



October 22, 2024

Councillor Alejandra Bravo
Chair, Economic and Community Development
Toronto City Hall

Dear Chair and Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

On or about the July 1, 2024 Canada Day Long Weekend, a number of residents and media reports brought attention to three or four physical attacks by a group of coyotes on dogs which were being walked by local dog owners. Videos were published documenting some of the attacks, and there were reports of injuries to the dogs, and injuries sustained by one dog owner connected with the attack. These incidents were linked to Princess Margaret Park, a city park in Etobicoke Centre with a wooded area, open space and a playground. For many weeks following, residents reported and documented encounters with multiple coyotes in the surrounding neighbourhood and public spaces. These included incidents of coyotes approaching dogs.

Toronto Animal Services promptly investigated the attacks and canvassed the local neighbourhood. It was discovered that a family of coyotes had suddenly relocated to Princess Margaret Park from another larger ravine valley park nearby. Several theories exist why the family relocated, however it became clear that there was a family with a mother, father, a juvenile, and three to four yearling coyotes. In addition, there were a litter of pups in a den within the park bringing the total number to approximately twelve at the time.

A well attended public meeting was held on August 1, 2024 with community members, Toronto Animal Services, Coyote Watch Canada, and the local Councillor. At the meeting there were presentations, questions and answers, public comments and information exchange. Several residents expressed concerns about public safety and asked that the City euthanize the coyotes immediately. A petition exists requesting similar action. In addition, some circulating inaccurate information was identified about trapping, capturing or attempting to relocate animals which has caused confusion or distorted the situation and expectations of the public.

As demonstrated by the discourse of the meeting, ambiguity exists about the role of the municipality in addressing wildlife such as coyotes, the legal and regulatory context, the threshold of what constitutes a threat to public safety, and about how to report information about coyote encounters to the Toronto Animal Services. Expectations of the City and opinions on the Coyotes varied, due in part to the difficulty of easily accessing factual information and a clear policy.

The City of Toronto has a Coyote Strategy first approved in 2003. It was considered again in 2004 to provide certain exemptions for the use of firearms in managing coyotes. The strategy was reviewed again in 2013. The decision is located here: <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2013.LS23.3>

Several municipalities have recently updated their coyote strategies and public facing communications to assist residents with contextual information about urban wildlife encounters, and clarity about the role of the municipality in escalating classifications of incidents to ensure that there is an appropriate response and data collection. Some examples include Vaughan, Oakville, and Collingwood.

The purpose of the recommended motion is twofold; to request a review and update to the City's coyote strategy based on the newest best practices, and to seek opportunities to improve the capture of reports and information about coyotes from the public to better respond and monitor coyotes in the city.

Recommendation:

Therefore I recommend that the Committee:

- 1) Request that Toronto Animal Services review and update the City's Coyote Response Strategy in consideration of new best practices of other municipalities, with additional attention to:
 - a. attacks to attended pets resulting in injury/death or consequential injuries to humans in those interactions
 - b. groups/families of coyotes
 - c. provocation of coyotes that leads to problematic interactions
- 2) Request that Toronto Animal Services, in consultation the Customer Experience Division and 311, review and consider enhancements to the contact intake process and available public information on coyotes, based on best practices of other municipalities and on the data-gathering necessities of the City to monitor and respond to coyote encounters.

Yours Sincerely,



Councillor Stephen Holyday
Councillor Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre