

April 11, 2009

**OPEN LETTER**

**To: Minister Barry Penner and Mayor and Council, District of North Vancouver**

**From: Peter Hamilton, Liferforce**

**Re: Stop the Grouse/Fromme Mountains Zoo Abuse**



Bears are bears. They are innately wild by nature. The hundreds of successful rehabilitation and releases have proven that they do not need further study and training in captivity as proposed by the "Grouse Mountain Zoo" gang.

The BC government should be investing \$400,000 in the existing wildlife rehabilitation facilities that have a proven track record of successful bear rehabilitation or in preventative programs to prevent human / bear conflicts (garbage containment, by law enforcement, back woods food drops and so on).

It is a dangerous plan to start a new "zoo" in a public area. This is a major zoo prison under the guise of a rehabilitation/conservation.

**There is a history of animal abuses at the Grouse Mountain and their cohorts at the Kicking Horse Ski Resort Zoo. It is a history of Captivity NOT Freedom :**

1. In 2001, the first two grizzly bear cubs were supposed to be part of a release program but were kept on Grouse Mountain. Then another two were brought in and then sent to Kicking Horse ski resort as zoo attractions. In 2003, the Grouse Mountain ski resort spokesperson admitted that there were no intentions to release them (North Shore News, February 26, 2003).

There were existing rehab facilities in Northern BC that should have received these bears (Northern Lights in Smithers and Hillspring Wildlife Rehabilitation Society). The bears could have been released.

2. In 2003, there was no hope for Hope, a spotted owl, who was released from the Grouse Mountain rehab facility and died of starvation within a month. The spotted owl was fitted with a radio transmitter and tracked to her death. She was captured from the wild in spite of an extremely low population.

In 2003, they also obtained two Peregrine falcons. In 2004 they obtained another female spotted owl and in 2007 a male spotted owl. The female and possibly the male were moved to a private centre in Fort Langley.

3. One of the grizzly bears escaped from the Kicking Horse zoo. He was recaptured more than 2 weeks later only to escape less than a month later. GM's Ken Macquisten (KM) now acknowledges that they

captured the wrong wild bear after two weeks and “Boo” was out for a month before returning.  
4. Grizzly bear cubs were locked inside man-made steel dens. One of the cubs, “Cari”, died while locked in the den in 2004 at the Kicking Horse zoo.

5. In 2004, two of the grizzly cubs (“Grinder” and “Coola”) escaped the locked dens resulting in the closure of the Grouse Mountain ski hill. Electric fencing had not been put up around the enclosure to protect the public and the bears. GM staff said they had not planned that the bears were stronger and bigger – the bears outwitted the zoo keepers.

6. In 2004, the Grouse Mountain zoo expands by adding several “retired movie” wolves that were put in the same enclosure with the grizzly bears. One of the wolves was killed by a bear in front of tourists.

7. From 2001, KM, former owner of the appalling Vancouver Game Farm, has stated that he plans to acquire numerous species including eagles, spotted owls, Roosevelt elk, bighorn sheep, marmots, caribou and wolverines.

The \$400,000 and 80 acres appears to be the start of this zoo. Escaped animals would be part of a new Upper Levels Highway road kills and threats to public safety.

In addition, throughout the years the GM Zoo also added reindeer, horse-drawn sleigh rides and “Birds in Motion” (with Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Red-tailed Hawk). The horse drawn sleigh rides may have been stopped. The horses were taken up and down the mountain/kept in cold, improper shelter area.

#### **More of a Dark Past for GM Zoo Keeper:**

1. In 1995, KM went to a zoo in Sweden to get a newborn polar bear cub for a movie industry animal trainer in BC. The bear, named “Agee”, has been inhumanely penned up for approx. 14 years at an animal compound near Mission. The bear was in the Charlton Heston movie “Alaska” and various commercials and other gimmicks. Last year the US Fish and Wildlife refused to allow a US animal trainer to import her (he also has a very bad reputation).

2. In 2001, KM went to China with the BC Government and setup contacts to bring pandas to BC. This was all part of a “eco theme park” scheme with animals and a hotels, restaurants, a theatre, corporate facilities, spa, pools and more.

Shortly after leaving the Vancouver Game Farm (among mutual lawsuits between himself and other owners) he said that he wants to open a “Pacific Rim Endangered Species Center” in the Lower Mainland. He would display 40 – 50 animals including pandas, tigers, elephants, whooping cranes and burrowing owls.

3. In 1997, when KM was a part owner of the Vancouver Game Farm, Lifeforce proposed a plan to turn the zoo into a true rehab centre and sanctuary for abused exotic animals. The proposal also included a Lifeforce concept called “Eco World” that is an education centre without captive animals. He didn’t even read the proposal.

4. While in charge of the Game Farm KM obtained a grizzly cub. In 2000 she was one year old – KM had no intent to release “Shadow”. Instead he tested electric shock on an adult “movie” bear named Koda (from the guy who bought the polar bear Agee).

#### **Broken Promises**

The Broken Promises must end. First there were grizzly bears kept in captivity. Then there were wolves. Now black bears and what’s next? Why wasn’t the public and organizations contacted? Let’s see all the plans on the table – the mega zoo with hotel and more.

The public should be allowed to comment and an Environmental Impact Study must be conducted. It must address:

1. How safe is it to contain up to 25 bears in this populated area? Are there any containment measures to be taken that would guarantee to protect the public and the bears themselves?
2. How will the fencing impact on trees and forest habitats? How do they plan to fence in 80 acres? An electric fence will not prevent escapes. It is my understanding that the Vancouver Game Farm (now Greater Vancouver Zoo) stopped that plan and went back to chain link fencing.
3. How will noise in this busy area impact the bears?
4. How would putting up to 25 bears in the same "territory" teach them what it is like to defend/respect a territory? If anything it may well teach them not to defend or recognize another bear's territory.

In addition:

1. Is the Fromme Mountain park land owned by the BC government or the DNV? Would the land be leased?
2. Does the legal liability fall on the "landlords" that permit dangerous wild animals on their land? Is the BC Government or the DNV responsible for personal injury and death and property damage resulting from escaped wildlife?

### **Conclusion**

In 1992, Liferforce fought for a bylaw to prevent such exploitation of wildlife for public display. It was intent of Council at that time to protect animals and to not support zoos and aquariums. There is no guarantee that the black bears would be released. They could end up in other zoos or research situations. It was not the intent of the past DNV Council to keep wildlife in captivity.

The Bylaw 6423 was to prohibit performances and exhibitions involving animals. The zoo display on Grouse Mountain represents a public exhibition of animals and should be strictly prohibited. The reindeer and "Birds of Prey" shows are also performances that are in violation of the bylaw. It is not a non-public rehab center to help and release wildlife. It is a secretly planned animal zoo prison to exploit them for lucrative profits.

The GM web site appears to foreshadow this devious plan. It said there is a "host of other species". GM has not responded to Liferforce inquiry about the present and planned animal exhibits.

It is of merit for governments to provide funds for wildlife protection. However, this money to a private ski resort business is a mistake. Funds should be provided to legitimate organizations that have a proven history of bear release.

I should also mention the apparent hypocrisy of the BC Liberal government. On one hand you say that the \$400,000 is an attempt to protect bears but on the other hand the government will continue to support trophy hunting. So any released bears may end up killed and their heads mounted above some rednecks' fireplaces. This is a further injustice to the exploitation of captive bears viewed by ski resort pub patrons watching the bear sports on the GM Zoo TV. The bear wrestling may amuse the drunks but it will do little for conservation.

**Please help stop this fraud and deceit. The plans for a major zoo with numerous animal prisons and hotel complex are well documented. Stop Ski Resort Zoos!**

Please send your letters to Minister Barry Penner – [env.minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:env.minister@gov.bc.ca) and Mayor and Councillors, District of North Vancouver, [dnvcouncil@dnv.org](mailto:dnvcouncil@dnv.org) and City of North Vancouver – [mayor@cnv.org](mailto:mayor@cnv.org)