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October 1, 2019

To all Ontario Mayors, CAO's and Clerks:

Municipalities can have a positive impact on the lives of animals.

What does the future of animal welfare look like? It's a question on the minds of pet owners, animal advocates, police and municipalities. Provincial animal welfare legislation is in the midst of a significant transition, and it requires a collaborative approach in order to be successful.

Historically, the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society was contracted to enforce the Province of Ontario's animal welfare legislation. In January 2019, a Superior Court judge ruled that it was unconstitutional for the Government of Ontario to permit a charity to provide law enforcement services. That ruling was a catalyst behind the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society's decision not to renew its contract with the government, which expired on March 31, 2019.

To help ensure a smooth transition period, the Ontario SPCA offered the provincial government a three-month transition phase and continued to enforce the legislation until June 28, 2019. After that date, enforcement services transitioned back to the government.

As Ontario's Animal Charity since 1873, the Ontario SPCA understands first hand how no one organization can do this work alone. The Ontario SPCA presented to the government a model of animal protection where the organization provides animal support services to the province and its enforcement agencies. Through the expertise of all agencies involved, this model will maximize resources for the best possible protection of animals.

So what does this mean for municipalities and their law enforcement officers? It means that you have the capacity to have a significant impact on the lives of

animals. Ensuring the pets in your community are protected requires a unified effort, at the heart of which are animal bylaws.

To put the significance of bylaws in perspective, the Ontario SPCA received approximately 14,000 calls last year concerning animal well-being. Of those, 56% related to standards of care issues alone. The Ontario SPCA estimates that as much as 65% of its annual call volume could be addressed at the municipal level through bylaws. With comprehensive bylaws in place across the province at the municipal level, those numbers could be further reduced.

Implementing or enhancing existing bylaws relating to animals left unattended in vehicles, standards of care, tethering, and other areas of common concern can prevent such incidents from escalating to cases of serious neglect. As municipal law enforcement officers are familiar with compliance-based enforcement, they have the skills and expertise to provide early intervention and education that can resolve a situation before it escalates to a level where police need to become involved, or animals need to be removed, which can become quite resource intensive.

The Ontario SPCA continues to support police and municipalities. The Ontario SPCA and Humane Society's province-wide 310-SPCA (7722) hotline remains active, offering support to municipalities and officers who need information or access to resources.

With over 145 years of experience, the Ontario SPCA has the skills, knowledge and infrastructure needed to provide support to government agencies, like municipal law enforcement. Through Ontario SPCA Enforcement Support Services, the Ontario SPCA provides expertise in animal care, veterinary medicine, animal transportation and understanding of the collection and processing of forensic evidence to help build cases against animal abusers.

Animal protection is much bigger than any one organization or enforcement agency. It will take a collaborative effort to make our communities a better place for animals and people.

To learn more about the Ontario SPCA and how it can support animal welfare efforts at the municipal level, visit ontariospca.ca or contact:

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Sincerely,



Daryl Vaillancourt
Chief, Humane Programs and Community Outreach
Ontario SPCA and Humane Society

CC: Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police

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