

From: [Penny Cookson](#)
To: [councilmeeting](#)
Cc: [Bo Gatarek](#)
Subject: Proposed amendment to Bylaw 349-6D
Date: July 15, 2022 7:19:47 AM
Attachments: [2022-7-15 CCT letter to city authorized.pdf](#)

Dear Toronto Council Secretary,

Please accept the attached letter from Community Cats Toronto concerning the proposed updates to chapter 349, Animals. Could you kindly add it to the public agenda of the July 19th Toronto City Council meeting and circulate it to all members of the Council.

Please be advised that we also have sent this letter to Mayor John Tory, Deputy Mayor Thompson (Chair), Councillor Carroll, Councillor Lai, Councillor Grimes, Councillor Mihevc, and the Committee Secretary Matthew Green.

Thank you,

Penny Cookson and Boguslawa Gatarek
Directors, Community Cats Toronto



July 15, 2022

Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West,
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 2N1

Dear Mayor Tory and Toronto City Councillors:

As Toronto City Council considers the proposed amendment to Bylaw 349-6D, which removes cats as one of the species that are allowed to roam freely in our community, Community Cats Toronto (CCT) hopes that you and other committee members will consider the following information.

By way of background, CCT is a volunteer-run organization that works to reduce the number of free-roaming cats in Toronto through education and implementing a trap-neuter-return (TNR) program, a humane way to control the feral cat population. CCT is an active member of the Toronto Feral Cat Coalition (TFCC or Coalition). The TFCC works tirelessly to reduce the feral cat population in the city of Toronto by promoting the TNR program and educating cat owners about responsible cat ownership. The Coalition was established in 2010 and along with CCT, its members include OSPCA, Toronto Animal Services (TAS), Toronto Humane Society (THS), Animal Alliance Canada (AAC), Toronto Street Cats (TSC), Annex Cat Rescue (ACR), and Toronto Cat Rescue (TCR). Through the TNR program and other leading initiatives, the number of cats in the shelter system has drastically decreased. Our research-based, time proven, and methodical approach has provided many benefits to the city. It is given our extensive experience working in this area for over a decade, that we strongly oppose the motion for the following reasons.

Firstly, while we acknowledge the negative impact of free-roaming cats on wildlife, we don't think limiting owned cats to indoors unless leashed is an effective solution. In terms of impact, other pivotal factors often constitute much greater danger to birds and other wildlife – such as the use of pesticides, reflective windows, urban sprawl, and habitat loss. In addition, because free-roaming cats are known to hunt rats, limiting cats to indoors could also lead to an increase of rats, a species that could arguably inflict much more damage on wildlife than cats themselves. Since Toronto has a large urban population as compared to other Canadian cities, there is no area-specific data to support that limiting free-roaming owned urban cats will have a measurable positive impact on the wild bird population in the region.

Secondly, the enforcement of such amendment would impose significant trust issues and operational challenges for the TAS. At the beginning of our TNR program, there was significant resistance by Toronto citizens to get involved because the public opinion of TAS was that all they did was trap and euthanize cats. It has taken several years of continuous hard work and community building to gain the trust of cat caretakers. Today, TAS is seen as one of the leaders in the program to help community cats. The motion as stated will result in TAS trapping healthy, loved, and owned pets, which will break that hard-earned trust and fundamentally destroy the progress made over the past decade. Furthermore, the trapped healthy cats will overcrowd and overburden animal shelters, which are best reserved for sick, injured, neglected, or surrendered animals. Since only about 10% of trapped cats are reclaimed by their owners, this will certainly increase euthanasia rates, lead to spreading of diseases within shelters, and result in additional TAS staff.

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Lastly, in our experience, the proposed changes to the by-law can be viewed by many citizens in a multi-cultural city like Toronto as based on cultural imperialism, since many cultures believe that cats should be free roaming. It can also be seen as a social justice issue because the proposed amendment will have a disproportional effect of targeting cats in the low-income communities in the city, where cat owners may not have knowledge of or easy access to affordable spay and neuter clinics.

For these reasons, we believe the motion is simply not the best solution to the problem of limiting free-roaming cats in the city, nor is it a wise use of public resources. The numerous unintended negative consequences of such amendment would far outweigh its intended benefits in the long run. Instead of trapping healthy owned cats, we think it's much more effective to allocate the limited city funds into alternative methods, such as expanding the existing TNR program, educating cat owners about responsible ownership, and providing low-cost veterinary services like the existing Spay Neuter Your Pet (SNYP) track.

As part of the Coalition, we have successfully reduced free-roaming cats in Toronto through the TNR program, and provided free spay/neuter services to over 20,000 cats. While the exact number of cats and kittens that would have been born had these cats not been sterilized is unknown, it is likely in the hundreds of thousands of cats. In addition, over 3,250 people have attended CCT's Colony Manager's Course which teaches the basics of TNR, including best feeding practices to ensure colony managers are not feeding wildlife. Thousands of kittens and friendly cats have also gone through adoption programs by Coalition members including TAS, THS, OSPCA, TCR and ACR. The TFCC sets a leading example to similar organizations and provides expertise to other communities on how to reduce the number of free-roaming cats in their regions. The proposed changes will greatly impede the TNR efforts in Toronto and may result in many more unowned cats on our streets.

We are committed to continue our efforts in limiting the free-roaming cat population. While we too wish that all cats could stay indoors, this is not a realistic goal. However, we truly believe that having an ineffective and unrealistic by-law that is difficult to enforce is not the right approach, and urge the Committee to reconsider the proposed amendment to Bylaw 349-6D. The city has previously addressed the issue of free-roaming dogs through education, and it will do so again with cats by working together and finding creative solutions. We would like to thank you for your consideration and appreciate the opportunity to discuss the issue.

Sincerely,

Penny Cookson, Director

Boguslawa Gatarek, Director

CC: Toronto Council Secretary: councilmeeting@toronto.ca

Deputy Mayor Thompson (Chair): councillor_thompson@toronto.ca



Councillor Carroll: councillor_carroll@toronto.ca

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