



October 2, 2017.

Re: Support for Backyard Hens item LS 20.1

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 concerning allowing backyard hens to be legal in 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.

In 2012, City Council endorsed *GrowTO: an Urban Agriculture Action Plan for Toronto*. One of the recommendations of this report was to allow backyards hens to be kept in the City.

Chickens are just one part of how healthy urban food systems can operate and provide food for residents in affordable and ethical ways.

The trend in recent decades has uniformly in the direction of allowing this practice. Cities such as Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Niagara Falls, Brampton, and Kingston allow the keeping of backyard hens. Major American cities such as New York and Los Angeles allow the practice.

Some facts to consider:

1. Chickens are not noisy. 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*.
2. Backyard hens provide fresh eggs for homeowners who can ensure that their hens are raised ethically and humanely. Citizens have the right to grow vegetables and fruit on their property. Their rights should be extended to keeping a few backyard hens.
3. 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.

4. 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. This aligns with City of Toronto policy to cut household waste.


5. 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.

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.

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.

I urge you to support the allowance of backyard hens in the City of Toronto.  
Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JKuhns", is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

James Kuhns  
Co-coordinator  
Toronto Urban Growers