

Dear Community and Protective Services,

Per my previous email, we're interested in presenting at your Tuesday November 29th Committee meeting regarding the myriad issues with zoos in the City of London... *** that is still a request, but in addition, here is a letter that I'm willing to be made public. Please note the references at the end of the letter.

There's nothing natural or educational about viewing or handling an unwilling animal outside of their natural habitat. It's impossible to effectively regulate or enforce the humane treatment of animals in zoos, and Humane Societies across Canada are against the sale and display of amphibians.

The City of London has rightly refused Reptilia's requests to set up shop / change animal control bylaws on two separate occasions in the past, in 2018 and earlier this year.

Study after study tells us petting zoos place enormous stress on animals. They're stolen from their families and natural habitats; prevented from performing natural behaviours; lack enrichment; have ridiculously reduced ranges; many of them die en route from their homes abroad; and their natural lifespan is often truncated. The idea that a mall... or any building, in any city ... could possibly be an appropriate habitat for a wild animal is ludicrous at best, and cruel at worst.

The risk of the animals escaping must also be considered, as I believe it was in previous decisions by Council; no matter what protocols are put in place by a business, human error and equipment failure must always be part of the equation.

The amphibian and reptile trade is ugly, and zoos like this simply encourage people to buy exotic animals, risking their extinction. Discarded animals from foreign countries bought as pets are frequently left to invade and permanently alter native ecosystems where they don't belong by people thinking they're freeing the animals.

There's also the risk to public health. Zoos and the reptile and amphibian trade can spread serious pathogens, including E. coli and salmonella, or worse. At this very moment we're in the midst of a worldwide pandemic which has its origins in the sale and exploitation of wild animals.

There are no regulations in the province of Ontario when it comes to exotic animals, and no health standards to protect the animals or the public.

I would ask that your committee refuse the application made by Reptilia because of health risks to the public, serious ethical concerns for the animals, the threat to our native ecosystems, and the threaten to the animals' native ecosystems.

With thanks for your time,
Marion Markham

References:

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https://spca.bc.ca/news/reptiles-pets-five-common-myths-debunked/?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/animal-welfare-advocates-aim-to-tame-by-law-exemptions-for-mobile-zoos-1.4800726>

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