



Press Release

CITY OF PORT COQUITLAM TAKES ACTION ON BEARS

Port Coquitlam, BC – March 6, 2009 ... As bear season approaches, the City of Port Coquitlam is taking action by launching a new Bear Aware program, considering changes to its garbage bylaw and pushing for more provincial resources.

“Last year 20 bears were killed in the Tri-Cities because they became habituated to human food sources – that’s 20 too many,” said Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore. “There’s no question our bear problem is escalating and we need to approach it from a variety of angles.”

Last month Council agreed to implement the \$27,000 Bear Aware program, to be funded by the surplus and a \$10,000 provincial grant. A Bear Aware coordinator, to be hired this spring, will work with City staff and provide guidance regarding effective bylaws, enforcement and public education.

A presentation on the Bear Aware program is planned for City Council’s March 9 meeting.

But the City isn’t pinning all its hopes on Bear Aware. For example, staff have been directed by the Community Safety Committee to investigate bylaw changes that would ensure residents take responsibility for their garbage. The report is expected by April.

“The cause of our bear problem is simple – it’s about food sources,” noted Community Safety Committee chair Councillor Darrell Penner. “People come up with all sorts of excuses for not managing their garbage. But if what you’re doing is causing bears to be killed, you need to take a good hard look at that.”

The City has also continued a public education campaign to inform residents of how they can help reduce the bear problem, and has joined other Tri-Cities communities in requesting a dedicated conservation officer for the region.

Last year, 2,743 bears were reported in the Tri-Cities – up from 1,120 in 2007. About a third of the sightings were in Port Coquitlam. The increase is mainly due to development encroaching into bear habitat and the fact that mother bears are teaching their cubs to seek out unnatural food sources. Wintertime bear sightings are also becoming more common because of the prevalence of food sources.

“Any bear that’s out in December is a bear that’s eating garbage, period,” Penner said. “It’s frustrating when people don’t take responsibility.”

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It's not too early to start bear-proofing your home. Here are some ways to make your home less attractive to bears:

- Secure all garbage cans or carts and keep them indoors if possible.
- Don't put garbage out to the curb until the morning of pickup day.
- Collect ripe fruit immediately from trees and the ground.
- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Never approach, interact or feed bears.
- Sprinkle lime inside backyard composters to deter bears.

More information can be found at www.portcoquitlam.ca/bears.

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