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April 13, 2009

Mayor Pam Goldsmith-Jones
District of West Vancouver
750 - 17th Street
West Vancouver, B.C.
V7V 3T3

Dear Madam Mayor Pam Goldsmith-Jones,

RE: Encroachment of Wild Bears into West Vancouver Residential Areas

The purpose in writing to you is to express my deep concern with respect to the wild black bears now inhabiting the lower level West Vancouver residential areas.

We have owned and lived in the above property since 1978, over the years the bears in our residential area have substantially increased, by Municipal Hall allowing residential building higher up the mountain slopes, in bear habitat – forcing the bears into “our areas”.

with many years of international major construction and commissioning experience. We lived in Johannesburg, South Africa for nine years, we never had lions roaming down the streets, and had there been, they would have quickly been dispatched.

My work in Canada was in major construction sites vis: 1978 Syncrude Tar Sands – Fort McMurray, peaking at 10,000 workers, grizzly and black bears were common food scavengers, in and around the construction camp kitchens. Due to the large work force – all bears were dispatched. It's my experience that all bears in Canada are unpredictable grizzly, black and polar bears. (We have approximately 55,000 residents in West Vancouver – and asked to cohabit with Black Bears.)

Black bears are dangerous and kill people and are capable of aggressive behaviour. They quickly become accustomed to human activity, causing them to develop aggressive food-seeking habits, making them more dangerous.

Over approximately seven years, having brought in West Vancouver employees and Bear Watch etc. - they have given the opinion black bears are nothing more than a “simple” nuisance, leave them alone he's just resting! Nothing could be further from the truth.

- 1.0 Turning to local conditions. Bear incursions in the 22nd block Mathers are frequent each year. In 2005, at a cost of \$1,400, we had our apple tree removed and two maple trees planted by Davey Tree Ltd. Also, we have removed our bird feeder.
- 2.0 In this immediate area, houses have: apple trees, bird feeders, put household waste out over night before pick-up. (over the past eight years this has been addressed by local authorities, to no avail).
- 3.0 I'm not prepared to record all bear problems, however suffice to say, damage to broken fences have been extensive and repair costs expensive.
- 4.0 July, 2008, I was charged by a vicious black bear through a picket fence and laurel hedge (300 lbs, 6 feet high) in my back garden whilst connecting a garden hose.
- 4.1 West Vancouver Police were notified – 911 did not respond!
- 4.1.2 Black Bear Watch told me to phone Victoria – who subsequently notified some wildlife office in Surrey!
- 4.1.3 Municipal Hall sent Mr. Larry McHale (Forestry Supervisor) who gave me a brochure how to live with bears, informing the bear was not dangerous! However, I noted he had a gun, bear spray and klaxon.
- 4.2.0 Your strategy to coexist in the residential areas with bears is a failure – exposing the residents to danger, then eventually killing the bear.
- 4.2.1 Your strategy has deprived us of the past pleasures of our garden, I have to carry bear spray, klaxon and chainsaw!
- 4.2.2 The situation needs to be addressed, because if it was your child being mauled you wouldn't want the bear there.
- 4.2.3 Your strategy is a recipe for trouble. Council should pass bylaws enabling: Bylaw Officers/Police/Conservation Officers, the right to enforce and fine individuals into compliance.
- 4.3.0 At present the bears are becoming “semi-domesticated” wild animals used to feeding on household waste, fruit trees etc. Therefore, the Council could consider supplementary feeding the bears, at a location high up the mountain, thus keeping them out of residential areas.
- 4.3.1 Once you have depleted the bears outside source of food, they will break into houses seeking food – this can become extremely dangerous to occupants within. Also necessitating dispatching the bear. The principle which must be grasped is that when we speak of a house being broken into, we are considering not only an offence against property, which it is, but also, and often more alarming and distressing, an offence against the person.

However, there is a long-standing, almost intuitive belief that our homes should be our castles. The concept suggests impregnability and defence against intrusion.

There have recently been several cases of bears breaking into homes – therefore your strategy has failed.

- 4.3.2 As you have the authority to force residents to coexist with wild bears, I am of the opinion, you must accept full responsibility and financially compensate for all costs to damaged property and injuries to people, this may be covered under the Municipalities Insurance?
- 4.3.3 The responsibility of your Government is to protect your residents not to harm them, but your strategy does not achieve this.
- 5.0.0 In negotiating development contracts i.e. developing up the mountain. Costs for moving and protection of all wild life can be charged to the developer i.e. relocating the bears to another distant territory. You may want to investigate this area and costs, thereby putting responsibility where it belongs – the developer not the taxpayer.
- 5.0.1 With your strategy, we are being imprisoned in our homes. As Conservation Officers do not respond even when a dangerous situation is present, and Police Officers request them. Faster response times and more forceful control is required – tranquilize and remove the bear from the area, before it becomes necessary to kill it.
- 6.0.0 No person likes to see bears dispatched and cubs orphaned, firstly you are endangering residents which results in killing the bear – whereas preferably interceding before this by having no bears in residential areas.

However, the paradox of the situation is your strategy effectively results in the bears death.

- 6.0.1 Your first priority is to ensure the safety of all West Vancouver residents, the second priority is the correct relocation, safety and feeding of the bears away from humans and residential areas.
- 6.0.2 The wildlife rehabilitation area for orphaned bear cubs on North Vancouver Fromme Mountain, is essentially a good move.

I await the favour of your reply.

Yours truly,

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- c.c. All Councillors
- c.c. Ms. L. Holitski, Manager, Bylaw & Licensing Services
- c.c. West Vancouver Police

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