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Non-profit takes wildlife killing authority question to highest level

The Fur-Bearers have filed an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada

VANCOUVER - The Fur-Bearers has filed an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada requesting that the court determine whether conservation officers in British Columbia have an unlimited authority to kill wildlife, including vulnerable animals – such as orphaned bear cubs – that present no danger whatsoever, and without a veterinary assessment.

This move comes after BC's courts recently determined conservation officers have broad authority to kill wild animals, including vulnerable, orphaned bear cubs that do not pose a threat to anyone. The Court stated that so long as an officer is “engaged in the performance of their duties” they were permitted to kill wild animals. The Court did not define when an officer is “engaged in the performance of their duties.” The Fur-Bearers is concerned that officers will kill animals in circumstances most Canadians would consider inappropriate, and even immoral.

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 care of the animal.

“Canadians’ attitudes towards animals are evolving,” says Lesley Fox, Executive Director of The Fur-Bearers. “Increasingly, Canadians see animals as sentient beings that must be treated with compassion and in accordance with shared values. The way the government treats vulnerable wildlife should reflect these shared values.”

This filing was made with financial support from the Westcoast Law Foundation and Lush Cosmetics, as well as many compassionate Canadians.

“We believe that conservation officers, who are law enforcement agents and not wildlife experts or rehabilitators, should not be the only ones determining whether an animal should be sent to rehabilitation for care and release, or killed,” adds Fox. “Additionally, it is unsettling that this armed law enforcement agency does not have external or third-party review processes for complaints like most other services.”

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The Fur-Bearers was formed in 1953 to advocate for fur-bearing animals in the wild and in confinement. The wildlife protection group have successfully worked with municipalities and landowners across Canada to promote co-existence and provide in-field solutions to conflict. They are based in British Columbia.

A timeline of events is also attached to this news release.

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