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Bear-proof garbage still a hard sell

Conservationist says DNV needs stiffer penalties

BY DRAKE FENTON, NORTH SHORE NEWS AUGUST 3, 2011



District of North Vancouver Coun. Mike Little and daughter Elise check out one of the municipality's slow-selling bear-proof garbage cans.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Paul McGrath

DISTRICT of North Vancouver residents have been slow to buy the municipality's new wildlife-proof containers, and unless that changes bears will keep dying, according to conservationists.

The District introduced the containers last year, and so far only 274 have been purchased. They cost just less than \$200 and are delivered free of charge.

"The sales are very disappointing," said Tony Webb, chairman of the North Shore Black Bear Network.

Wildlife-resistant garbage containers are meant to keep hungry bears from getting food, and in turn, prevent them from becoming habituated in populated areas. The containers are not odour proof, but Webb said that bears quickly lose

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interest if they are unable to access food.

"The bear will bang the container around, throw it up in the air . . . play with it for about five minutes and then walk away," said Webb.

The district has been great at promoting the devices, but residents have not been responsive, said Webb. To make progress, he feels a cultural change must occur.

"That is what we are trying to do," he said of his group. "It is a function of morality .

. . People will think nothing about spending \$200 on themselves, but to actually go to an extension of trying to save a bear's life, it appears that is asking a bit too much."

Webb said that one possible solution would be to enforce stricter bylaws that are attached with harsher penalties. A \$200 wildlife-resistant container will appear much more cost-effective than a \$500 fine, he explained. At the moment, a bylaw forbids residents from putting their garbage out before 5: 30 a.m. or after 7: 30 a.m. on the day of pickup. Failure to comply costs the resident \$100.

District of North Vancouver Coun. Mike Little agrees that a culture change is necessary, but he believes creating a new bylaw is not the solution.

"The issue with a blanket application of a bylaw is that we have areas that are obviously wildlife sensitive, and then we have huge areas that are not that wildlife sensitive," he said. "So when you prepare a bylaw that is supposed to be district-wide, it may make absolute sense in some areas and make no sense - and add an unnecessary cost - in other areas."

"Maybe we should be talking about some sort of incentive program for people who live in an interface area, but I don't think a communitywide bylaw is the way to go on this," said Little

Little suggested the education route is more sensible, as it is much more targeted. The district has already lowered bear deaths by pursuing that option, he said.

Wildlife-resistant containers can be bought online at [www. dnv.org](http://www.dnv.org) or in person at district hall.