



**SUBJECT:** City of Burlington Coyote Response Strategy update and response to recent serious attacks on city residents

**TO:** Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.

**FROM:** City Manager's Office

Report Number: CM-26-22

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 155-03-01

Date to Committee: September 14, 2022

Date to Council: September 20, 2022

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### **Recommendation:**

Receive city manager's office report CM-26-22 - City of Burlington Coyote Response Strategy update and, with regard to the City's immediate response to the recent serious coyote attacks on Burlington residents, endorse the actions taken by staff under established authority as outlined in the report at an estimated 2022 one-time cost of \$22,850; and

Approve the single source of a Certified Wildlife Professional (CWP) and authorize the Manager of Procurement Services to sign a multi-year agreement with the CWP for the remainder of 2022 and the duration of 2023, with the option to renew for three (3) additional one (1) year terms; and

Direct the Director of Building and By-law to proceed immediately with the design and implementation of a new two-year Coyote Action and Awareness Program specifically directed at delivering enhanced coyote response services based on the program scope outlined in city manager's office report CM-26-22; and

Direct the Chief Financial Officer to report back to City Council directly on September 20, 2022 with options and recommendations for funding the new Coyote Action and Awareness Program; and

Direct the Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility to report back in Q1 2023 in conjunction with City Council's 2023 budget consideration on the

establishment of the proposed new By-Law Compliance Department (as recommended in companion report CM-24-22 in this agenda) inclusive of an enhanced coyote response model as part of the Animal Services function; and

Direct the Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility, following the hiring of a new Director of By-law Compliance, to undertake a full review and update of the current City of Burlington Animal Services By-law (By-law 60-2005) and Coyote Response Strategy by Q4 2023; and

Direct the City Manager, with respect to the February 2022 report, specifically the recommendations of the community association – Burlington & Oakville Coyote Management (BOCM) as outlined in Appendix B of city manager's office report CM-26-22, to proceed with the implementation of the staff recommendations and next steps and report back on the status in Q1 2023; and

Direct the City Manager to initiate meetings, as required, with the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Oakville and senior staff of both Burlington and Oakville to develop and implement a coordinated workplan related to both the BOCM recommendations as well as other City/Town coyote response initiatives including, but not limited to, joint procurement of external professional wildlife management services, joint coyote related data collection, research and analysis and public educational and awareness programs and possible mutual coyote response service agreements; and

Direct the City Manager and Chief Financial Officer to include for consideration in the 2023 proposed budget the recommended resources to fully address all of the above noted service delivery requirements for an enhanced coyote action and awareness program.

## **PURPOSE:**

### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

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## **Background and Discussion:**

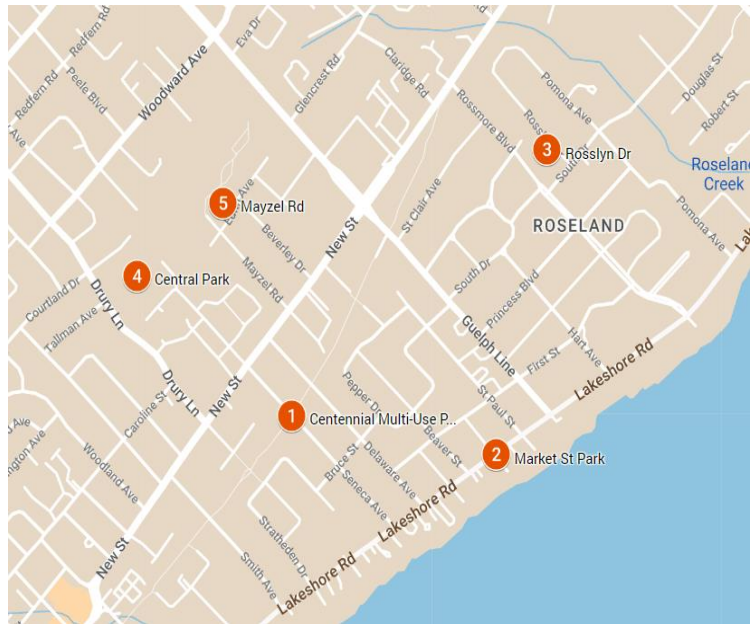
### *Coyotes in Burlington*

Coyote sightings are common in the City of Burlington, as our green spaces and forested areas provide an excellent habitat for them. In an April 9, 2021 segment of CBC's *Quirks & Quarks*, host Bob McDonald spoke about the increased population of

coyotes in urban environments with Dr. Dennis Murray, associate professor of biology at Trent University.

“According to Murray, the rapid rise in the coyote's range and urban population is due to the intersection of many different ecological issues. Climate change plays a part. Coyotes do better when there's less snow, and so have been able to expand their range northwards. The absence of bigger predators like wolves has meant less competition for prey animals. And, Murray adds, the way we've built cities has changed to incorporate more parkland and green space, which is ideal coyote habitat.”<sup>1</sup>

Incidents involving coyotes in Burlington are on the rise. Since January 2022, the City of Burlington has received over 385 emails regarding sightings of coyotes. This involves sightings in densely populated areas, as well as parks, recreation facilities and school grounds. Most recently, Burlington has experienced five confirmed unprovoked attacks on residents; largely within a radius of approximately 1km from the intersection of New Street and Guelph Line as depicted in the adjacent map.



These increased calls related to coyotes are in addition to a drastic influx of animal related calls associated to domesticated animal on animal attacks, surrendering of animals, off-leash occurrences, and domesticated animal versus person attacks. This drastic increase in call volumes/occurrences requiring response and investigation has placed a significant demand on the Animal Services team. Of interest, our neighbour Oakville has advised they have experienced a similar level of reported coyote sightings this year.

### Wildlife Control Roles and Responsibilities

- *The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF)*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/coyotes-doing-well-in-the-city>

Wildlife control is a function of the Province under the [Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act](#) and as legislated through various regulations, such as [Ontario Regulations 665/98](#) (hunting) and [Ontario Regulations 667/98](#) (trapping).

With respect to wildlife, specifically coyotes, The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) states:

“Wildlife such as coyotes, wolves, and other furbearing mammals sometimes come into conflict with people. Municipalities are responsible for deciding on and taking appropriate actions when human-wildlife encounters create ongoing conflict situations on municipal property, and can also take action on private property with the permission of the landowner.

The province supports municipalities by providing advice and expertise on actions they can take to resolve such situations. In many cases, these conflicts can be prevented (see tips at [ontario.ca/livingwithwildlife](http://ontario.ca/livingwithwildlife)). However, when prevention fails, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act allows municipalities to protect their property by harassing, capturing or dispatching a variety of wildlife species, including coyotes, or to hire a licensed hunter or trapper to do so on their behalf. Municipalities may also take action to address human-wildlife conflicts on private property with the permission of the landowner. No approval or authorization is required from the province in these cases.

Any situation that impacts public safety should be referred to the local police as they are the authority to deal with these matters. Police can dispatch an animal if they deem it necessary to protect public safety.

Municipalities may pay licensed hunters or trappers to hunt or trap furbearing mammals within their municipal boundaries. The municipality determines the terms of any such arrangement, including the species of furbearing mammals, the hunters or trappers involved, the number of animals, and the locations and time periods that apply.”<sup>2</sup>

- *City of Burlington Animal Services*

Given the Province’s delegation of responsibilities to municipalities, responding to wildlife issues in Burlington resides within Animal Services. The primary functions of Animal Services are:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://files.ontario.ca/mnrf-wild-animal-control-rules-municipalities-en-2020-06-18.pdf>

- dog licensing programs,
- in-house animal shelter and care,
- pet adoptions,
- by-law enforcement related to all aspects of Animal Services By-law 60-2005, and
- educational and public awareness programs.

Burlington Animal Services is currently staffed with 1 supervisor, 4 animal control officers and 4 animal care and licensing attendants. It is the animal control officers who are directly responsible for administering and enforcing applicable animal laws and regulations of the Province of Ontario and City by-laws pertaining to animals. In the provision of the services, Burlington residents are assisted with stray animals, rabies mitigation, dangerous animal investigations, animal nuisances, loose livestock, injured animals and deceased animal pickup. While coyotes represent an increasingly difficult challenge, an increased demand has also been placed on Animal Services to deal with domestic animal issues; namely aggressive dogs in City-owned public parks and open space.

Animal control officers are responsible for providing public education on co-existing with coyotes including hazing techniques, assessing properties for known coyote attractants, investigations into encounters and attacks, investigating and issuing fines for illegally feeding coyotes, monitoring known coyote dens, and locating and eliminating coyotes involved in attacks on residents.

#### *Coyote Response Strategy History*

In November 2015, Council approved the City's first Coyote Response Strategy; essentially creating a guideline for residents and staff to use when dealing with problem coyotes. Appendix A contains the coyote response strategy escalation protocols based on classifications ranging from observations/sightings to human attacks. This protocol is in addition to a by-law established to prevent the feeding of wild animals with the exception of the Trumpeter Swan.

Coyotes play an important ecological role in maintaining diversity of species and the health and integrity of a variety of ecosystems. Coyotes can have a top-down effect on ecosystems by regulating the numbers of other wild animals, such as foxes, raccoons, skunks, and feral cats through competitive exclusion and direct killing. Coyote response plans hope to achieve a balance between the importance of human safety and the role coyotes play in our local ecosystems.

The stated goal of the Coyote Response Strategy is to support co-existence with urban coyotes using education, behaviour modification and development of a tiered response to aggressive coyote behavior. The tiered response requires active participation on the part of the entire community including residents, homeowners, volunteers, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Halton Regional Police Services and city staff.

Human-coyote interactions must be documented to identify where coyotes are frequently seen, to count how many coyotes are within an area and to identify human-coyote conflict hotspots. Gathering specific data on incidents will allow for targeting of educational campaigns and conflict mitigation efforts, as well as the ability to measure success in reducing conflicts over time.

As is provided for in the escalation protocol, lethal responses (i.e. coyote elimination) should be considered only in the event of an unprovoked or provoked, confirmed attack on a human. If implemented, lethal control efforts should focus on the offending coyote(s) only, rather than the coyote population at large. As evidenced with the recent physical attacks, this requires significant surveillance efforts to make sure the correct animal(s) is targeted and eliminated.

## **Strategy/process**

### **Immediate Response to Recent Coyote Physical Attacks**

As indicated, Burlington has experienced five physical attacks by coyotes on residents since July 30. Upon learning of the attacks, the City has:

- Engaged a Certified Wildlife Professional (CWP) for the following:
  - location and elimination of the coyotes responsible for the attacks
    - as of August 24, one coyote has been eliminated (with additional support of Halton Regional Police Services) and a second coyote is actively being sought
  - removal of the related coyote den located on private property, and
  - patrol through the attack area to assess for probable cause of attraction to the area (i.e. food source, other attractions)
- Contacted owners of the private property where the related coyote den is located and issued property standards orders to clean up location and remove debris used by coyotes for denning.
  - By-law enforcement has confirmed the property is being cleaned of debris and in compliance with property standards and expected to be completed by September 3, 2022.
- Issued media releases and posted social media blasts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to draw attention to the attacks and remind residents of the need for vigilance and the techniques for hazing coyotes

- Initiated a whistle distribution campaign to provide a whistle and brochure with coyote hazing information as a public safety measure so residents have a means to make noise as part of the hazing techniques and learning to co-exist with coyotes.
  - Whistles are available through Burlington Public Library locations and City of Burlington Community Centers and at Service Burlington.
- Installed temporary signage to make people aware of the presence of aggressive coyotes in the area of
  - Drury Lane and New Street,
  - Guelph Line and Woodward Avenue,
  - Guelph Line and Lakeshore Road,
  - New Street and Dynes Road.
- Connected with Halton Region Public Health to ensure notice of attacks reported through Joseph Brant Hospital are provided to the City for tracking purposes.
  - Note: only high level information regarding the date, location, type of exposure and brief synopsis of the event is shared; no personal information is shared.
- Provided Joseph Brant Hospital with contact information of Animal Services to be provided to victims of coyote physical attacks to encourage their reporting of attacks.

The above actions were all taken in keeping with our Incident Response protocols which involved daily meetings with Council and staff as required and decision making was immediate and targeted. This report seeks council's endorsement of the actions by staff under established authority requiring an estimated 2022 one-time cost of \$22,850. Details of expenditures are contained in the financial section of this report. A number of actions continue, and further decisions will be reported out separately to Council as required.

#### *Immediate Service and Resource Needs – Coyote Response Strategy*

Through our initial incident response, Animal Services identified specific immediate service and resource needs. Details of the projected cost are contained in the financial section of the report. Specifically,

- Animal Services
  - *Retention of Certified Wildlife Professional (CWP)*

MNRH has delegated responsibility to the municipalities for control of coyotes including engaging licensed hunters or trappers to hunt or trap furbearing mammals within their municipal boundaries. In its response to the recent physical attacks, the City engaged a CWP to assist in dealing with coyotes in accordance with the City's protocols.

A CWP has the skills, tools, permits and methods to safely locate, trap and eliminate the targeted coyotes including related dens. This type of skill and competency is needed to augment and extend the efforts of Animal Services specifically to respond to coyote physical attacks. Moving forward, as recommended, the City is seeking approval to single source a CWP and authorize the Manager of Procurement Services to sign a multi-year agreement for this service recognizing the need for an immediate and priority response to be guaranteed to be in place when required by the City.

– *New Coyote Action and Awareness Program - Pilot*

City of Burlington is recommending proceeding immediately with a new two-year Coyote Action and Awareness Program, as a pilot, which will in part address concerns brought forward within the Burlington and Oakville Coyote Management association (“BOCM”) document (refer BOCM section below and Appendix C for full BOCM report). Incidents involving coyotes are on the rise, and since January of 2022, the City of Burlington has received over 385 emails regarding sightings of coyotes. This involves sightings in densely populated areas, as well as parks, recreation facilities and school grounds.

The proposed Coyote Action and Awareness pilot program would provide key educational programs, as well as bring awareness to the issues via public interaction and education and focused community engagement. The City’s presence in and amongst the community would also provide assurance of an added layer of security being readily available for coyote-related issues which may arise.

The current Animal Services service model is primarily complaint-driven and reactionary due to limited staffing capacity and the daily influx of call volumes related to community-wide service needs both in the urban and rural areas. The additional Coyote Action and Awareness pilot program encompasses a proactive and community-based approach in addressing real-time issues. Specific to the recommendations of BOCM, the Coyote Action and Awareness program would encompass the following:

- Direct support and delivery of public education programs to the Halton School Boards;
- Enhanced and direct coyote hazing education and training programs to be provided at a neighbourhood level; and
- Oversee and work internally with staff to ensure consistent signage is maintained throughout the City of Burlington, as current signage is out of date and does not accurately identify potential threats to the public.



A thorough review, with consultation and collaboration, of the Animal Service By-law 60-2005 also needs to be conducted during this Coyote Action and Awareness pilot phase, as the current by-law is out of date and requires refinements and updates. Community engagement during the consultation phase will allow for open and transparent dialogue to ensure community needs are heard, assessed and integrated into the new by-law.

The Coyote Action and Awareness program would be facilitated by 2 contract staff for a period of 2 years to ensure the program has the ability to capture two full cycles of coyote denning. In addition to the 2 dedicated and fully qualified staff, additional resources for data collection and analysis are recommended to better understand the coyote population in Burlington and facilitate informed decision making.

– *Change from Reactionary to Preventive & Proactive Animal Services Delivery Model*

As outlined earlier in the report, a critical need exists to update and enhance the service delivery model for City of Burlington's Animal Services in conjunction with the establishment of the new By-Law Compliance Department recommended in report CM-24-22.

With the new service model implemented in 2023, an enhanced coyote response strategy needs to become an integral component of the development of the future state Burlington Animal Services function. This organizational design and strategic management responsibility, as recommended in report CM-24-22, will reside with the Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility and will require a comprehensive multi-year business case to be presented in conjunction with the 2023 Proposed Budget.

▪ *Corporate Communications and Engagement*

Communications to residents on how to co-exist with coyotes consistently occurs throughout the year. There are more detailed, focused communications campaigns each spring in preparation for mating season and each autumn for the denning season. Prior to the City becoming aware of the recent physical attacks on residents, a social media campaign was underway reminding residents what to do when they see a coyote, not to feed coyotes and other tips on how to co-exist with them. This campaign was paused once we became aware of the attacks.

With coyote sightings on the rise and the confirmed physical attacks on residents, it is necessary to update the messages and increase the frequency and reach of communications to residents. The existing communication resources, including the staff resources needed to support enhanced coyote communication and engagement and other critical communication to residents, needs to be considered particularly related to the ever increasing challenges related to city-wide by-law enforcement.

One of the realities the City experienced in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency is the much greater importance residents place on the services protecting both their neighbours and the overall quality of life they value living in Burlington. The City's actions are designed to continue to protect the health and safety of our residents, visitors and businesses.

In addition to media releases, website updates and organic (unpaid) social media posts, the following proposed tactics could be utilized for enhancing our two seasonal campaigns and would require specific communications budget to support these efforts:

- Newspaper Ads (3 full page ads)
- Halton Multicultural Council (HMC) e-newsletter
- Road Signs
- Flyer/Brochure Distribution
- Social media (paid ads)
- Local TV ads
- Bus Ads
- Pull-up Banners at facilities (At various recreation centres and libraries throughout the city)

The existing coyote communications comes from an advertising budget which is used to support the entire corporation. Specific on-going funding for direct coyote-related communications programs throughout the year is necessary to ensure all residents across Burlington are well informed. The approximate on-going budget required for these tactics is \$56,250 to provide two communication campaigns; in spring and fall.

*Report from Burlington and Oakville Coyote Management (BOCM)*

Burlington and Oakville Coyote Management ("BOCM") is a voluntary organization comprised of citizens in both Oakville and Burlington. The mandate of BOCM is to promote strong, definitive and effective measures to ensure residents, children and pets are safe and protected at all times. In February 2022, the BOCM submitted a

report to the City to be considered including a “Summary of Recommendations”. A copy of the complete report is contained in Appendix C.

BOCM met with staff including the City Manager on June 2, 2022 to share their concerns with the delay by City staff in formally responding to the report and to discuss further and address any questions related to their recommendations. The City Manager acknowledges the delay in responding to the report and appreciates the substantive effort, extensive research and detailed recommendations brought forward by BOCM. In hindsight, as is our normal process, the BOCM report should have been brought forward in the July cycle with a motion memo for approval by Committee and Council to direct the City Manager to report back in September 2022.

Appendix B lists the BOCM recommendations along with the staff response and recommendations/next steps for consideration by the Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Committee (standing committee of Council). In addition to the 11 specific recommendations listed in the BOCM report, a further recommendation is also being addressed to request joint meeting(s) with Burlington and Oakville senior staff and BOCM representatives. Burlington’s City Manager has discussed this matter with the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Oakville and included a separate recommendation in this report, with their full support, seeing the development of a coordinated workplan working closely with BOCM. The BOCM recommendations are strategically grouped into 4 main categories namely Protection, Analysis, Education, and Prevention.

Included in Appendix B are staff comments related to each item. These comments are also intended to provide the context as to the current role of the City of Burlington Animal Services in relation to our Coyote Response strategy. In responding to the recommendations, staff acknowledge the desire by BOCM to continue to work through the various proposals with staff. In so doing, it is important to acknowledge individual recommendations may require further consideration with respect to future Animal Services’ resourcing needs, City-wide by-law implications including zoning, and provincial/municipal legislative authority, etc. Staff appreciate the approach taken by BOCM to work collaboratively with both Oakville and Burlington over the balance of 2022 and beyond.

The BOCM document provides 11 recommendations which the association has put forward for further review and consideration to both Oakville and Burlington on the basis they would have a significant and beneficial impact on coyote management in the two communities. They are as follows:

- Conduct an impact analysis by neighbourhoods to identify various controls that should be implemented to safeguard residents, children and pets from coyote attacks.
- Improve both the quantity and quality of signage relating to coyotes, and ensure it offers meaningful information on what to do in the event of sightings.
- Current municipal by-laws should be amended to permit the laying of charges and assessment of fines for persons who feed coyotes.
- Provide appropriate coyote management education in schools and parks that border creeks.
- Change municipal by-laws to permit residents to increase fence heights in order to deter coyotes from entering residents' properties.
- Permit residents' whose properties back onto wooded areas to place an awning structure at the top of their fence to prevent coyote jumps.
- Request more frequent and nightly by-law officer visits to wooded areas known to have coyote dens.
- Scientifically measure the size of the coyote population in West Oakville, Bronte and Burlington
- Institute a program of coyote contraception to limit the size of the coyote population.
- Initiate a program of aggressive hazing to instill fear in coyotes.
- Institute a program of regular pesticide spraying of rats and other vermin consumed by coyotes in our trail areas and known den areas.

Further to the staff response provided in Appendix B, this report includes a recommendation related to moving forward with implementation and further review where required of the BOCM recommendations.

### **Options Considered**

Maintain the status quo – management recognizes this is not a viable option. The traumatic physical attacks have changed the dynamics of coyote-human co-existence. While the City's approved protocols addressed how unprovoked and provoked physical attacks would be handled, the reality the City has experienced demonstrates the need for further proactive response tactics.

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### **Financial Matters:**

The expenditures and funding requirements for the City's initial incident response and future resources and actions to provide support in the areas of Animal Services and Corporate Communications & Engagement are detailed below.

## **Total Financial Impact**

### Initial Incident Response

The City has incurred \$22,850 in expenditures to date to support the initial incident response. These expenditures are within management levels of authority. The details are included below.

- *Animal Services*: Total = \$17,325
  - Engagement of Certified Wildlife Professional = \$2,850
  - Retention of Certified Wildlife Professional for balance of 2022 = \$7,125
  - Location and tracking of coyotes - Animal Services overtime costs = \$1,250
  - Whistle Distribution Program (whistles) = \$6,100
- *Communications*: Total = \$5,525
  - Printed Resource Material = \$1,225
  - Temporary signage = \$1,000
  - Staff hours including over time = \$3,300

### Future Resources and Actions Needed

The approximate total budget required to support the additional tactics and resources is \$576,900. The preliminary details are as follows:

- *Animal Services* = Total \$520,650
  - Retention of Certified Wildlife Professional (CWP)
    - Annualized Cost = \$14,250
  - New Coyote Action and Awareness Pilot Program including salaries, vehicle and operating costs for 2 years
    - \$506,400
- *Communications* = Total \$56,250
  - Print/On-line/Visual and Social media blasts (paid) = \$16,050
  - Printed Resource Material and Distribution = \$23,000
  - Road Signs = \$1,200
  - Bus Advertising = \$16,000

As indicated in the recommendation, the City Manager and Chief Financial Officer will include, for consideration in the 2023 Proposed Budget, the above noted costs for

resources to fully address the service delivery requirements including an enhanced coyote action and awareness program.

### **Source of Funding**

As indicated in the recommendations, the Chief Financial Officer is to report back to City Council directly on September 20, 2022 with options and recommendations for funding the two-year pilot Coyote Action and Awareness program and the other on-going costs.

### **Other Resource Impacts**

With the implementation of the new pilot Coyote Action and Awareness program and the enhanced communications campaign, it is expected other support services will be engaged to provide either one-time or on-going support. As the details of the programs emerge, the extent of the impact on these support services will be made clear. Management will be assessing any requests for additional resources as the need arises.

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### **Climate Implications**

Changing climate and its impact on weather and weather patterns plays a role in the urbanization of coyotes. According to Dr. Murray,

“... the rapid rise in the coyote's range and urban population is due to the intersection of many different ecological issues. Climate change plays a part. Coyotes do better when there's less snow, and so have been able to expand their range northwards.”<sup>3</sup>

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### **Engagement Matters:**

In its initial response to the coyote physical attacks, the City connected with:

- Halton Region Public Health to ensure shareable information about coyote attacks was being exchanged with the City to enable the City to track the number of attacks,
  - Joseph Brant Hospital had the necessary information to encourage victims of coyote attacks to report their attacks to the City, and
  - Halton Regional Police Services to seek their assistance in the locating and eliminating the suspect coyote.
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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/coyotes-doing-well-in-the-city>

The City Manager has had preliminary discussions with:

- BOCM and, as indicated, the City has proposed a further discussion between City of Burlington, Town of Oakville and BOCM.
  - Town of Oakville regarding the opportunities to work together in a number of areas related to coyote response.
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## **Conclusion:**

Coyotes have existed in the City of Burlington for decades and recently an increase in sightings and aggressive behaviour including physical attacks on residents has brought about the urgent need to closely examine and enhance our coyote response strategy. Our ability to co-exist with these wild animals is, in part, due to our understanding of their behaviour, how to maintain their fear of humans, our understanding of our behaviour, and how to reduce attractants such as food sources. The recent traumatic physical attacks have changed the dynamics of coyote-human co-existence. While the City's approved protocols addressed how unprovoked and provoked physical attacks are to be handled, the reality the City has experienced demonstrates the need for further proactive response tactics.

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Respectfully submitted,

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**Appendices:**

- A. CM-26-22 Appendix A - Coyote Response Strategy Escalation Protocols
- B. CM-26-22 Appendix B – City of Burlington Coyote Response Update Including Response to Recent Attacks
- C. CM-26-22 Appendix C - Burlington & Oakville Coyote Management Group Report (February 22, 2022)

**Notifications:**

Stephen White via personal email

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.