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General Correspondence
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Correspondence/Meetings/General

The Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture
PO Box 9043 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
via email: AGR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
via email: ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

The Honourable Doug Donaldson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
PO Box 9049 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
via email: FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Ministers Popham, Heyman and Donaldson:

RE: DEER MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Capital Regional District's (CRD) position on responsibility for deer management. Deer populations continue to increase throughout the region, as evidenced from recent deer counts, agricultural damage, damage to gardens, landscaping, parks and urban forests ongoing public complaints and the number of deer-vehicle collisions.

At its September 11, 2019 meeting, the CRD Board passed the following resolution:

That the Board Chair write to the Province urging them to assume responsibility for deer management including coordinating possible population control measures.

In 2012, the CRD worked with an Expert Resources Working Group and a Citizens Advisory Group to coordinate the development of BC's first regional deer management strategy (RDMS). The CRD also developed education and outreach materials and worked with municipal partners, agricultural land owners and First Nations to implement several actions in the RDMS. A key outcome of the process was the RDMS implementation framework of jurisdictional roles for municipal, regional and provincial partners to work together on implementing the recommended deer management options through an urban and rural pilot project.

Local government staff in the region have worked closely with staff in each of your ministries to implement various RDMS actions, remove barriers to implementation, access the urban cost-share program, conduct pilot deer counts, population reduction projects, and worked with First Nations communities to receive traditional foods and cultural elements from these projects.

Despite these efforts, deer populations continue to rise, as do corresponding human-deer conflicts and vehicle-deer collisions (e.g., more than 380 deer were killed in vehicle collisions in the District of Saanich in 2018 alone). Deer management is a significant issue in this region due to a lack of action by the Province and local governments have had to invest resources to tackle wildlife management issues that are outside of our jurisdiction.

Wildlife management remains a provincial responsibility. The Province's toolbox has focused primarily on traditional wildlife management techniques, such as hunting. While hunting can be permitted and can be effective in rural areas and on agricultural lands, hunting is not relevant or useful in dense urban environments where municipalities have created small parcels of land and firearm discharge bylaws. Alternative population control options should be established (e.g., use of immune-contraceptives) and a coordinated approach should be led by the Province within urban environments.

Increased resources to support deer management in the region are required from the provincial government. Cooperative efforts of all parties would be enhanced with increased coordination and collaboration among multiple local governments, provincial government agencies, large landowners and the agricultural community to more effectively manage deer populations region and to minimize the social, environmental and economic impacts in the region.

We ask that the provincial government implement actions within your powers for deer management including providing the necessary resources to enhance deer management in the capital region and coordinating possible alternative population control measures.

Sincerely,



Colin Plant
Chair, Capital Regional District Board

cc: CRD Board Members
Robert Lapham, Chief Administrative Officer, CRD
Larisa Hutcheson, General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services, CRD