



Ken Higginbotham retires as Chair of the BCFSC



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Ken Higginbotham shared the news at the end of December 2017 that he had decided to retire as Chair of the BC Forest Safety Council (BCFSC) and as facilitator for both the Coast Harvesting Advisory Group (CHAG) focused on coastal logging safety and the Manufacturing Advisory Group (MAG), focused on sawmill safety across the province.

"I just passed my 72nd birthday and it seems like the right thing for me to do at this point after 43 years in forestry," explained Ken who has been a force in forestry in both Alberta and BC for many years.

"Before I sail into the sunset, though, I wanted to express my thanks for having had the chance to work with industry, WorkSafeBC and the provincial government over the past few years to help support better safety outcomes for all," he said.

Significant strides in safety

"I would like to believe that the forest industry and WorkSafeBC have made significant strides together in improving safety outcomes for a broad range of workers in our province's forest industry. The 2012 sawmill explosions were a tragic event that industry learned from, stimulating a focus in both harvesting and manufacturing to make workplaces ever more safe," said Ken.

Reflecting back over the last several years, Ken said he has been particularly impressed with the fact that industry and the regulator have been able to effectively collaborate in important ways.

"I certainly hope that this will continue, as we all share one focus: to help get every worker home safe at the end of the day," he said.

Ken became board chair of the BCFSC on October 1, 2015, succeeding Reynold Hert who had been both Chair and CEO of the organization at that time.

"We are still in process of choosing replacements for me as facilitator for MAG and CHAG; and as Chair of the BCFSC. I am confident that excellent processes are in place to get the right people into those roles," said Ken. In the interim, the BCFSC's vice chair, Reid Hedlund, will fulfill chair duties for the BCFSC board of directors. Reid is also chair of the Interior Logging Association and was a member of the Forest Safety Task Force, having chaired the Forest Industry Safety Association from 1999 to 2004. Reid has been a logging owner-operator since 1979.

Industry commitment to safety is strong

"When safety comes first production and outstanding performance will follow. Industry needs to continue its unwavering commitment to reducing fatalities. I am confident that with the continued commitment of industry CEOs to this quest - at both large and small companies as well as at the senior levels of WorkSafeBC - industry will secure continuous improvement in safety and operational performance. Safety really is good business.

"Finally, to everyone I have got to meet and work with over the years: thank you for your commitment to safety and to the genuine friendships that have developed over time. I will cherish them all," said Ken.

Ken has left us in a strong position

"Ken has left us in a much stronger position thanks to his steady, considered, trusted and respectful leadership," said Rob Moonen, BCFSC CEO. "Ken's contributions to furthering safety in forest harvesting and manufacturing in BC are significant in no small part due to his ability to build consensus and develop long-term relationships with key stakeholders and influencers. We wish Ken a wonderful retirement," said Rob.

Since 1974, Ken has had roles in forestry education including as acting assistant professor of Botany at University of North Carolina and assistant professor and associate professor of forestry at University of Alberta. He also served as Assistant Deputy Minister of Forests for the Alberta Government and was subsequently vice president of forestry for Canfor (1995 - 2012) before becoming a consultant to forestry operations for the past five years. Ken has BS/MS degrees in forestry from Utah State University and a Ph.D. in Botany from Duke University. 🌲