

Dear CPSC Members (Chair E. Pelozo, Mayor J. Horgan, Councillors D. Ferreira, J. Pribil, C. Rahman, and S. Stevenson):

I am a decades-long London resident, presently living in Old South.

I was also in the public gallery in 2018 when Council successfully voted no to Reptilia setting up shop in London.

It is therefore dismaying and distressing to see them making yet another plea to CPSC on November 29th to reverse our city's anti-zoo bylaw.

Reptilia is clearly a zoo.

Reptilia is a highly commercialized, multi-faceted operation that, at their two existing locations in Vaughan and Whitby, include a public zoo, event rental spaces for children's parties, corporate gatherings, animal meet and greets and other activities, a significant reptile pet product sales area and a robust program of offsite animal presentations, shows, parties and other events.

Sounds like a great business opportunity... until you discover that they break provincial laws governing exotic animals.

Until you discover that they may no longer be CAZA-accredited, as they claim (my understanding is that they lost their accreditation a few months ago and I do not see them listed on CAZA's present list).

Until you discover that provincial animal welfare authorities have documented numerous issues with Reptilia.

Until you discover that Reptilia's revenue-generating predictions claim numbers which rival those of the internationally recognized Toronto Zoo, which itself struggles with attendance at times.

Concerned citizens, animal welfare and environmental groups, experts, academics and others have opposed proposed Reptilia zoos in Toronto, St. Catharines and here in London.

In December 2021 the City of Toronto Council voted 26-0 not to change their bylaw to accommodate Reptilia's request, secondary to serious public safety and animal welfare concerns.

Reptilia has been attempting to set up a zoo in the City of London since 2018, asking for an exemption to our "no zoos" animal bylaw.

At that time, London City Council refused to do so, expressing safety and potential legal concerns as Reptilia exposes the public (including the highly vulnerable, like children) to crocodilians, venomous snakes and other currently prohibited animals.

Reptilia's business model also includes a significant number of offsite visits with these prohibited animals, putting both the public and animals at further risk.

The frequent transport and containment of these animals is a highly stressful and unnatural experience which is not only harmful to the animals themselves but could also lead to unexpected stressful reactions towards the public.

They may also carry diseases which could put our increasingly vulnerable pediatric population at risk.

Council wisely made the same decision again in April 2022 when the Reptilia item was deliberated a second time.

It is also worth noting that in 2011 London City Council dealt with the private zoo issue and removed the definition of private zoo use from their zoning bylaw to prevent new zoo operations from opening in the City.

After the 2018 London City Council decision to leave the animal control bylaw as is, Reptilia was issued a building permit by the City for a location at the Westmount Shopping Center on Wonderland Road.

I remain highly concerned that despite a robust vote against Reptilia, a building permit was still issued to them.

That serious error (I hope it was an error) has now led to Reptilia recently stating that they are nearing end of construction at Westmount Mall.

Since they have invested so much to this point (despite knowing that they did NOT have a bylaw exemption) they are now back again, trying to obtain it after the fact.

We have no idea why Reptilia would continue to construct their facility after the 2018 Council decision and when they hadn't secured changes to the animal control bylaw.

Nevertheless, four representatives of Reptilia has made requests to delegate at the November 29th meeting of CPSC.

As in 2018, I continue to agree that the City of London animal control bylaw should not be changed to accommodate a private, for profit, zoo business and therefore oppose any exemptions for any new zoos in London, Ontario.

I hope that we can finally close the door on Reptilia for good.

For the good of the City, the public and the animals.

Merci,

Kelly Smith