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Protesters chained to trees to stop 'massacre'

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A controversial residential development at the South March Highlands is back on after two Algonquin Warriors chained themselves to trees Tuesday in Kanata's Beaver Pond forest.

OTTAWA - Clear-cutting for a controversial residential development in the city's west end is back on after two Algonquin Warriors who chained themselves to trees Tuesday morning ended their protest after about 4 1/2 hours.

Protesters Dan Bernard and Robert Lovelace strapped themselves to the trees in Kanata's Beaver Pond forest at around 7 a.m. with cord similar to the type used to lock bikes.

Police approached them several times and read them the law and warned them trespassing charges could follow. At one point, cops also brought blankets to keep the pair warm.

The peaceful protest ended around 11:30 a.m. when police convinced them to unhook themselves from the trees.

"We stopped the cutting for a couple hours and I hope that's a good example for other people who want to stop the cutting," said Lovelace, a former chief of the Algonquin's Ardoch First Nation.

The men were barely visible from the roadside, partially hidden over a small hill a few hundred metres into the forest.

They maintain an Algonquin study found important cultural artifacts and KNL Development should hold off until all the results are back.

But later Tuesday, two machines continued chopping down small trees in the forest.

"We have a duty as Algonquin First Nations to protect the forest ...to stop this massacre until all the levels of government discuss this with the Algonquin First Nation and the general public," Bernard told QMI Agency during an exclusive interview while he and Lovelace were still bound to the trees.

Lovelace is no stranger to this type of protest.

He was sentenced to six months in jail in 2008 for protesting against uranium mining near Sharbot Lake, 120 km southwest of Ottawa.

He said Beaver Pond is the "cheapest park in Ottawa" and the City of Ottawa should buy the land from KNL.

"We want the mayor to take responsibility for this. He can blame the past council for all the errors that have been made. But he now has to take responsibility," said Lovelace.

KNL Development, a partnership between Richcraft and Urbandale Homes, was supposed to start cutting Jan. 17, but delayed two weeks so the Algonquins of Ontario could conduct an archaeological study.

Police officers and security guards hired by KNL will continue to monitor separate entrances to the forest during operations.

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