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September 18, 2013

Chairperson and Members,
Municipal Licensing and Standards Committee,
City of Toronto

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Municipal Licensing and Standards Committee,

**P:\2013\Cluster B\MLS\LS13014
Coyote Response Strategy**

We are quite pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to such an exemplary draft of the Coyote Response Strategy and to have received an invitation to present our commentary before City Staff. Due to a scheduling conflict we are unable to attend Thursday September 19, 2013 to present our support and suggestions. We are available to discuss any information/suggestions we have provided about the CRS.

The *Living With Coyotes* Programme created through our *Coyote Strategy Framework (CSF)* for the City of Niagara Falls, represents and serves as a working coexistence model which has been in effect for close to two years. The CSF a "living" document with ample opportunity to revise any components deemed necessary or not effective. Measurable success is critical to engage, educate and empower the partnerships and collaborative efforts of all organizations, community members and stakeholders. We are grateful to City Staff for considering the best practices already in place for Niagara Falls and Oakville.

The Town of Whitby also has an excellent coyote program in place. Animal Services worked closely with Coyote Watch Canada to develop their coexistence plan in collaboration with Niagara Falls City Staff. For the investigation component of the Niagara programme, an entire day "in the field" training was included and considered an integral step by Animal Services in

gaining the necessary insight and experience to quickly assess and assert food removal directives during and after a field investigation concerning a coyote sighting, encounter or feeding “hotspot”.

Collaborative partnerships including community volunteers are the backbone of any wildlife coexistence program. We again thank City Staff for the opportunity to contribute in partnership as outlined in the draft. It takes a whole community to create a successful coyote coexistence plan and the CRS draft emphasizes this undertaking.

We have several practical amendments and two recommendations that we hope will offer more support for the evolution of the final document.

AMMENDMENTS:

1. **Background:** Terminology such as “*habituated*” allows for a diverse interpretation of perceived coyote behavior. Once the Coyote Response Strategy (CRS) is in place; investigation, education, prevention and enforcement components of the CRS when put into action, would minimize the opportunity for wildlife to increase their presence in the landscape. “***Increased proximity tolerance to people, pets and properties due to food rewards***” is appropriate and reflects a more accurate description about coyote ecology. Food rewards put out the “welcome mat” for a diverse range of species. Coyotes are the eco-thermometer for our communities and when we are alert, pay heed to their behaviour and immediately remove attractants, coyotes are able to respond more appropriately when navigating through an environment where people are present.

A list of “hotspots” would be beneficial to include in the final CRS. The obvious locations such as open backyard composts, overflowing birdfeeders, parks, trail systems, shorelines, ponds, notwithstanding the more subtle locations such as cemeteries, construction sites and feral cat feed sites.

The benefits of a *keystone species such as coyotes to the cityscape include serving as “Mother Nature’s clean-up crew by consuming natural by-products from the environment such as carrion and keeping other transient coyotes from establishing a new territory.*

2. **Best Practices:** The Coyote Feeding By-Law (Wildlife) enacted for the City of Niagara Falls is complaint driven and provides a direct link to residents for education, prevention and enforcement of existing by-laws. The existing by-laws (such as leash, garbage handling) enhance the Coyote Feeding By-Law which is an effective tool to firmly encourage compliance by identified “repeat feeders”. The desired outcomes are time sensitive which when dealing with people feeding coyotes is most effective. We acknowledge the superb by-laws already established for Toronto but would strongly support a Feeding Wildlife By-Law. The Beaches location is a clear example of residents that continue to provide food items to wildlife including coyotes even after the dog/coyote encounter which recently lead to the death of a small pet dog.

Mixed messages via residents feeding coyotes compounds coyote behaviour that is not only inappropriate but also reinforces that human provided food foraged in a given “hotspot” belongs to the coyotes in that territory. Domestic dogs pose a threat and competition for those food items. A Feeding Wildlife By-Law clearly defines for residents what is and is not acceptable activity and serves as an education/enforcement tool for stakeholders and agencies that will be responsible and responding to coyote sighting reports and encounters.

3. **Coyote Response Strategy:** Educational Coyote Signage is an excellent tool for community awareness. Identifying locations around the city to erect signs keeps the public informed and able to access current and relevant coyote ecology information.
4. **Removal:** To be added as steps taken leading up to the removal of a coyote deemed a “bona fide threat to public safety. Attempts to gain photo evidence of the individual coyote in question which would minimize misidentification. Active hazing efforts were put into action to reshape coyote behaviour and assist residents to discourage coyote feeding and how to apply low intensity hazing initiatives. A defined “*Hierarchy for Action*” that identifies the key responders for coyote sighting reports and encounters and to whom this information is shared. *We have provided four slides that present the benefits of establishing a Hierarchy for Action along with the inclusion of an on-line report and mapping application to record coyote sightings.

Additional Recommendations

5. **Developing/Including an on-Line Sighting Report Systems:** To be commended, the Beach Coyote Coalition (BCC) has taken this effective tool application and provided this information and data outlet for the community. We would like to see a more permanent home base for this critical prevention and assessment tool. *Please refer to the slide “Coyote Sighting Reports” that provides an overview of the benefits this interactive and engaging coexistence tool presents to any community considering a coyote strategy plan.
6. **Developing/Implementing Hazing Techniques for a Wildlife Response Team:** First line responders including law enforcement such as TAS and Toronto Police in conjunction and partnership with other wildlife agencies identified in the draft and organizations such as Toronto Wildlife Centre, Coyote Watch Canada, and Beach Coyote Coalition.

In summary we sincerely thank you for the collaboration, time and expertise that were put into the CRS draft. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments, recommendations and suggestions towards the final CRS document. Our input is extended in collaboration and partnership with the City of Toronto and City Staff and we hope it will be of consideration and benefit.

Best regards,
Lesley Sampson
Co-founder and Director Coyote Watch Canada