

#### EC3.4 - Follow Up Report on the UrbanHensTO Backyard Hens Pilot Program

**I am writing to ask that City Council PAUSE THE DECISION to terminate the UrbanHens TO Pilot Program for 18 months (January 2025) and reassess Avian Flu concerns at that time.**

We all know that this has been a very successful program with very few complaints to city staff. We all understand the severity of Avian Flu but **there have been no reported cases** in the small flocks within the city wards where hens are permitted. With Avian flu being spread by water fowl I know personally that I do not have water fowl visiting my garden.

In England my family has been instructed not to have their chickens' free range during the migratory season to reduce the risk of their flocks catching the flu. They are allowed up to 50 birds before having to register. This mandatory housing measure was lifted on April 18, 2023.

Our neighbouring cities such as Brampton, and other comparable North American cities, New York City, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, Calgary, Edmonton, etc., have continued to allow backyard hens.

Organizations responsible for ensuring public health in light of Avian Flu, such as the Ministry of Health, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control (U.S.), are united in continuing to allow backyard hens and in recommending sensible biosecurity measures to protect urban flocks and public health. Our own Medical Officer of Health's position is that backyard hens are not a threat to human health.

What they are NOT recommending is making urban hens illegal, as Toronto is about to do!

On the City's website it tells residents who keep pigeons that they can keep:

- Keep no more than 30 domestic pigeons on a property, with allowances for an increase to a maximum of 50 during breeding season (April to October).
- Prohibit the pigeons from perching, roosting or resting on anyone's property other than the owners.

Our chickens are restricted to our backyards so will not be perching, roosting or resting on anyone's property other than the owners and therefore far less likely to catch Avian Flu.

**Once again, I ask that City Council PAUSE THE DECISION to terminate the UrbanHens TO Pilot Program for 18 months (January 2025) and reassess Avian Flu concerns at that time.**

Sarah Doucette, Ward 4

Happy chicken owner since 2019



Stella and Ruby our lap chickens