

“Langford mayor says protesters won't stop cave-gating project”

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Published: Sunday, June 03, 2007

Langford Mayor Stew Young is vowing protesters won't stop him from gating off a cave near the proposed Spencer Road interchange, but protesters are questioning his motives.

"They will not impede the RCMP or the municipality. I'm responsible, basically for the safety of the citizens and I don't want people going in there thinking it's OK," Young said.

A work crew contracted by Langford to gate off the cave was turned away by protesters at the foot of Leigh Road Thursday. The workers wanted to drive a backhoe into the woods to do the job.

The workers will be back, Young said, although he wouldn't say when, or whether they would be armed with a court injunction.

"If you have to protest something, protest something. But my point is public safety is No. 1," Young said, adding he would do whatever it takes to gate off the cave to make it safe.

"It's my RCMP and it's my fire department that have to go in there to rescue anybody, and I'm not going to put my staff at jeopardy for people who think it's open season."

Ingmar Lee, one of the protesters who established the Spencer tree-sit, called Langford's actions to gate off the cave provocative, especially after years of neglecting it.

"Suddenly they've got some interest in it and they're going to go and build a backhoe road to the cave and then weld a gate on it? The only explanation for that is to provoke and challenge the people involved in the tree-sit," Lee said.

The cave is on land owned by the Provincial Capital Commission and leased to Langford. Protesters have been staging a tree-sit near the cave since April 11 in opposition to the highway interchange Langford wants to build to give a second access to the Bear Mountain golf course and subdivision.

Years ago, the cave was sealed with a triangular metal gate. The gate has rusted off, and a second entrance has been opened through erosion. Langford maintains it is attempting to design the interchange so the cave won't be disturbed.