

OPINION / EDITORIAL | OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Cochrane Mayor Peter Politis | Cochrane, Ontario – November 1, 2013:

NORTHERNERS NEED COMMITMENT NOT MORE DELAY TACTICS.

The lack of an appropriate Bear Management policy continues to escalate the frequency of dangerous encounters between Bears and Northerners. This year alone for example just under 70 occurrences with Bears took place within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Cochrane alone. Many occurrences saw Bears entering people's home stalking them as prey. On one of these occurrences a man came eyelashes away from being the latest bear attack fatality as he had virtually given up to the aggressive predatory Bear, who attacked him in his home and was dragging him off to the bush, when two people miraculously just happened by and scared the Bear off. An important perspective to keep in mind is that there are some 260 other municipalities in Northern Ontario.

As incredible as it sounds, people are afraid to walk their children to school now, they're staying indoors in the evenings and arming themselves out of desperation, all within what should be the safe confines of city limits. The issue of Bear management is a very serious one for northerners.

Another committee to further study Black Bears and once again report to the legislature was created today in Queens Park by request of the Timiskaming-Cochrane MPP John Vanthof of the NDP. What's curious about this is that there is already a private members bill scheduled to be debated in the Legislature on December 12th that actually calls for the reinstatement of the Spring Bear Hunt. More curiously, Mr. Vanthof himself is recorded in the house replying to a question of whether or not he supports the hunt saying; that's a big political discussion and a course of action he wouldn't commit to. He said he wasn't sure that bringing the hunt back, or increasing the length of the fall hunting season, would solve the problem. Even more curiously though, is that the very same committee was already created by the Legislature the last time Northerners were actively lobbying for the return of the Spring Bear Hunt – And that committee finally recommended the return of the Spring Bear hunt over ten years ago.

The fact is that extensive data exists that consistently suggests Bear populations are dangerously out of control and a sustainable spring hunt is required. So why another committee to study the same thing? Why deflect to more "studying" when a bill exists on the floor, right now as we speak, to bring back the hunt?

Northerners have grown tired of the political partisanship and gamesmanship that has led to their family's safety being trivialized and left to absurdities like self-help websites instead. Incredibly, as the largest predator in the food chain preys on northerners, our political representation plays games and offers more delay tactics. What we actually need is for our Northern MPP's to find the courage to stand up for our interests here and commit to bringing us the results we so obviously need. I politely urge Mr. Vanthof and any of the other MPP's in the Legislature who voted to delay the issue yet again by creating another committee to "study" the obvious even further, to recognize that Northerners are not fooled anymore. Recognize that our lives here are at risk while you play political games, in an effort to avoid having to show your true colours publically on December 12th.