

Attention: Community and Protective Services

Honourable Members of the London City Council:

My name is Carla Kuijpers and I have been a resident of London for most of my life.

I herewith would like to oppose Reptilia's request for an exemption to the present bylaw which came into existence for very good reasons. I am asking the City of London maintain their 2018 decision to reject Reptilia's request to expand here, into London.

Reptilia is a highly commercialized, multi-faceted zoo operation that provides rental spaces for children's parties and corporate gatherings, animal meet-and-greets, reptile pet product sales, and offsite animal presentations, shows, parties, and other events. In other words, Reptilia is "in it for the money"; there is nothing natural or educational about viewing or handling an unwilling animal outside of their natural habitat; there is nothing beneficial to the well-being of the animals kept in unnatural settings and heavily reduced ranges. Reptilia is strictly a business with no concern for the animals they are exploiting. And in business, anything goes to make a dollar.

Concerned citizens, animal welfare and environmental groups, experts, academics and others have opposed proposed Reptilia zoos in Toronto, St. Catharines and London. In December 2021 the City of Toronto Council voted 26-0 not to change their bylaw to accommodate Reptilia's request. In 2018 London City Council refused to make changes to London's animal control bylaw that would accommodate Reptilia and its zoo business model, which may involve crocodilians, venomous snakes and other currently prohibited animals. Council also made the same decision again in April 2022 when the Reptilia issue was deliberated upon a second time.

A new shopping mall zoo that will display animals and that will take animals offsite throughout the City is a bad idea for animal welfare, public safety, or for the negative educational messages those activities convey. 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.

Reptilia has a disreputable track record of trying to exploit legal loop-holes to ultimately turn a profit on exotic animals in towns that, as yet, fortunately, do not allow zoos to operate. Reptilia representatives have recently stated that they have completed construction, so, once again, they are back to try to obtain an exemption from the City of London animal control bylaw. I have no idea why Reptilia would even START construction of a facility after the 2018 Council decision and when they hadn't secured changes to the animal control bylaw, other than that they are forcing their way into Council with the help of their expensive legal partners.

Again, a bylaw is a bylaw is a bylaw. No, is no, is no. Please, do NOT concede to Reptilia's demand.  
Sincerely,

Carla Kuijpers, B.A. Hon, B.Ed.

I would like to make a request to delegate to the CPSC meeting at City Hall this Tuesday afternoon. I am a resident of London. I give permission to publicize my letter, speech, or photo.

Thank you,

Carla Kuijpers