



SUBJECT: City of Burlington update to Coyote Response Strategy

TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.

FROM: Building and By-law Department

Report Number: BB-03-23

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 155-03-01

Date to Committee: March 28, 2023

Date to Council: April 18, 2023

Recommendation:

Receive and file building and by-law department report BB-03-23 and endorse the actions taken by the Director of Building and Bylaw to date related to the City's response to the implementation of a Coyote Action and Awareness Program; and

Direct the Director of Bylaw Compliance to report back as required with any further updates on the program as well as additional future staffing and other resource requirements to support the City's Coyote Management Strategy.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

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 Coyotes and other wildlife. Incidents involving coyotes in Burlington are also on the rise, as indicated by the 7 unprovoked attacks of 2022.

As noted in report to council CM-26-22, an April 9, 2021 segment of CBC's *Quirks & Quarks*, hosted by Bob McDonald addressed 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.”¹

Wildlife Control Roles and Responsibilities

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

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

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.”²

▪ 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:

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

Burlington Animal Services recently completed the contract staff (2) hiring process for the CAAP (Coyote Action and Awareness Program) and the Animal Services team is now currently staffed with one supervisor, six animal control officers and four animal care and licensing attendants. Animal control officers 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

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

animal investigations, animal nuisances, loose livestock, injured animals and deceased animal pickup with these requests being related to domestic and/or wildlife. 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. Domestic animal bites alone account for almost 1 incident per week over the past 2 years 2021/2022.

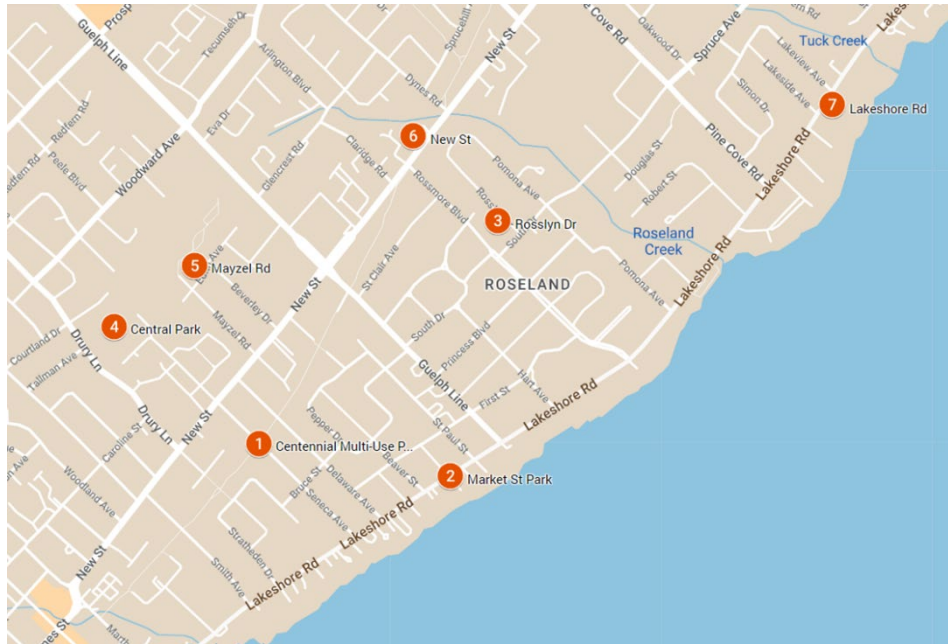
Year	Dog Bites
2018	41
2019	41
2020	31
2021	47
2022	45
2023	6 (Current investigations)

Animal control officers are responsible for providing public education related to 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 and other wildlife, monitoring known coyote dens, and locating and eliminating coyotes involved in attacks on residents.

Strategy/process

CAAP – Coyote Action and Awareness Program

As indicated, Burlington experienced 7 physical coyote attacks on residents in 2022 during a 9-week period from July 30th to September 20th, 2022. Upon learning of the attacks, Burlington took specific and direct action to activate the Level II Crisis Management Team and followed the Coyote Response Strategy Escalation Protocol approved by Council in PB-90-15. The Animal Services team focused their resources on locating and tracking the coyotes responsible and collaborated with a Certified Wildlife Professional (CWP) in their elimination.



In addition, staff presented a comprehensive report CM-26-22 entitled the City of Burlington Coyote Response Strategy Update and response to serious attacks on city residents. This report outlined coyote management recommendations and strategic actions subsequently all approved by Council to allow the City to be proactive when it comes to managing coyotes and wildlife to protect its residents.

Council approved the following directions in the report and amended the report to include several additional comprehensive directions.

1. 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
2. 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 additional one year terms; and

3. Direct the Director of Building and Bylaw 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
4. Direct the Chief Financial Officer to report back to City Council directly on Sept. 20, 2022 with options and recommendations for funding the new Coyote Action and Awareness Program; and
5. 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 Bylaw Compliance Department (as recommended in companion report CM-24-22) inclusive of an enhanced coyote response model as part of the Animal Services function; and
6. Direct the Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility, following the hiring of a new Director of Bylaw Compliance, to undertake a full review and update of the current City of Burlington Animal Services Bylaw (By-law 60-2005) and Coyote Response Strategy by Q4 2023; and
7. 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
8. 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
9. 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; and
10. Authorize the Director of Roads, Parks and Forestry to procure and install lids for non-decorative garbage cans in the immediate area of coyote concern, to an upset limit of \$15,000 in 2022; and

11. Direct the Director of Building and Bylaw to adopt a pro-active coyote response strategy model inclusive of adding two additional contract Bylaw Enforcement Officers, and engage appropriate coyote specialist resources to assist with investigations, canid response team, training staff and members of the public; and
12. Direct the Executive Director of Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility to review waste receptacles identified in various urban design guidelines, starting with Downtown Streetscape Guidelines, to ensure that those identified are secure and enclosed, and to report to CPRM Committee in Q4 2022; and
13. Direct the Chief Financial Officer to include information regarding expenses incurred related to the Coyote Response Strategy when reporting on the 2022 year-end financial position and bring forward any amendments in the 2023 budget; and
14. Direct the Mayor and Government Relations Manager to connect with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and other ministries as needed, to formally request emergency funding, and staffing support, to help the City respond to coyote attacks in Burlington; and
15. Direct the Executive Director of Legal Services and Corporation Counsel and the Director of Building and Bylaw to review the current fine structure for illegal dumping contained in the Lot Maintenance By-law 49-2022 and fines contained in City's Animal Control By-law 60-2005 relating to feeding of wildlife and bring back options to increase the fines for ticketing offences, Part I and the maximum fine for Part III offences for the feeding of wildlife, including any required bylaw amendments for consideration by Council on Sept. 20, 2022; and
16. Direct the Director of Corporate Communications & Engagement to distribute a city-wide mailing and social media communication plan by Sept. 30, 2022 focused solely on the fact that the recent crisis of aggressive wildlife attacks is the direct result of illegal dumping and/or feeding of wildlife and clearly communicating increases in Part I Offence ticketing and Part III Offence fines to be considered by Council on Sept. 20, 2022; and
17. Direct the City Manager to include targeted cutting back of vegetation on public lands as part of the risk mitigation actions to be considered in the updated coyote response strategy.

With respect to the above directions the following is a summary of their status to date:

Completed to Date	In Progress Tied to Future Reporting Date	In Process of Completion with Date for reporting TBC
Directions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 (related to feeding of wildlife), 16	Directions: 6, 7 (namely this report)	Direction: 12, 15 (related to illegal dumping), 17

In the months following the attacks, in addition to the above, Burlington animal services staff have worked towards developing a more proactive approach, ensuring public awareness and increased visibility throughout the community. Additional large billboard signage was deployed, as well as increased social media messaging. Staff ensured to secure the appropriate PPE (full-length gloves and wildlife proof coverings) as well as the appropriate wildlife capture equipment (hand-held wildlife capture equipment) and appropriate wildlife hazing devices and tools (pyrotechnic flares and audible deterrent devices).

Senior leadership, via implementation of the ECG (Emergency Control Group) identified immediate needs to have resources on hand and available for immediate deployment, as such the City of Burlington has continued the procurement of a roster of CWPs (Certified Wildlife Professionals) trained and accredited to use lethal and non-lethal measures in Coyote control and mitigation tactics. In addition to the use of external CWP services, in recent months, the Supervisor of Animal Services has also built greater internal capacity to deal directly with any crisis situations similar to the 2022 attacks.

The CAAP program will continue to utilize science-based information as well as data to monitor, track and aversion condition coyotes to maintain a healthy ecological balance in the community. This information is obtained in large part through the development of our ongoing and closed relationships with the MNRF as well as our continued collaborative efforts with our municipal neighbours, Oakville & Mississauga. Through the City Manager's offices, Burlington and Oakville has initiated ongoing joint coyote management meetings with the respective animal services staff teams.

Public facing data such as digital mapping and reporting forums are also key to the program, and to date the City has created and is beta-testing interactive reporting channels which will assist both the public and officers in maintaining this balance. The Animal Services team is currently working with Geomatics & Data Management Services to finalize an external facing map that visually plots coyote sightings across the City.

This reporting system assists both Animal Service officers as well as the Municipal Law Enforcement team in determining and identifying locations for a systematic and routine approach to audit derelict and problematic properties (both public and private). This method allows the teams to work collaboratively and efficiently to deal with coyote issues, by educating the public regarding minimum property standards as well as wildlife attractants and deterrents. City staff are also able to assess potential den locations to either mitigate or remove the location prior to it becoming a public safety threat. To date a number of property audits have already been completed with highly positive feedback from the community.

Increased community visibility and coyote education programs, via town halls, school pop-ups and proactive patrols are the continued focus of the CAAP team in 2023 and 2024 based on the two-year pilot timeframe. The education and enforcement regarding feeding of wildlife continues to be the foundational basis for the program, which also expands into proactive park patrols for domestic animals off-leash as well as the failure to remove domestic animal waste. This provides the community with multiple channels for relaying information to officers, either via email, telephone, or personal conversation with an officer patrolling a specific park or ward. This amplifies community engagement as well adds an additional layer of security by officers being readily available for any coyote-related issues which may arise.

Purchasing and implementation of digital (or magnet) signage (i.e. mobile/portable signage) is also being explored, as the need for readily available, large & visible signage is key to ensuring messaging is deployed in a timely fashion. Having signage on hand and readily available, will allow for focused messaging to be displayed in identified problematic areas immediately, to continue to provide the public with the most readily available information.

As Committee is aware, in report CM-26-22, a section of the report was devoted to the independent report provided the Burlington Oakville Coyote Management (BOCM) and as part of this report a further update is provided in relation the status of the 11 recommendations included in that report (Refer to Appendix A). Committee should also be aware that the joint meetings of Oakville and Burlington Animal Services staff, including the respective CAOs, has included discussion of the report and in particular where opportunities to work together to advance the recommendations provided by BOCM. Staff appreciate the efforts of BOCM and acknowledge that while all of the recommendations have been fully considered, not all of the recommendations as noted in Appendix A have been supported.

Options Considered

The traumatic physical attacks have changed the dynamics of coyote-human co-existence within Burlington. While the City's approved Coyote Strategy protocols addressed how unprovoked and provoked physical attacks would and in fact should be handled, those incidents have demonstrated the need for ongoing proactive response tactics, the implementation and endorsement of the CAAP program is achieving positive results.

Future consideration is being given to the ability to track, tag and potentially collar urban coyotes, which would be the first program of its kind in Ontario to our knowledge. This program could potentially have revenue streams attached in the capacity of base donations or sponsorships of the animals being digitally monitored similar to the Yellowstone Wolf Program (State of Montana). This will require collaboration with external agencies to ensure appropriate database systems are in place as well as seeking input from the Ministry and any associated grant programs to assist with cost offsetting.

Financial Matters:

The costs incurred during 2022 were \$88,190. These costs were not budgeted and therefore absorbed as part of the 2022 yearend financial position

Total Financial Impact

The 2023 budget included a one-time funding in the amount of \$580,488.00 for a two-year coyote response strategy. The two-year program includes 2 contract animal control officers, communication and literature costs as well as purchased services of CWP's and veterinary expenses.

Source of Funding

The 2023 budget included a one-time funding for the two-year coyote response strategy.

Other Resource Impacts

With the implementation of the new pilot Coyote Action and Awareness Program (CAAP) and the enhanced communications campaign, it is expected other support internal 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.

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.”³

Engagement Matters:

The City continues to maintain ongoing connections with all agencies involved in the initial attacks, as well as establishing ongoing relationships with neighbouring municipalities to ensure knowledge transfer and public safety;

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) - sharing scientific information
 - Halton Region Public Health - ensure shareable information about coyote attacks
 - Halton Regional Police Services - assist with public safety if/when required
 - Town of Oakville (Municipal Enforcement Services) – collaborating on policies/procedures
 - City of Hamilton (Animal Services) – collaborating on policies/procedures
-

Conclusion:

Coyotes have existed within the City of Burlington for decades and will continue to thrive in this current climate. Recent aggressive behavior including the 2022 physical attacks on residents brought about the urgent need to enhance our response strategy and implement a rapid action team (CAAP) to deal with these urgent issues. Our ability to

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/coyotes-doing-well-in-the-city>

coexist with these animals is dependent on public understanding and controlled interactions which reduce the level of fear and increase the aversion conditioning tactics required to maintain that balance. While the City's protocols addressed how the unprovoked and provoked physical attacks are handled, continued enhancements and response tactics will be key to long term success of the program and overall public health/safety. Council's unequivocal support of the additional tactics and resources proposed is directly benefiting the City's efforts with Coyote management and will ensure that the Animal Services team is equipped to address escalated coyote situations in an expeditious manner.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Palmieri

Supervisor of Animal Services

905-335-7600 x 6523

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.

Appendices:

Appendix A – BOCM Report_CM-26-22 and Status Updates

Appendix B - 2023 Coyote Response Communications Strategy