



Lawyers for Animal Welfare (LAW)

VIA EMAIL to: lsc@toronto.ca

**City of Toronto Licensing and Standards Committee
Attention: Lynn Genova
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N2**

July 25, 2011

Dear members of the Licensing and Standards Committee:

RE: Budget Cuts and Outsourcing for Toronto Animal Services

Lawyers for Animal Welfare (LAW) is a Canadian Registered Charity dedicated to advancing public knowledge of animal practices and preventing the abuse and killing of animals through the enforcement of existing laws.

In its report to the city, consulting firm KPMG has identified several areas for budget cuts to Toronto Core Services. The Licensing and Standards Committee has been asked to make recommendations to the Executive Committee on the suggested budget cuts to programs overseen by the Licensing and Standards Committee.

The KPMG Licensing and Standards report suggests that Toronto could reduce the resources available to Toronto Animal Services (TAS). Specifically, Toronto could reduce the level of service it offers in relation to pets, including:

- Outsourcing some or all of Toronto Animal Services
- Forcing owners to deliver animals they wish to surrender to the shelter, instead of picking them up
- Increasing Emergency Animal Rescue and Care response time, such that response time could be greater than two hours
- Eliminating cat and dog licensing enforcement

LAW wishes to provide you with some information regarding the potential service reductions for Toronto Animal Services, in order to better inform your decision.

Outsourcing/privatizing TAS raises a number of animal welfare concerns. Currently, TAS enjoys a strong reputation in the community for providing quality services to animals, including caring for injured animals, helping people retrieve lost pets, and helping them adopt new ones.

Privatizing some or all of TAS could lead to a significant erosion in the quality of services that are delivered both to animals and people. This is because it is difficult for animal service agencies to

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make a profit. Animal services are not offered to residents of Toronto because it is profitable to do so; rather, animal services are offered because it is in the public interest to protect animals in the city of Toronto.

Should TAS be outsourced to a private firm, that firm will be under pressure to turn a profit while delivering services to animals. Because it is difficult to profit from providing what is traditionally seen as a public service, there is a strong likelihood that profit will be made by cutting corners and providing a lower standard of service to the animals who should benefit from the city's care. This could result in neglect, cruelty and increased rates of euthanasia for the animal clients of TAS.

This scenario recently played out in Montreal, where for-profit pound operator Berger Blanc was exposed in April 2011 as having committed disturbing acts of neglect and cruelty against the animals it supposedly cared for. A Radio-Canada investigation also revealed that Berger Blanc regularly euthanized stray and lost animals immediately after picking them up, instead of keeping them long enough to provide their owners with the chance to retrieve their beloved pets before they were killed.

There are also animal welfare concerns raised by requiring owners to surrender animals to the city shelter, instead of picking up the animals from their homes. Often times, the reason a person or family will need to surrender an animal in the first place is because of financial pressures and/or poverty. Some families and individuals simply do not have the capacity to deliver an animal to the shelter as they may lack a vehicle and may not be able to afford to take a taxi. It is possible that some individuals will simply abandon their pets instead of delivering them to a shelter, which would obviously have a negative effect on the abandoned pets.

Increasing the response time for Emergency Animal Rescue and Care is also of concern. The title of this service, which includes the word "Emergency", is instructive. The calls received to this agency are often of an emergency nature, where an animal may be injured or caught in a difficult situation. Increasing the response time means that injured animals will likely suffer for longer than they would if response time was kept to its present standard of two hours or less.

LAW urges you to keep animal welfare interests in mind while you assess your options. We thank you for the opportunity to provide a written and we invite you to contact us should you wish to discuss any of these matters in greater detail. You can reach me by email at camille@lawyersforanimalwelfare.com or by telephone on my direct line at 647-864-0604.

Yours sincerely,

Camille Labchuk

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