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October 10, 2002

Maureen Nichols
Chair, Panel of Administrators
Workers Compensation Board
6951 Westminster Highway
Richmond, B.C.
V7C1C6

Dear Ms. Nichols,

Re: *Preliminary 2003 Rates for Forestry Classifications*

There was a meeting in Richmond with the assessments department of W.C.B. to discuss this issue on August 28, 2002. Shortly after this meeting was held, a very truthful and well put together set of minutes was written up and circulated back to the stakeholders. I have been told that these minutes have been made available to yourself and the "panel". I would like to bring a few other points to your attention that go along accordingly with the top paragraph on page two.

The independent fallers as we know them today have been created by and are used to give the person he is employed by, be it an integrated firm, contractor or licence holder, a huge financial break just by being who we are. This is openly documented in a "Vancouver Sun" article by Gordon Hamilton on June 11, 2002 in which the vice president of Weyerhaeuser timberlands states, 'outside contractors are 30 per cent cheaper than in house fallers'.

There is also the subject of W.C.B.'s experience rating system to address. As the most dangerous jobs are farmed out, the licence holders reap the financial benefits there also. When an independent faller breaks a leg at work it will be him that pays the rising costs on his assessments' bill, not the outfit he was employed by.

The licensee's are getting ample enough breaks financially from the independent fallers and the contract community in general, without having to instate the 2003 preliminary rates the assessments department has come up with. There has got to be some form of accountability left to go along with tying up so much of the provinces' woodlands that we all work in. The licensee's are slowly but surely wiping out all of that.

The bulk of the forest industry in B.C. has repeatedly announced to the assessments department of W.C.B., through both document and dialogue, that they would not mind bringing the contract/independent falling community back under their C.U.; making forestry a one rate industry. Why then does it appear that we are about to pay double for our coverage than what an integrated firm would pay for their fallers? The way things were set up with the 'Board' prior to the 2000 rate increases seemed to be working about as good as it was ever going to get for the independent fallers. I hope you will strongly reconsider returning forestry back to a one rate industry.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McKibbin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael McKibbin, representative
Western Fallers Association