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Liberals, coalition slam Kananaskis logging

By Brad Herron
 The Eagle

"Teddy Clear-Cut Krueger" — a.k.a. Sustainable Resource Development Minister Ted Morton — needs to be stopped, a Liberal MLA told a Save Kananaskis rally in Calgary on Nov. 2.

Harry Chase declared the provincial government's plan to log Kananaskis "has nothing to do with pine beetles."

"There is no good reason for this attack in the southern part of the province," said the Calgary-Varsity MLA.

Chase was one of two Alberta Liberal MLAs to speak at the Save Kananaskis rally in Calgary Nov. 2, the other being Calgary-Mountain View's David Swann. Attributing much of the logging plan to Morton, the Progressive Conservative MLA for the rural area around Cochrane, Chase said the "man has some challenges."

After trekking into Kananaskis for the last 50 years, a simple stroll down a city sidewalk is painless for Rick Collier, but it was a walk he needed to take. A southwest Calgary resident, Collier was part of the protest.

"If you don't make a stand, you lose your conscience," Collier said.

Carrying a wooden sign, Collier was impressed with the turnout of roughly 50 people, but disappointed the group's voice won't be heard by the provincial government.

"We may not do any good, but at least we tried," Collier said.

After devoting much of his time to the campaign, organizer Doug Sephton spoke to the crowd about how he wants to see a park created in Kananaskis, yet trees are still being felled.

"They are logging in Sibbald," Sephton said. "That is where we want there to be a park."

Swann, the Liberals' environment critic, was the first politician to address the crowd. He told onlookers the "public is ahead of the government."

"We are going to really put heat on an Alberta government that still doesn't get it," he said. Swann said information is coming out that is contradictory to the government's "misguided pine beetle action."

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The province is planning to clear-cut sections of forest before the mountain pine beetle advances into the area.

Swann said Kananaskis needs to be protected rather than meeting the moving end of a chainsaw.

Agreeing with Swann, Chase said even if the pine beetle moves into Kananaskis, dead trees are better for the environment and watershed than barren ground.

"The fact is it holds the soil in place," Chase said.

Ralph Cartar, of the Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition, said public sentiment towards Kananaskis has been disregarded.

"The letters were virtually ignored."

Carter said outdoor enthusiasts heading to Kananaskis will face disappointments next year.

"They won't love it much longer after they see what happened this summer."

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