



March 13, 2025

Town of The Blue Mountains  
Mayor & Council

*Via email*

Dear Mayor & Council,

### **Reference: AMO & World Animal Protection Municipal Resolution**

I am writing to you today to ask you to adopt the attached municipal resolution, calling on the province to introduce zoo licensing legislation in Ontario.

Ontario is the *only* province that does not licence or control the keeping of non native ("exotic") wild animals. Anyone can own and operate a zoo without professional training, adequate financing, or appropriate facilities. As a result, there are more [roadside zoos<sup>i</sup>](#) and [private wildlife collectors<sup>ii</sup>](#) in Ontario than in any other province. Since there is [no provincial licence requirement<sup>iii</sup>](#), there are no records to tell us how many exotic wild animals are kept or where they are located.

The keeping of wild animals without adequate provincial oversight is a serious animal welfare and public safety issue. These issues have been downloaded to municipalities to address. This has resulted in a patchwork of different municipal bylaws governing the keeping of wild animals, for what is clearly a provincial issue.

### **Impacts on municipalities**

*"I strongly encourage each member municipality to have a look at your rules, because these things can jump up and bite you, and you don't see them coming. And you have absolutely no rules to deal with them," said [Tony Fitzgerald, Hastings Highlands Mayor in 2024<sup>iv</sup>](#), "This is something that hit us – kind of gobsmacked us in the face – a couple of years back, when somebody showed up and started setting up a roadside zoo in Hastings Highlands, and we were not prepared to deal with it – not even a little bit,"*

[Half of Ontario's municipalities](#) have no bylaw whatsoever<sup>v</sup>. Even municipalities that have bylaws in place are increasingly facing challenges from unregulated zoo type facilities and wild animal owners who have sought bylaw exemptions or have attempted to [open roadside zoos](#) and [bring in prohibited wild animal species](#) despite existing bylaws.

[Escapes or injuries can and do happen<sup>vi</sup>](#) because of low fences and flimsy cage construction. Other safety measures like stand off barriers, perimeter fences and shift cages – which help prevent animal escapes or dangerous interactions – are usually inadequate or lacking. The lack of safety measures put animal care staff, visitors, first responders and communities at risk.

Captive wild animals are often deprived of opportunities to behave naturally. They frequently show signs of psychological disturbance, boredom, and frustration. These poor conditions for the animals can result in public outcry and significant negative media attention.

### Municipal resolution

World Animal Protection, with support of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association of Ontario (MLEOA), is asking **municipalities to support and adopt this resolution to introduce zoo licensing and restrict the keeping of dangerous exotic wild animals in Ontario.**

Without a provincial approach to these issues, all municipalities are at risk. We ask you to pass the attached resolution in a motion, showing your support uploading this issue to the Province, instead of downloading the burden to municipalities.

### Support for the resolution

- [88% of Ontarians](#) support provincial regulations that would require all zoos to have a licence and meet animal welfare and public safety standards.
- Canada's leading animal welfare groups, the Toronto Zoo, AMO, AMCTO and MLEOA support a mandatory provincial zoo licensing system.
- More than 40 Ontario municipalities, and the Western Ontario Wardens Caucus (WOWC) and Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA), have adopted our resolution calling on the Province to take action.
- There is cross party acknowledgement and support that the roadside zoo issue in Ontario should be solved.

We thank you for your consideration and are here to answer any questions or provide support however we can for this resolution. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to safeguard Ontarians.

Sincerely,



Erin Ryan  
Wildlife Campaign Manager  
World Animal Protection Canada

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<sup>i</sup> Roadside zoos are substandard facilities that keep animals in unnatural conditions. They often lack professionally trained animal care staff and the financial resources necessary to ensure the humane and safe keeping of the animals. These types of facilities often use wild animals for entertainment purposes such as encouraging close interactions between wild animals and visitors (e.g., feeding and petting).

<sup>ii</sup> [https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/sites/default/files/media/WAP\\_Roadside\\_Zoo\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_092322\\_LR\\_1.pdf](https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/sites/default/files/media/WAP_Roadside_Zoo_Report_FINAL_092322_LR_1.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/-anyone-can-own-a-zoo-in-ontario-highlighting-why-ontario-ranks-dead-last-in-zoo-regulations-report-card-824904598.html>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.intelligencer.ca/news/hastings-county-asked-to-lobby-ontario-on-exotic-animal-rules>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/04/24/the-truth-about-exotic-animals-in-ontario.html>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://actnow.worldanimalprotection.ca/page/140997/-/1?location=canada>

**[name of municipality] RESOLUTION**  
**Provincial regulations needed to restrict keeping of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals**

**WHEREAS** Ontario has more private non-native (“exotic”) wild animal keepers, roadside zoos, mobile zoos, wildlife exhibits and other captive wildlife operations than any other province; and,

**WHEREAS** the Province of Ontario has of yet not developed regulations to prohibit or restrict animal possession, breeding, or use of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals in captivity; and,

**WHEREAS** non-native (“exotic”) wild animals can pose very serious human health and safety risks, and attacks causing human injury and death have occurred in the province; and,

**WHEREAS** the keeping of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals can cause poor animal welfare and suffering, and poses risks to local environments and wildlife; and,

**WHEREAS** owners of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals can move from one community to another even after their operations have been shut down due to animal welfare or public health and safety concerns; and,

**WHEREAS** municipalities have struggled, often for months or years, to deal with non-native (“exotic”) wild animal issues and have experienced substantive regulatory, administrative, enforcement and financial challenges; and,

**AND WHEREAS** the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) and the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association (MLEOA) have indicated their support for World Animal Protection’s campaign for provincial regulations of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals and roadside zoos in letters to the Ontario Solicitor General and Ontario Minister for Natural Resources and Forestry;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** [given the recent [enter incidents if any]], the [name municipality] hereby petitions the provincial government to implement provincial regulations to restrict the possession, breeding, and use of non-native (“exotic”) wild animals and license zoos in order to guarantee the fair and consistent application of policy throughout Ontario for the safety of Ontario’s citizens and the non-native (“exotic”) wild animal population;

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution will be forwarded to all municipalities in Ontario for support and that each endorsement be then forwarded to the Premier of Ontario ([premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)), Ontario Solicitor General ([michael.kerzner@ontario.ca](mailto:michael.kerzner@ontario.ca)), Ontario Minister for Natural Resources and Forestry ([graydon.smith@ontario.ca](mailto:graydon.smith@ontario.ca)) and MPP [name and email address provincial representative], AMO ([amo@amo.on.ca](mailto:amo@amo.on.ca)), AMCTO ([advocacy@amcto.com](mailto:advocacy@amcto.com)), and MLEAO ([mleo@mleo.ca](mailto:mleo@mleo.ca)).