



# NEWS RELEASE

## ***'Unacceptable' situation for tree planters prompts review by Forest Safety Ombudsman***

**Nanaimo, BC** – (February 11, 2011) - A case involving what the provincial government called "unacceptable" treatment of 58 silvicultural workers will be examined by BC Forest Safety Ombudsman Roger Harris as part of a review of silviculture camp systems.

The B.C. Employment Standards Branch (ESB) last month ordered Khaira Enterprises Ltd. to pay workers unpaid wages and interest of \$236,500 and issued a penalty of \$3,500 following an investigation of company camps at Golden, Revelstoke, Texada Island, Powell River, Salmon Arm and Kamloops. The investigation found the company had imposed poor living and working conditions last summer.

"The Khaira situation is not typical of the industry, but I have received calls about health and safety conditions at silviculture camps in the past," said Harris. "It appears that a small number of contractors and operators are not acting in the best interests of workers and these types of situations continue to occur."

Harris announced the review at the annual meeting of the Western Silviculture Contractors' Association held February 4 in Kelowna.

Association executive director John Betts said, "The B.C. silviculture industry welcomes this investigation. We hope it will produce a comprehensive and impartial review of the conditions that led to the Khaira Enterprises Ltd. situation. We also look forward to any recommendations the Forest Safety Ombudsman may make to improve and restore confidence in the tendering and administration of silviculture projects."

Harris suggested the Khaira case indicates a need for better coordination among a number of ministries, agencies, industry sectors and associations with roles in ensuring that contractors and operators act in the best safety interests of their workers.

Expected to take four months, Harris indicated his review will seek input across the province with the goal of developing recommendations that will help improve coordination among all parties and ultimately prevent these situations from occurring again.

Harris is appointed by the BC Forest Safety Council to be an impartial representative for forest safety issues. (See [www.bcforestsafe.org/ombudsman.html](http://www.bcforestsafe.org/ombudsman.html).)

The Council works with forestry employers, workers, contractors and the government to make BC's forests safer. It is a not-for-profit society consisting of forestry organizations and supported by WorkSafeBC and the provincial government. Details are at [www.bcforestsafe.org](http://www.bcforestsafe.org).

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