggie Lovelock:

Thank you. After listening to that gentleman I feel very humbled, but okay, I will start at the beginning. My name is Maggie Lovelock and I am a resident of Peachland, specifically the Brent Road area of Peachland which is six kilometers south of Peachland, directly across from Squaley Point.

I have very little to contribute, especially to the people who lost so much in Kelowna. In fact, I have very little to contribute at all, but I have had this urge to discuss, or at least to question the initial hours at the beginning of the fire. Because, we were very much a witness to the first few hours and the frustrations I felt at that time and in the days that followed were very strong.

I have in front of me a piece of paper that was e-mailed to me – a neighbour of ours who lives in Vancouver is a Vancouver policeman, but he also owns property in the same area as us, directly across from where the fire started. I hate to tell you this, but I left my glasses in the car, so please bear with me.

Saturday, August 16th, 0230 lightning strikes between Squaley point and Commando Bay.

0600, helicopter begins fighting fire with water buckets.

0940, first of three Quebec water bombers arrive.

10:00 a.m., three province of Quebec water bombers fight fire.

11:00 o'clock, fire substantially contained. Water bombers depart.

15:30 hours wind from south increases, fire spreads rapidly north.

1700 hours water bombers return, trying to combat fire.

2030 hours fire fighting ceases due to nightfall.

And that basically is a synopsis of what happened on the first day and he kept quite a stringent diary of the last few hours.

Our recollections were very similar, the timing is slightly off because most of what I had remembered was literally from memory. He had actually tabulated the hours.

Our home is directly across from Squaley Point. We were awakened by a crash and a flash around 2:30. at 4:00 a.m. we saw the fire. We video taped it. It appeared to be about a mile south of Squaley Point, approximately the length of a football field, but narrower, and a hundred yards or so up from the lake.

At that time a fire boat and a ground crew could probably have dealt with it, possibly even just a ground crew with pumps could have dealt with the fire. That was my opinion, obviously it was not technically verified.

At 9:00 a.m. we videotaped again. By now there were helicopters and fixed-wing plane. We spent the morning in the garden doing yard work, overlooking the lake and the fire. By 11:00 a.m. we noticed that the plane and the helicopters were gone. I remarked – I hope they only went to re-fuel. But they

didn't return. Then, around 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock, I'm not really sure of that exactly, but the wind got up – very noticeably stronger, from the south and we stopped what we were doing and watched as the smoke started to billow and got thicker, and blew towards Squaley Point and the Canyon. I remarked that they had better get back soon or this is going to get away from them.

Shortly after that we saw “them” return. A spotter plane, helicopters and fixed wing. By now the smoke was thick and the wind was whipping up the flames. By 3:00 a.m. the smoke and fire had crested the mountain behind Squaley Point and Peachland on the west side can testify to what happened next and over the following week in Kelowna, of course.

That's the end of my official presentation. I just would like to say that we were dumbfounded by a situation where there was no camp fires allowed, there was a very high burn ban and yet somewhere along the line somebody decided to let those fires continue to smoulder for whatever reason. I was never given, or told that reason. It was never made plain to us. But, from where we were watching, our vantage point, it seemed like I could have gone over there with a garden hose and put out the flames, or the embers that were left mid-morning.

Peachland was never asked to go over there, not to fire fight they were asked to warn away campers, and I believe they were also used to ferry forestry workers across to fight the initial blaze. They were next asked to fight the fire and I would like to know why. They have done that job before. I have watched them put out fires from those campgrounds in that area on several occasions, well a couple anyway. And on this occasion for some reason they weren't used. There were no ground crews taken in there at a time when the fire was probably containable. I know it is hindsight and I am not wishing to offend anybody, but I just would like to see this never happen again. I live on the west side of the lake and there, by the Grace of God, my home is still standing. If I had been in the same position on the east side, we wouldn't be.

So I count my blessings and I just pray that with the provincial campground so close and the potential for the same kind of situation to arise again that in future somebody will be there – they won't leave until the fire is completely contained – the chain of command will be significant so that people don't leave until backup have arrived, or at least another form of containing the fire. And, every possible foreseeable deployment is made to put it out. A fireboat – maybe now we can get a fireboat that can be equipped with hoses and pumps so that anything that starts on the lakeshore area from Penticton to Vernon can be deployed quite quickly, with pumps to – at least because most of the campfires are in that area anyway, on the lakeshore. Possibly a fireboat may be a useful tool, I don't know.

But, maybe a little bit of thought into acting quickly and containing things in the future would prevent this from ever happening again.

- Thank you for listening to me.
- GF Thank you, Maggie, I don't have answers to the questions you have raised and I will hopefully attempt to get those answers and get back to you then. Do you mind if we get copies of those things?
- ML No, you can have these. Unfortunately this one is not signed. I do have verification, the documentation for those times – I worked until 7:00 and I just typed this up and flew down here. I can sign this – that's mine. The other one I can get that e-mailed to you.
- GF You can just print the name if you like.
- ML Sorry?
- GF You can just print the name of the person who sent it.
- ML I can tell you he is on the Vancouver Police Department. He has a much longer – it actually goes on for several days, but I was more concerned tonight with just my very small point of view.
- GF Okay, thank you very much.
- ML Thank you.

Okay, is there anyone else who would like to come forward? Welcome.

Bob Richards:

Thank you very much. I am Bob Richards from Penticton. I have lived in the area for sixty plus years, except for a couple of years when I was away. I can't really comment too much on the fighting of the fires and stuff like that, but my comments are more towards future protection. I spent a lot of time in the hills and there are a lot of areas that are closed to the public and yet they have a very high fuel load and lower limbs that cause lattering of fires. My personal feeling is that if that country was more open and people were allowed to use our outdoors like we used to in the old days, a lot of the fuel load could be utilized by people going out there camping for firewood. There are some roads that are blocked off that if a fire ever gets in there it will go very fast because of the way the roads have been put in. They are just wind road with old dead trees and I think by opening up and keeping your access open you would reduce your fuel load and you would also make it much easier to get into to fight the fires. I have had occasion myself when hiking a trail and came across a lightening strike and we spent a little bit of time dousing it and perhaps that year we stopped a forest fire. But I think by eliminating access you are also limiting some method of controlling before these fires get going.

Just a brief, brief comment. I would like to perhaps give you a written submission later on if I can get an address where to send it.

GF Firstly, thank you very much, Bob. I appreciate your perspective on this. We would be happy to receive the written submission from you and I will just give you a card with both the fax and an e-mail, whichever you prefer and you can send it in to us.

BR Thank you.

GF Thank you for coming.

Anyone else who would like to appear.

Okay, well if I may just say thank you to all of you for coming out. Thank you to all of you who have made presentations. I think we have just set a new record. There were twenty-two presentations today and we had twenty-one in our first day in Barrier. So I appreciate all of the active involvement of people from Penticton and the surrounding areas.

As I indicated at the beginning of the day, this is a listening and learning process and I am certainly learning a great deal from those coming forward and we will eventually, after many different additional meetings and stakeholder meetings, we will eventually be attempting to arrive at conclusions and making recommendations to the provincial government for action, but it appears as though many of the things that are being put forward involve other levels of government to some degree, and maybe even other stakeholder interests. But, in the end we are going to attempt to address a very broad range of issues that are being brought forward and we thank all of you very much for your presentation.

Good night.

8:25 p.m. Nov. 25th, 2003.