

June 12, 2007

Work Safe BC Oral Presentation

Presented by: Jamie L. Cox

Good Afternoon my name is Jamie Cox, and I am the Director of Resort Operations for Ski and Ride Smithers, located on Hudson Bay Mountain in the town of Smithers.

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First on behalf of the Canada West Ski Areas Association I would like to thank the Board for giving me the time to express the Associations concerns regarding the proposed amendments to Part 4 / General Conditions.

BC ski areas, a total of 43 members of the CWSAA all operate on tenured Crown Land. These recreational areas are developed under strict guidelines of the BC Commercial Alpine Ski Policy, with all parts of the facility falling in a defined CRA, or Controlled Recreational Area.

Every operator in British Columbia is committed to a contractual agreement with the Province, called a Master Development Agreement. Under Article V11 of the Master Development Agreement, the Operator has the legal right, authority and obligation to control, regulate and direct the movement and activities of skiers and all other persons with in the CRA. The intent of this provision is to ensure the safe and orderly use of the CRA.

The Master Development Agreement or MDA includes a detailed Master Plan, or MP. This MP has to be signed off by the Government, prior to any operation or development occurring. The MP encompasses full details of terrain development, ski trails, base facilities and all other structures.

The MP contains full mapping detail, and in particular, avalanche start zones, slide paths and deposit zones.

Operators are closely monitored by many organized groups, though there are three highly educated, up to date regulating bodies;

- The first group is the British Columbia Safety Authority, or BCSA. A stand alone body looking after the safety of all BC citizens and visitors.
- The individual insurers, whom require detailed operational plans and procedures annually prior to writing a policy. Also the insurers perform regular site and operational inspections, in an every changing and advancing industry such as the Ski Industry.
- And third is the Canada West Ski Areas Association, whom I represent today!

Regarding the proposed amendments to Part 4, specifically avalanche assessment, the CWSAA and its members work closely with the Canadian Avalanche Association, monitoring the activity 24/7 across the country!

The association and industry places a high priority on the safety of its workers and the participating recreating public, as our record shows, and pays the greatest attention to safety and the management of risk. Reviewing procedures frequently, and specific review during in-depth industry safety and Risk Management seminars held annually.

Operators have Risk Management departments, with highly trained individuals made up of the professional Patrol Teams. This is the Team that administers the working

procedures with in the CRA, including though not limited to Standing Operating Procedures giving the fullest details of avalanche assessment, activity and control efforts. These are daily procedures and no ski area is allowed to open until the threat of and avalanche has been eliminated. During the period that professional ski patrol teams are dealing with any avalanche threat, no other members of the staff or public can enter the area.

It is extremely difficult to reconcile the contents of subsection 4.1.1 (1) (2) and (3) with in the confines of a ski area regulated and operating under the strict guidelines of the Canadian Alpine Ski Policy, by trained and qualified teams who assess and eliminate those dangers which the sub-section refers.

Our question to Work Safe BC during the consideration period of these regulation changes is "How many QRP's are there in BC that are available to assess and give opinion on avalanche hazards and control that exists in BC Ski Areas?" The same question is posed regarding HeliSnowcat operational terrain, BC Highways, BC Forests and the Mining sector of BC, because the sum total overall requirements must be outrageously beyond the Human Resource!

"A personal view of the kind of expertise in our region is the fact that our avalanche forecaster is regularly contracted to these others industry, because of his skill, his certification with the CAA and he is the only one in the area."

In view of this, come October 2007 and we find the task of assessing BC ski areas alpine terrain is incomplete due to the Human Resource shortage, is Work Safe BC going to disallow ski areas to open?

This would be a matter of grave concern to the industry and the Province from the Premier downwards, because the loss of revenue to the Government would be significant, and jeopardize the Premiers mandate to double our numbers in the next ten years!

An immediate solution would be to change the definition of a QRP to include a qualified avalanche professional ski patroller, certified by the Canadian Avalanche Association. In reality the process of avalanche hazard assessment and procedures to prevent or eliminate the hazard, is what he or she is trained and experienced to do – and has been doing successfully for a great number of years.

In conclusion, WSBBC should be aware of the financial support for many years by the BC Ski Industry for an Avalanche Research Program under the direction of Dr. Bruce Jamieson of the U of C. The results are published annually and circulated to all areas and Patrol Directors. This assists patrollers and management in keep informed of the current avalanche assessment work and procedures

Finally I would like to note:

"The number of skier visits to British Columbia this past season 2006-2007 is 5.5 million, with numbers still coming in!"

Again, thank you for your time today.