
Halifax West Community Council Presentation Request

Ecology Action Centre and Nova Scotia Bird Society request to present to the HWCC regarding the need for a Responsible Pet Ownership Program in HRM that includes cats.

Scope:

Halifax has large outdoor populations of cats including feral, stray, and roaming owned cats. As domestic pets, the source of these populations is previously owned or abandoned cats. Outdoor cats contribute to the growing feral population, face poor welfare conditions outdoors, and pose threats to human and environmental health. Between 1.7-4.1 million birds are killed every year in HRM by the ~60,000 feral and 98,000 owned cats. Halifax faces higher numbers of feral cats/1000 persons than other Canadian cities, and the current investment towards spay and neuter affects a small fraction of the feral population (1-2%). There is a demonstrated need to improve programming directed at limiting the cats that enter the outdoor population in the first place.

Public education and municipally enacted measures are critical to supporting the current spay and neuter funding by encouraging responsible ownership of pet cats and turning off the tap of recruitment. Strategic investment in wide spread educational campaigns, alongside associated programming initiatives (affordable identification, free drive home and other rewards, low cost registration) are the core of successful incentive-driven programs which generate revenue, while prioritizing for healthy communities.

Municipalities play an important leadership role in providing the framework and guidelines for its citizenry. Seventeen of the 20 most populous municipalities across Canada have taken steps to improve cat care through the introduction of municipal programming- it's time for Halifax to make the commitment as well.

Desired outcome:

Our recommendation is the preparation by an external, experienced consultant of a communications and strategic initiatives plan that outlines the phased implementation of a responsible cat ownership program. Our request is for endorsement and recommendation to council for such work to be initiated.