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Charitable # 1191-92763-RR0001

Tuesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Office of the Mayor  
City Hall, 2nd Floor  
100 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of City Council,

I am writing today to express my support for the legalizing of backyard hens for the City of Toronto. I understand that a pilot proposal may come before Council and this could lead to allowing backyard hens throughout Toronto. I strongly urge you to vote in favour of this.

Backyard hens are permitted in cities all over the world and across Canada and the United States. Cities such as Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Niagara Falls, Brampton, Kingston, and Guelph all allow backyard hens. Backyard hens are just one part of a vibrant local food system.

Much like keeping other pets many cities have created rules and regulations for keeping hens within their cities that ensures that animals are not mistreated and that they are being reasonably cared for. Some of these include limiting the number of hens that a person is allowed to keep, licensing each animal, setting standards for the living conditions that hens occupy, and not permitting roosters. Working within these reasonable standards the city could easily build upon existing animal services infrastructure to allow hens to fall under their jurisdiction. City Staff have been supportive of this in the past and could work with Councillors and residents to ensure that this is a policy that works.

There are many myths that have been circulating about why backyard hens should not be allowed in an urban environment. Below I have outlined reasons for allowing backyard hens in Toronto and why those myths are not true.

1. Backyard hens provide fresh eggs for homeowners who can ensure that their hens are raised ethically and humanely. This is in contrast to the majority of eggs in our grocery stores that come from hens that are brutally raised in cages with no access to the outdoors and where they are not able to live as chickens are meant to with access to grass and dirt.

2. Chickens provide excellent compost, which could either contribute to the gardens of hen owners or could be added to the green bin, much like dog or cat waste.
3. Chickens are natural composters themselves and since they have been kept by humans they have been used to help consume kitchen scraps, reducing the amount of food waste that would go into the municipal collection program.
4. Keeping chickens is not much different than keeping domesticated animals such as a cat, a dog, or a parrot. They are clean animals and would require similar care in terms of cleaning up after any other pet and feeding them.
5. Chickens are not noisy creatures. Roosters are noisy but are not necessary for egg production and therefore do not need to be included under the permitted animals list. The regular noises that a chicken makes are small clucking sounds, which are much quieter than a dog barking.
6. Urban agriculture is a growing trend in cities around the world. Many cities have policies, Toronto included, that support the production of food in urban environments to create sustainable locally sourced food for growing urban populations, as well as many social, economic, and environmental benefits. Chickens are just one part of how healthy urban food systems can operate and provide food for residents in affordable and ethical ways.

As a signatory city of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Toronto would be demonstrating its commitment to supporting local food systems. Toronto would be joining cities around the world in allowing hens, that provide fresh and healthy food sources, to be just one more animal among the other animals that are cared for by residents of Toronto.

Once again, I urge you to support the allowance of backyard hens in the City of Toronto.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rachel Gray', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rachel Gray  
Executive Director  
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