

Wednesday, June 22, 2022

Chair Thompson and Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West,
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N1

**Request to strengthen Toronto Animal Protection Bylaw #349
Agenda Item # EC30.5**

Dear Chair Thompson and Members of the Committee:

Please accept this letter as our formal request to strengthen the recommendations contained within staff report #EC30.5 (Updates to Chapter 349, Animals) which is being considered at the July 6, 2022, meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee. We also request the opportunity to meet with you individually via zoom to discuss the proposals in the staff report.

Toronto has been a national and international leader in the field of animal welfare, and we urge you to continue this proud tradition by adopting the recommendations outlined below.

The City has taken a leadership role in many animal welfare areas, including:

- Adopting the first Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines in the world. Toronto's legislation, created in 2007, has now been adopted by the Canadian Standards Association (2019) and cities across North America.
- Adopting one of the first cosmetic pesticide bans in Ontario in 2003. A version of Toronto's legislation was adopted in 2009 by the Government of Ontario.
- Banning the sale of cats and dogs at retail stores (which were supplied by the puppy mill industry) in 2011. Toronto was the second municipality in Canada to adopt this legislation; and hundreds of municipalities across Canada have now followed Toronto's lead. In 2019 the State of California (population 39 million) passed the same ban, and, in June 2022, New York State (population 19 million) also passed the same ban.
- Establishing the first free municipal spay/neuter program for rescue groups (2010) and first municipal mobile spay/neuter truck (2016) in Ontario. Today, municipalities across Ontario are adopting Toronto's programs, including Lindsay, Peterborough, Sudbury, Brockville, Barrie, Simcoe, and Goderich.
- Banning the sale or possession of shark fins in 2011. Toronto was the second municipality in Canada to adopt this legislation. The Government of Canada, in 2019, adopted a version of Toronto's legislation that bans shark fins across the country.

We are urging you to continue this strong tradition by adopting the following recommendations:

- 1.) **Approve an anti-roaming bylaw for cats.** Toronto should follow the lead of other municipalities such as Oakville, Burlington, Hamilton, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Victoria, Newmarket, London, Oshawa, Vaughan, Pickering, Peterborough, Barrie, and many others and approve an anti-roaming bylaw for cats; just as it does for dogs. Keeping cats indoors or, if outdoors, in a cat enclosure or walked with a harness and leash is good for cats, good for birds and will likely lower the demands on the City by reducing the feral cat population, the need to pick up dead cats (over 1,000 cats were killed by cars in Toronto in 2017), and the need to house stray cats. At one time, dogs roamed free in Toronto and the City wisely passed a bylaw to ensure dogs cannot roam free in our City. The City should adopt the same requirement for cats.
- 2.) **Keep the requirement for Toronto Animal Services staff to retain nuisance animals, including cats.** Permitting cats to roam freely in the City is a giant step backwards in terms of protecting both cats and birds. While ignoring nuisance cats might make it appear, in the short term, that there are fewer cats in our City shelters, it will mean many more cats are outside of our shelters, many more birds (and small mammals like chipmunks) will be killed, and many more kittens will be created; leading to a vicious cycle of even more nuisance cats. The best way to protect cats and birds is to impound nuisance cats, and then work with cat rescue groups to find forever, indoor homes.
- 3.) **Require mandatory microchipping of all cats.** The City staff report states that less than 10 per cent of cats impounded by the City are reclaimed by their owners. A mandatory microchipping bylaw could change this statistic drastically, with both cats and their owners benefitting. When cats roam or accidentally get outside, they can get lost or reported as a nuisance cat by a neighbour. If Council passes an anti-roaming cat bylaw and a mandatory microchipping bylaw, then the number of stray cats picked up by Animal Services will decrease and the ability of Toronto Animal Services to reunite cats and owners will increase; and the safer both cats and wild birds will be.
- 4.) **License Wildlife Removal Companies.** Toronto should ensure protection of consumers from fraudulent and/or untrained “fly by night” companies involved with wildlife removal and should set humane standards regarding removal methods, capture, handling, transport, and euthanasia of wildlife. This can only be done through proper licensing and training, and this will only happen if legislated by the City of Toronto. Uneducated, untrained, unlicensed companies cause a huge amount of suffering and death to adult and baby wild animals. Many companies, for example, trap and relocate mothers which separates them from their dependent babies, who then slowly starve to death if they are not found. These companies often charge high fees to provide services to residents that are neither effective nor humane. These unlicensed companies also create a huge expense to the City when Toronto Animal Services is required to pick up orphaned babies and then euthanize them.

- 5.) **Create a positive list of pets people can keep.** Toronto should follow the lead of Kitchener and East Gwillimbury – and New Brunswick and Nova Scotia - and create an allowable list of pets residents can own. There are 8.7 million species of animals on earth, including 10,000 species of birds, 8,000 species of reptiles, 6,000 species of amphibians and 5,000 species of mammals. Anyone with a computer can now order almost any of these species online. Toronto staff cannot review all these exotic species and determine which ones are safe and/or pose a danger to the public and/or our natural ecosystem. The capturing of exotic species around the world for the exotic pet market is decimating local wildlife populations and causing widespread animal suffering. Toronto residents should not keep exotic animals or native wild animals (e.g. raccoons, skunks, squirrels, rabbits, and birds) as pets. The most effective way to protect the public, the environment, and the wild species we love is to create a simple list of companion animals that residents are allowed to keep.

- 6.) **Strengthen the “no feeding of wild animals” section of the bylaw.** The feeding of wild animals leads to many human/wildlife conflicts which creates problems for people and often death for the wild animal. People feeding coyotes is the cause of the vast majority of coyote/human conflicts. We support the City’s recommendations to ban the feeding of wildlife, but suggest the provisions be strengthened so that no food can be left outdoors when people are not present.

- 7.) **Launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign.** We congratulate the City on its many public awareness campaigns and the great work they do finding new homes for shelter cats and dogs. We encourage the City to do even more public education and outreach to protect both companion and wild animals.

We appreciate the work Toronto Councillors and Animal Services staff have done to improve the welfare of animals in many, many ways across our City. We encourage you to continue to be bold and adopt the above recommendations that will keep Toronto at the forefront of positive animal welfare and protection.

Sincerely,



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