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## We can do better for BC's black bears

### *Eroded public trust, lack of preventative funding, and changing attitudes spell need for evolution of bear management in BC*

VICTORIA – A wildlife non-profit is calling for systemic changes to how community conflict with black bears is managed as deaths continue to rise, and signs of eroded public trust in the Conservation Officer Service become more apparent.

On the heels of numerous reports of black bears being killed by conservation officers due to human activity – namely failing to manage attractants in neighbourhoods – social media comments and media reports are indicating it is time for change.

“It’s time to recognize that if we keep doing the same thing over and over, all that will happen is bears will die,” says Michael Howie, spokesperson for The Fur-Bearers. “The COS has killed bears as a first step for years; by-law departments demand that neighbours identify themselves before reporting on others in their community; and no significant funding changes have occurred despite outcry from the public. There are even communities calling to be ‘no-kill zones.’ The time is ripe for how we treat conflict with black bears to change.”

Comments, such as those attached to this news release, show that individuals want to have co-existence solutions and prevention prioritized – but the fear that officers will kill bears and other wildlife is preventing homeowners from accessing a frontline law enforcement agency.

“We know that attractants and inappropriate human behaviour are the leading cause for conflict with wildlife, yet through their funding structure and actions, conservation officers focus instead of killing bears rather than working with communities to make change,” Howie says. “If the COS was focused on prevention and actual change, we’d expect to see fines and potentially charges every time they kill a bear. Instead all we get is a dead bear and a shocked community.”

The Fur-Bearers are encouraging residents to take action on their website and make calls for three simple changes to government policy:

1. That conservation officers be directed to show preventative measures, fines, and other educational tools are utilized prior to lethal measures and that third-party oversight be put into place to review and advise the actions of armed law enforcement agents.
2. That funding be made available to any municipality to increase by-law enforcement activities, specifically related to wildlife feeding and attractants.
3. That both the RAPP line and by-law enforcement departments begin accepting anonymous information regarding by-law or provincial infractions that put wildlife and people at risk.

“We believe that the Conservation Officer Service – when properly funded and given appropriate oversight – is just as integral to an ecologically healthy British Columbia where residents can co-exist with wildlife,” Howie adds. “But it has to start with acknowledging we can’t kill our way out of these problems.”

The public is invited to take action at [TheFurBearers.com/bearchange](http://TheFurBearers.com/bearchange).

The Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals (The Fur-Bearers) was founded in 1953. The wildlife non-profit advocates on behalf of fur-bearing animals in the wild and in confinement, and works with communities to help them coexist with wildlife.

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Screenshots from Tri-City News on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tricitynewsBC/>



This is why I never report bear sightings 😞

Like · Reply · 1d      18

Maybe If you're continuing to build residential neighbourhoods where these animals live then people who choose to move need to be educated on proper bear awareness and how to live with them vs getting them killed!! Makes me so angry

Like · Reply · 19h · Edited      1

I'm so angry about this, I can't even read the article. I've lived here 20 years and come across many bears and cubs. Let's educate people how to behave around wildlife, rather than destroy nature out of fear.

Like · Reply · 1d · Edited      29

As far as our so called conservation officers I think they've just become lazy. I think killing them has become an easy way for them to do their jobs plus it gives them a reason to fire their guns at something that's probably scared and just trying to survive. As the news showed they have no respect for these animals and just throw them in the dump like a bag of garbage. These beautiful creatures deserve so much better. So how about