

MUNICIPAL LEADERS JOIN WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION AND TORONTO ZOO IN CALLING FOR TOUGHER REGULATIONS AND MEANINGFUL ENFORCEMENT AROUND CAPTIVE WILDLIFE

World Animal Protection is calling on Ontario to make this year the last year for 'roadside' zoos.

TORONTO, ON (May 18, 2023) - With dozens of under-regulated 'roadside' zoos and other facilities set to open this weekend, World Animal Protection is calling on all political parties to make sure that this year's operating season is the last. The animal protection organization is urging the government to roll out a comprehensive licensing system to restrict the keeping of captive wildlife to facilities that can meet the highest animal welfare and human health and safety standards, backed by meaningful enforcement.

"From the recent concerning animal deaths at Marineland, to Reptilia opening in London, despite a by-law banning the display of many of their species, these are just some examples that highlight how broken the system is in Ontario, and frankly, it has been for far too long," said **Michèle Hamers, World Animal Protection Wildlife Campaign Manager**. "It's why we are calling on all political parties to come together to pass meaningful legislative changes and end the culture of non-compliance by making this year the last year for 'roadside' zoos in this province."

The passing of the Provincial Animal Services (PAWS) Act in 2019 was a step in the right direction but there has been **no government action** on addressing the significant welfare and safety concerns around captive wildlife in the province.

"While the PAWS Act has taken important steps, there continue to be far too many exotic animals in sub-optimal conditions in private ownership and in unaccredited roadside zoos across our province," said **Dolf DeJong, Chief Executive Officer of the Toronto Zoo**.

The Toronto Zoo, as well as the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), and Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association (MLEOA) have joined efforts led by World Animal Protection to bring change to Ontario's broken model.

Ontario only bans the ownership of select native species - but the regulation of thousands more wild species including tigers, lions and venomous snakes has been downloaded onto municipalities, leading to a patchwork of rules and regulations.

It's estimated that approximately 50% of municipalities in the province don't have any bans on wild animal ownership.

"Municipalities in Ontario have continued to face challenges in managing unregulated exotic animals and the presence of 'roadside zoos' which have posed safety risks to the public and to enforcement officers." said **Elana Arthurs, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) at Township of Douro-Dummer and President of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO)**. "We encourage the Province to develop a mandatory licensing regime and take action to minimize the operational, financial and legal risks to the municipal sector."

“To address public safety and to reduce the risks faced by bylaw officers who are often called upon to respond to exotic animal concerns, the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers’ Association supports World Animal Protection in their advocacy for the development of a provincial framework to create a uniformed approach to regulation and enforcement of exotic animals and roadside zoos,” added **Doug Godfrey, President, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers’ Association.**

World Animal Protection has been campaigning for over 20 years to push all levels of government to create tighter regulations as it relates to animal welfare including banning the private ownership of wild animals and tightening regulations that would result in the phase out of roadside zoos, keeping only those facilities that can meet the highest animal welfare and public safety standards.

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Notes to media:

[Letters sent by the Toronto Zoo, AMCTO and MLEOA to the Government of Ontario are available for download.](#)

KPW Communications can connect reporters with media contacts for the various organizations for additional comment.

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