



## Zoocheck Inc.

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Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC)  
City of London  
300 Dufferin Avenue  
London, Ontario  
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Dear Community and Protective Services Committee Members:

**RE: March 29, 2022 Agenda Item 4.3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee regarding private zoo use/Reptilia**

I am writing in support of the recommendations contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) in Item 4.3 of the March 29, 2022 CPSC Agenda. They are:

- 1. Council affirm that the exemption in the Animal Control By-law for animals licensed by the province is limited to the animals held under their provincial license, (i.e. those listed as specially protected or game animals under the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act), and that all other animals will be subject to the municipal animal control by-law.***
- 2. Council direct staff to send a clarification to the owner of Reptilia Zoo regarding the exemption limitation and a copy of the by-law highlighting that many animals within the Reptilia Zoo collection may be prohibited or restricted in the City of London pursuant to the by-law.***

The AWAC recommendations aim to provide public confirmation regarding the limited exemption from the Animal Control By-Law PH-3 provided to any person or business holding a provincial license to keep certain kinds of native wildlife in captivity. They will also verify to anyone who doesn't understand the limited exemption that the City of London retains control over non-native exotic animals within City limits.

The recommendations also help the City of London to proactively prevent exotic animal problems, rather than allowing them to surface and then trying to deal with them retroactively. A number of Ontario municipalities have dealt with these kinds of issues retroactively and have encountered long, difficult, sometimes expensive, struggles to address them. Examples include the Municipality of Lambton Shores and the Township of Wainfleet trying to address public safety and nuisance issues posed by zoos



operated by Mark Drysdale and the Township of Southwold addressing similar problems with big cat owner Norman Buwalhda.

I would like to note that:

1. There are no provincial or federal licenses for zoos or zoo-type facilities in Ontario and no licenses for the keeping of non-native exotic animal species.
2. Since the early 1980s there have been no fewer than 12 attempts to establish a licensing regime for Ontario's zoos and zoo-type facilities. They have included government bills, private members bills, government consultation/working groups, single Ministry initiatives and other programs. None have resulted in the establishment of any kind of zoo licensing in the province.
3. The Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (NDMRNF) currently issues a *License to Keep Specially Protected and Game Wildlife in a Zoo* [the "License"]. It regulates ONLY those native wildlife species listed in the *Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act* and does not apply to non-native exotic wildlife species. According to NDMRNF Senior Policy Advisor,  

**"The requirements of the licence for zoos to keep specially protected and game animals apply only to the species being held under the licence (ie. Those regulated under the FWCA) and NOT to other species that may be kept in the same facility."**
4. According to Animal Control By-Law PH-3 (3.6), "This By-law shall not apply to animals maintained in a public park, zoo, fair, exhibition or circus operated or licensed by a municipal or other governmental authority." Since there is no municipal or provincial zoo license and no governmental authority operating the Reptilia zoo business, there is only a limited exemption for those native wildlife species covered by NDMRNF licenses leaving all non-native exotic wild animals held within City limits as the responsibility of the City of London.
5. Municipal staff have recognized the limited exemption by indicating that issues lying outside of the scope of the provincial license may have to be dealt with by the City.

I should also mention that in December 2021, the City of Toronto rejected Reptilia's request for an animal control bylaw exemption. A comprehensive multi-agency review by Toronto Animal Services identified numerous public safety, animal welfare and other issues and recommended that no exemption be provided. On December 1<sup>st</sup> Toronto's Economic and Community Development Committee unanimously voted against an exemption, as did Toronto City Council on December 15<sup>th</sup> with a unanimous 26 – 0 vote.

In January 2022, opposition to a Reptilia request for an exemption to the City of St. Catharines animal control bylaw led to a deferral and then a withdrawal of the request by the applicant. Those opposing the application included City residents, Brock University faculty members and students, the local humane

society and animal control service provider, the Ontario SPCA as well as numerous other animal welfare, wildlife protection and environmental organizations and independent experts.

For the reasons stated in this letter I urge you to support the AWAC recommendations as presented.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Laidlaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

Rob Laidlaw  
CBiol MRSB  
Executive Director

*Zoocheck is an international wildlife protection charity established in 1984 to promote and protect the interests and well-being of wild animals. Zoocheck works with a broad range of collaborating partners in Canada and around the world, and assisted the City of London in the relocation of animals from the Storybook Gardens zoo and other issues.*