

City of London Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC)

2014 Budget Recommendations on Animal Services

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is pleased to support the enhanced programs that were recommended by Civic administration and approved by City Council on December 17, 2013. We are particularly pleased with the recommendations concerning having a City-hired Veterinarian and a Cat Adoption Centre. We believe these programs will not only help to address the problem of pet overpopulation in our City, but also prove to be highly effective and decrease animal service costs over the long term.

1. **The City-hired Veterinarian** (\$125,000 annual operating costs for veterinarian, and a \$300,000 one-time cost for modular unit)

AWAC supports the City staff recommendation to hire a veterinarian who would report directly to the City. This veterinarian would work out of a modular building similar to a school portable that would be placed on the contractor's site, and would perform necessary medical treatment, procedures, spay/neuter surgeries and oversee that any euthanasia taking place on animals is carried out according to the highest standards of humane best practices, as per the recommendation that was approved by City Council on December 17, 2013. Without financial allegiance to any entity other than the City, a City-hired veterinarian would be accountable to London's citizens through Council.

Our research indicates that city-hired veterinarians are used in other Canadian municipalities at great cost benefit. Toronto Animal Services (TAS), for example, has employed City veterinarians since 2006 and currently has 2 full-time and 2 part-time veterinarians on staff. A member of AWAC recently spoke to one of those veterinarians, Dr. Esther Attard. Dr. Attard explained that Toronto's community, spay and neuter services are provided by City veterinarians.

The City of Toronto made the initial investment of hiring and equipping a staff veterinarian. Toronto citizens have been so pleased with the results that donations have grown exponentially since the inception of the City veterinary program. Now, the community spay/neuter program, as provided by the City veterinarians, is fully funded by donations. This is the kind of long-term cost benefit that can be achieved when the public perceives the stability and accountability that such a City veterinary service can provide.

Further cost benefits can be realized by having the veterinarian perform additional procedures on city animals that are in the shelter. While an animal is sedated for spay/neuter surgery, additional medical needs can be addressed, such as dental work. This would enhance the animal's adoptability at no further expense to the city. As animals at the city shelter become more adoptable due to enhanced medical care and leave the shelter more quickly, pressure to expand the shelter budget is relieved.

We are highly supportive of this service being included in the 2014 Budget.

2. **The Cat Adoption Centre** (\$200,000 for annual operating cost for the cat adoption centre, \$400,000 one-time capital cost for the purchase of a mobile building and equipment)

AWAC views the proposed Cat Adoption Centre as an effective way to increase adoptions of cats that are already spayed or neutered. Providing a pleasant environment for people wishing to adopt a cat (and possibly dogs in the future) can enhance the status of rescued animals. The Adoption Centre would house and display cats from various community rescue groups.

The Cat Adoption Centre would involve an initial cost of an approximately \$400,000 one-time investment for the purchase of a portable/modular unit, which would be placed on properties already belonging to the City. We agree with Council and staff that this can be a highly cost effective way to get such a facility operating in a short time frame, and makes use of property already owned by the City. In addition, the existence of a physical demonstration of a joint venture between the City and community partners has great potential to attract more volunteers and donations to the preventive programs that will help us reduce the pet overpopulation and achieve the 90% live exit rate that Council has set as a goal.

We strongly support the inclusion of this initiative in the 2014 Budget.

3. Enhance Existing Community Preventive Programs (funds for 2012-2013 were depleted by July 2013)

We support and appreciate the existing community preventive programs and would like to see them continue, and receive additional funding sufficient to ensure that spay/neuter and other essential programs are available throughout the year. These programs decrease future funding requirements over the long term.