WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO COMMITTEE MEETING – NOVEMBER 15, 2011

RE: RESPONSIBLE ANIMAL OWNERSHIP BY-LAW (PED09303(b))

The aspiration of my submission is quite simple: to reduce the number of cats that are killed annually by Hamilton Animal Services, which currently numbers in the thousands of cats.

Responsible pet ownership is the answer to this dilemma and I was hopeful that the title of the report “Responsible Animal Ownership By-law” would mean that the new by-law would incorporate education, services and solutions that would achieve this worthwhile goal of promoting responsible ownership. Unfortunately there is little in this bylaw that would achieve this goal and thereby reduce the number of cats killed by the City of Hamilton.

Ironically, the most significant deficiency of the by-law is the lack of education services regarding responsible pet ownership.

**Responsible cat owners do not allow their cats to roam out of doors.**

The unfortunate truth is that the majority of cat owners are not responsible in this regard and do allow their cats to have free access to the outdoors. This is a cultural phenomenon perpetuated by the belief that indoor cats are not happy cats. The new by-law needs to take this reality into account and stop picking up cats that are not causing a nuisance. It is stated in the executive summary that there are less than 100 calls made to Animal Control each year regarding nuisance animals. It is only these calls that should precipitate the pick up of a cat. This would greatly reduce the number of cats being captured and euthanized by the city. Citizens need to be educated on a grand and continuing basis the dangers of allowing their cats to roam free, including the greatest danger - being picked up by Animal Control.

**Responsible cat owners spay and neuter their cats.**

The unfortunate truth is that many owners do not spay/neuter their pets ON TIME. Pet overpopulation is a grave problem and calls for immediate public attention. Tax dollars that are currently being spent to collect, caring for and kill pets should be redirected to spay/neuter services and education regarding it’s status as the only effect method of controlling pet populations.

The animal control bylaw adopted by the city of Calgary (often called the Calgary Model) is an excellent, proven and respected model for any city to adopt in an effort to reduced the killing of animals.

Other deficiencies of the new Hamilton by-law are:

- Lack of adoption services to re-home uncollected pets.
- Lack of micro-chipping services.
- A short, three day redemption period for claiming lost animals that is woefully inadequate.
- Rigid hours of operation that are not convenient for working citizens to claim their pets.
- No use of volunteers who are committed to animal welfare.

It is my request that those responsible for the new Hamilton bylaw educate themselves with regards to the Calgary Model and attempt to improve the fate of thousands of cats each year by adopting its proven and successful methods. Education, as stated in the title of The new Hamilton bylaw is the key to achieving this goal.

Thank you.

Bonnie Gardhouse