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B.C. Liberals not prepared to ensure healthy grizzly bear populations

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VANCOUVER – A new scientific study shows that the B.C. Liberals don't have the data necessary to make informed decisions about the grizzly bear hunt in British Columbia, say New Democrats.

“Whether you are for the bear hunt or against it, any position on this issue must start with good science,” said New Democrat environment critic Spencer Chandra Herbert. “You can’t make good decisions without good data, and this report shows that the Liberal government doesn't know what's happening on the ground.”

Scientists from three B.C. universities studied eight years of government data, and found that kill limits on the bears are being exceeded in many areas of the province. The researchers also noted that the lack of hard data about actual grizzly population numbers make it challenging to design government policy to ensure there are healthy grizzly populations into the future.

“Without this key information, it's impossible to know whether or not human activity will trigger irreversible declines in vulnerable regional grizzly populations,” said Chandra Herbert. “First Nations, community groups, environmentalists, and hunters all agree: we need better information to ensure we have sustainable grizzly populations.”

New Democrat forest critic Norm Macdonald added that the government has put pressure on the grizzly population by pushing logging into sensitive habitats.

“Nine sub-populations of grizzly bear are identified as ‘threatened,’ and yet the government has not taken the action necessary to address the effects of logging in sensitive habitats on grizzly populations,” said Macdonald.

“The Auditor General issued a scathing audit of the province’s approach to biodiversity, and the Species at Risk Task Force issued 88 recommendations in May 2011. Yet despite this wealth of advice, the study shows the government continues to neglect its responsibility to protect at-risk species.”

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