

## **Statement by Councillor Akerhielm, Council Meeting of Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009, after delegations spoke**

Madame Mayor, early this summer Council took on the task of mitigating the impact of recreational visitors in the Kelvin Grove beach area, the kind of mitigation that Councils have undertaken around other beach areas in the past, such as Brunswick Beach and Lions Bay beach.

I started by going down and talking to residents of lower Kelvin Grove and I drew them out on visitor issues to the area, and I analyzed that for Council. We put in measures to control parking, which included specifying five visitor parking spots, better enforcement – we have upped the enforcement done in previous years and our bylaw officers have done a good job – and we have done some towing. We also put a clause in the Parks bylaw to address the behavior of divers. We wanted to ensure that divers would behave appropriately by having a resident along with them, so we put that clause into the Parks bylaw. And as you have said, Madame Mayor, Council will be looking at the legalities of that and thinking about it.

At any rate, when I got into this work, there were certain reactions I expected and certain reactions I didn't. I did expect a negative reaction from divers, because we would be limiting their freedom to dive. We didn't ban diving – we didn't want to do that – but I did expect a negative reaction from divers. I also expected a negative reaction from Lions Bay residents in general, frankly. Because Lions Bay residents are not great lovers of law and regulations. They prefer friendly solutions. "Mitigating the impact of recreational visitors" means parking and other measures that are tough on visitors and those are just never going to look friendly.

So as I said, those were reactions I expected.

What I did not expect was how what I have heard from other residents about how they have been received in Kelvin Grove, themselves. I did not expect to hear about women afraid to walk past a certain area alone because of having profanity and abuse hurled at them. About women afraid to have their children walk past a certain house alone because of what might occur. I did not expect to hear from a woman with whom I have sung in church that she and her husband had lewd, ugly words screamed at her from a balcony. Dogs swerved at on the road, people photographed from behind curtains. I did not expect to hear about from residents about the treatment of some of their relatives – having their car blocked into the parking lot by someone demanding to know their business there, or when their relatives went down the stairs and picked some blackberries, being told that those blackberries were only for residents. People made to feel entirely unwelcome.

I did not expect this, and it has really dismayed me. Because this kind of behavior in a neighborhood is completely self-defeating. The lower Kelvin Grove delegations who have spoken at this meeting tonight have described visitor issues in their neighborhood. They could really use some understanding from other Lions Bay residents. They are being sniped at by divers and the media are making all these negative statements about them. They really could use some sympathy from other residents of Lions Bay right about now.

But a significant group of other residents in Lions Bay is just not going to sympathize with them. No sympathy will be forthcoming – none. These other people are coming to Council saying that the problems that the neighborhood describes don't even exist, they aren't happening, actively denying it. Their sympathies lie entirely with visitors to the area – their sympathies lie not with the residents, but with the visitors, the divers, the cliff-jumpers and the dog-walkers who have been made to feel unwelcome in the neighborhood.

So what happens now? Well, lower Kelvin Grove residents have come here tonight and I have heard them ask for a private meeting with Council to discuss more parking measures, and for Council to take action regarding dogs at the beach. And a statement one of them made here tonight was that adults who flaunt bylaws such as walking dogs on leash can only be made to behave themselves by bylaw enforcement -- so more bylaw enforcement is what is needed in lower Kelvin Grove.

Well, I am not stupid enough to think that bylaw enforcement is going to get other adults in a small Village to cooperate with you and obey the laws in your area. If you want other adults to cooperate with you, what it takes is understanding, dialogue and talking to people – it takes explaining your context to other people.

I am not going to pussyfoot around with the truth here. There is no way I would support Council meeting privately with lower Kelvin Grove again. A Council would have to be out of its mind to take on dog owners on their behalf. The rest of Lions Bay is just not in a place where it would support these approaches at the moment.

If we meet again with lower Kelvin Grove, let it be in a context where some dialogue gets started.

And that is all I have to say, Madame Mayor.