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BC court dismisses non-profit's appeal

A lack of clarity on what a conservation officer's duties are at centre of dismissal

VANCOUVER – The province's highest court cannot determine when a conservation officer can or can't kill wildlife because of a lack of clarity on how their duties are defined.

The Fur-Bearers, a wildlife non-profit, yesterday argued their appeal of an earlier decision regarding a section of the Wildlife Act that purportedly sets out when conservation officers are allowed to kill animals. The case stems from a 2016 incident in which a conservation officer stated a bear cub had to be killed prior to examining the cub, and ultimately killed the cub even though a wildlife rehabilitator was willing and able to take on the animal.

"We're calling on Premier John Horgan to rectify this immediately," says Lesley Fox, executive director of The Fur-Bearers. "No other armed law enforcement agency operates without this kind of clarity of their duties. Additionally, it highlights the absolute need for independent oversight of the Conservation Officer Service so that transparent, unbiased determinations can be made regarding killing of animals and other actions.

"The province owns wildlife for the benefit of British Columbians," explains attorney Arden Beddoes, who represented The Fur-Bearers. "The wilds of British Columbia belong to all British Columbians. Right now, the highest court in the province cannot determine precisely whether and when officers may kill wild animals. The province needs to make this clear for officers and all British Columbians by prescribing exactly what conservation officers' duties are and to ensure they have the training and education to carry out those duties."

The Fur-Bearers have created an online petition at TheFurBearers.com/COSPetition for British Columbians and animal lovers from across Canada to show their call for change.

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