

“Protesters risking arrest, warns Langford mayor”

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Langford Lake cave protesters may soon be talking to the media from behind police cells or a court room.

That is likely to be very soon, says Langford Mayor Stewart Young.

The RCMP will accompany City crews the next time they attempt to install a locked gate at the cave entrance.

Young said a gate is needed to prevent people from hurting themselves — or damaging the geologically sensitive limestone cave after they climb into it.

A handful of protesters last week prevented a work crew and backhoe from using a trail at the end of Leigh Road to get to the cave entrance. The cave is on land leased to Langford by the Provincial Capital Commission.

Unless the protesters get out of the way, Young said the police will arrest them for trespassing, without disclosing exactly when the confrontation is likely to occur.

At least three protesters from the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed continue to occupy the cave entrance 24/7 and promise to block any Langford efforts to gate the cave.

Young, not wanting to “advertise” when the City and police will take action, said “it depends on when the contractor and the RCMP get together.”

Young said Langford must put a locked gate on the cave entrance for liability reasons, because anybody injured crawling into the much-publicized cave could sue the City.

Ray Parks, the Provincial Capital Commission CEO, said Young’s move to involve police is “great news to hear, that’s fantastic, it really is Langford’s issue.”

Under the terms of the lease, Langford “bears the responsibility” for any safety issues and potential injuries, he said.



Members of the Coalition to Protect Goldstream Watershed lie in the path of a backhoe tasked with gating the entrance of the Langford Lake cave.

Protest spokesman Larry Wartels said "we don't want a confrontation" but "we're in it for the long haul."

In a press release issued minutes before the work crew arrived at the trail to the cave, the coalition claims the aim of the protest is to halt Langford from removing trees and doing "construction work in the vicinity of the Langford Lake cave, a rare 150-foot-long karst structure in the path of the proposed Bear Mountain Parkway."

Wartels said the coalition is "committed to the protection of the cave and the entire Goldstream Watershed" and claims that gating it is "sneaky and demonstrates a disturbing lack of transparency, considering that no final decision on the Bear Mountain interchange has been made."

But Young said the coalition is misinformed because Langford has promised the interchange "isn't going anywhere near the cave."

He said the publicity caused by the coalition's previous protests has made the cave's location common knowledge, and will result in considerable damage to the sensitive site unless entry to it is blocked.

Even if the current protesters are arrested, Wartel said others will replace them, echoing the news release, which said "the coalition intends to prevent any future attempts to destroy the natural ecosystem of the area and open up Goldstream Watershed to further urban sprawl."