



THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE
PROTECTION
of Fur-Bearing Animals

179 W. Broadway
Vancouver, BC, Canada V5Y 1P4

Telephone: 604-435-1850
Fax: 604-435-1840

info@thefurbearers.com
thefurbearers.com

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Minister of Environment Mary Polak
Room 112, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC
V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Mary Polak,

We met earlier this year to discuss the growing divide between the public and the essential first responders of the Conservation Officer Service (COS). Sadly, we are seeing the ongoing consequences of a lack of oversight of this service, and poor policy that remains unchallenged by your office.

It is becoming clear to the public that a culture of killing exists within the service; while officers may tell the media that they never want to kill animals, the *Preventing and Responding to Conflicts with Large Carnivores* policy used by the COS does not at any point require non-lethal measures to be used in conflict. In fact, there is no preventative action required between receiving a conflict call and use of lethal force by officers.

In the *Cougar Conflict Response Matrix*, officers may “manage” a non-violent potential conflict situation with lethal force, but are not first required to enact preventative measures, work with municipalities or homeowners to address attractants, or utilize non-lethal hazing techniques. The CO could, according to this policy, kill a cougar for day-time sightings with minimal human presence in front-country areas. This policy should state that all non-lethal options are to be exhausted prior to escalation – yet every option is left as discretionary with the use of the word “may.”

We, and our 60,000 plus supporters, respect that there are circumstances in which human safety is prioritized and lethal action required. But as there is no oversight body or independent review process for the Conservation Officer Service, and the decision-making process or prior due diligence is never made public, red flags quickly become raised following questionable actions publicized in the media.

It is time for you to speak up for the wildlife your ministry is tasked with protecting, and represent the people who want more for their environment. Instituting an independent review of policies, and creating a third-party oversight process for when lethal action is taken will show the Conservation Officer Service – and the public – that you know they’re capable of so much more.

I would gladly discuss this matter with you in greater detail at a convenient time for you.

Sincerely,

Lesley Fox
Executive Director
The Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals (The Fur-Bearers)
