



## PRESS RELEASE

### ***Gaps in Safety Net Threaten Forestry Workers and Rural Communities***

**February 3, 2017 Vancouver** – BC Forest Safety Ombudsman, Roger Harris, released a report, *Will It Be There? A Report on Helicopter Emergency Medical Services in BC*, about emergency medical transportation services found in rural BC and how it affects forestry workers.

According to the findings of the report “there are serious gaps in the provision of emergency medical transportation services to people living and working in rural parts of the province. This gap threatens the safety of forestry workers—as well as residents—who seemingly have little or no guarantee that they will have access to timely medical transportation in the event of an emergency.”

“The vast majority of timber in BC is harvested by independent timber harvesting contractors and many of them, through necessity, work hours from a paved road, let alone a hospital, in BC’s remote working forest,” said David Elstone, Executive Director of the Truck Loggers Association (TLA). Poor weather, rough terrain and distance are major obstacles to transporting injured workers and they can seriously impede the outcomes of emergency response. “We have a moral obligation to ensure these men and women have timely access to emergency medical transportation services when they need it most.”

“Timber harvesting contractors are the economic backbone of BC rural communities. Their workers and their families should expect the same level of medical evacuation service that those living and working in urban centres rely on,” said Elstone.

“Harris has put a spotlight on an important safety issue both in the woods and in our rural communities. The report makes several useful observations and recommendations,” said Elstone. “I think the approach going forward must be flexible and not attempt to solve this problem with one solution across the entire province. I want to stress that the primary focus here needs to be on what is best for the injured worker. We need to close this gap in the safety net.”

“I thank Roger Harris for filling an important role in helping to seek continuous improvements in safety for our forest industry,” said Elstone. “The independence of his role as BC Forest Safety Ombudsman allows all stakeholders in the forest industry—including independent timber harvesting contractors—to have a voice in industry safety.”

**Link to full report:** [\*Will It Be There? A Report on Helicopter Emergency Medical Services in BC\*](#)

*The TLA (Truck Loggers Association) represents over 470 independent forest contractors and their suppliers operating on the coast of British Columbia. Our membership supports thousands of workers and, along with other independent contractors, accounts for close to 90 per cent of the trees harvested on the coast. The TLA promotes a thriving, sustainable coastal forest industry in BC.*

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