

September 13, 2015

Burlington City Council,

Re: Development & Infrastructure Committee – Options Regarding the Feasibility of Creating a By-law Prohibiting the Feeding of Wildlife – September 14, 2015

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association provided input regarding the issue of coyotes in Burlington communities to the Manager of Bylaw Enforcement and Licensing, the Supervisor of Animal Control and City Council on April 7, 2015 (copy attached).

While we remain unconvinced of the need and effectiveness of the recommended bylaw coming before the Development & Infrastructure Committee, we are pleased that the staff report shares our viewpoint that coyotes and people must co-exist and their recommendation for additional efforts in public education.

In the event members of Council determine that a bylaw should be enacted, we recommend a revision to the proposed by-law to ensure that the Ontario Trumpeter Swan Restoration Group can continue their valuable conservation work no matter where the swans may be found.

We understand that although the majority of the swans are located within LaSalle Park, and will benefit from the designation of their habitat as a location for “specific purpose or use”, occasionally swans require care when found in other public areas, and must be offered bait to provide that attention. Therefore, for clarity we propose the following addition (in bold italics) to the by-law:

THAT in Section “Definitions” add (cc) "feed", in all of its forms, includes the regular or intermittent supply of food, but does not include baiting during lawful activities, ***including rescue and species restoration measures.***

Yours truly,

Gloria Reid
Advocacy Program Lead
BurlingtonGreen Board of Directors

c.c. Eleanor McMahon,
MPP, Burlington

April 7, 2015

Tracey Burrows,
Manager of Bylaw Enforcement and Licensing,
426 Brant Street,
Burlington, Ontario L7R 3Z6

Dave Lake,
Supervisor of Animal Control
2424 Industrial Street,
Burlington, Ontario L7P 1A5

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association would like to provide input regarding the issue of coyotes in Burlington communities. We are aware of the recent media coverage of the issue and we attended both public forum meetings hosted by the City.

In February 2011, following similar concerns about the presence of coyotes in our communities, city staff provided Council with two options. At that time, Council's decision was to adopt a public education program instead of implementing an additional by-law. The City posted signage in parks and nature trails, created an information page on its website with details about coyote-encounter safety, and developed a system to easily report coyote sightings.

BurlingtonGreen agrees with this approach but feels that education efforts to date have not gone far enough or been as widely conveyed as hoped. The initial signage was confusing and limited. New, easier-to-read signs are just now being posted. Many people are unaware of coyote safety measures, hazing techniques, and other mitigation efforts. Public education remains a work in progress with much room to grow.

In recent months, public concern has risen again about the frequency of coyote sightings, particularly in the wake of some highly publicized pet attacks and public meetings. However, our understanding is that the coyote population is not dramatically increasing. According to numbers provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources, coyote populations across the province increased in the early 2000's, but peaked in 2010 and have actually been decreasing for the past four years.

In Hamilton, since 2010 the number of public complaints about coyotes has dropped by more than half. Burlington reported 76 coyote sightings in 2014, the first year for which the city has kept records, but as reported in the Hamilton Spectator, Burlington Animal Control supervisor Dave Lake said he doesn't consider 76 sightings a high number, "noting it's likely many were multiple reports of the same coyote".

Human population growth and loss of green space in the urban and rural environment may be factors resulting in more sightings of coyotes in our neighbourhoods. Burlington has grown by a compound annual rate of 2% over the last 10 years, primarily in previously undeveloped areas of the city. In the Tansley area alone, population growth has been 62% - that's 20,000 more people in what was previously mostly green and natural space.

BurlingtonGreen advocates for the protection of wildlife habitat, trees, farmland, and greenspace. As development intensification pressures increase in our city, it is essential we recognize the vital role our natural areas play in the provision of a balanced, healthy community and that effective plans must be in place to protect them. Doing so will help to ensure people and wildlife can co-exist now and in the future – a feeding prevention by-law or culls will not effectively address this issue.

There are already property standards by-laws to manage most undesirable food sources and there is abundant scientific research and evidence that killing, den removal, or trapping and relocation of coyotes is ineffective and can, in fact, lead to higher and younger coyote populations with fewer stable families to keep other coyotes away.

BurlingtonGreen proposes the best courses of action to address this issue are as follows:

- Increased dissemination of accurate information about living with coyotes in our communities
- The effective application of existing bylaws to minimize undesirable food sources such as overflowing commercial bins, derelict properties, and improper food storage on private property
- Comprehensive land use planning that respects wildlife habitat

We believe this three-pronged, responsible approach to dealing with coyotes best reflects the city vision of Burlington being a place “where people, nature and business thrive.” Thank you for this opportunity to provide input on this important issue.

Yours truly,

Gloria Reid
Advocacy Program Lead
BurlingtonGreen Board of Directors

c.c. Mayor and Council Members
City of Burlington

Eleanor McMahon,
MPP, Burlington

Indira Naidoo-Harris,
MPP, Halton