

PRESTIGE TOURS

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you regarding the forthcoming WSBC policy on avalanche hazard.

My name is Mike Sosnowski and I have operated my snowmobile tour company PRESTIGE TOURS in and around the Fernie area for the last eight years.

I welcome the intent of this proposed policy and believe that written avalanche plans with a best practices and procedures section will enhance the safety of not only my workers but also my clients. I presently practice an avalanche avoidance plan, but look forward to updating it. I would like to mention that I have never had an avalanche related incident or close call in my business, I wish I could say the same for me personally.

As a member of the B.C. Commercial Snowmobile Operators Association I have been involved in the development of the plan submitted by them. I believe the plan submitted by them is very good and is MOST relevant to the snowmobile industry.

My company operates in 75% non avalanche terrain and about 15% simple terrain and 10% challenging terrain, based on the Park Canada terrain Matrix.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Over the last eight years I have two guides that have stayed employed for the last 4 years. I speak to this to make you aware that it is hard to keep professional snowmobile guides. Even though I pay a good wage of \$20 per hour for experienced guides

the seasonal nature of the business and the fact that after a few years, the rigors of snowmobile guiding tend to have guides looking for new careers.

This is one reason that the present CAA qualifications for an avalanche planner of 15 years are going to be unattainable. The recommended 8 years for a consultant and 5 years for an employee is way more inline with the attainability of our sector.

Also the time we will need to come up to full compliance for a new policy as proposed would have to be 3 years. We need time to develop plans for our areas including mapping 1 to 2 years and time to have our guides take the necessary but yet to be developed courses.

I again would like to impress upon you that we are an industry that does not require gravity for our product. Totally opposite to any ski related industries. This should be highly considered when deciding what the policy will demand of the snowmobile industry.

As the Premiers mandate is to double tourism, I caution that this new policy be attainable by all, or this goal may not be realized.

I would like to speak to another issue that does not relate directly to this WSBC policy initiative but may hold some relevance to the current CAA guidelines.

I have worked on the SRMMP for the past eight years. Through this land use plan I have learned to respect the culture of those groups that are non- motorized. I say respect because I have seen the things they do, the way they think, and the ends they will go to to reduce the amount of motorized traffic in the back country.

Because this culture is in control of the CAA, I suspect that some of the reason for the unattainable guideline for a Planner Consultant or the Planner Employee may be to accomplish the mandate of there culture.

This is why we as a Snowmobiling Industry must be able to have our own people trained for our own Industry. WE would gladly use the CAA for their training courses, but we must not be put in a position where their culture can dictate or mandate something that could be detrimental to us.

In closing I would again thank you, and look forward to working with you as we get this new policy underway.

Mike Sosnowski
President
Prestige Tours
250 423 1029
mike@snowmobilefernie.com