

HUMANE SOCIETY of CANADA

Protecting Animals and the Earth

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Humane Society of Canada for
the Protection of Animals and the
Environment is a Registered
Canadian Charitable Organization
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Letters to the Editor
Toronto Star
One Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5E 1E6

Re: "As outdoor living rooms parks must be safe for all" by Premika Ratnam, www.playatthepark.ca, Toronto Star, July 12/07

Dear Editor,

This author deliberately took our remarks out of context to support her agenda which in our opinion fans the flames of prejudice and hysterics against people and dogs. That is why on three separate occasions we have turned down their request to form a coalition. Our charity embraces diversity and the inclusion of people, dogs and nature because the way we treat animals is a reflection of the way we treat each other. Each day across Toronto there are at least 750,000 encounters between dogs and people and most of them are positive. Walking your dog is a valid recreational use of the park, serves as a neighbourhood watch for crime, provides exercise and helps promotes a vibrant community spirit for people of all ages.

We have always supported training as a requirement of licensing because of the practical benefits to dogs, their families and the community. Likewise we have developed bite prevention information that politicians refuse to include in school curricula. In order to stop Toronto Animal Services from killing every second animal they get their hands on, we also advocate mandatory spaying and neutering to put an end to their pet slaughterhouses. City Council refused these and many more practical ideas and instead shut out every single animal protection organization in the city, including our own, whose staff once ran their animal control program and who have more than 40 years of experience here in Canada and in over 100 countries. Instead, at taxpayers' expense, the politicians flew in two animal people from Calgary as "surprise guests" who told them what they wanted to hear. Evidently, Councillors also need a lesson in geography. They are accountable to Toronto taxpayers, not to those who live in Calgary.

Albert Einstein said: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." In our opinion, Toronto Animal Services' track record is criminally irresponsible, and instead of fixing it, they want more public trust, more money and more legal authority, to make even bigger mistakes. Meaning more animals will die, more money will be wasted and more people who care about animals will be harmed. Over the last five years, elected officials and civil servants in charge of this tax payer funded agency have even gone to court to fight our requests under the Freedom of Information Act and in other cases have outright lied about their law enforcement authority and about having records they are required to keep by provincial law.



Still stinging from the public's refusal to roll over and accept new taxes on Monday, the vitriol that poured from Councillors' lips yesterday when they passed their fundamentally dishonest plan was truly breathtaking. We all recall the caricature of a man coming home after being yelled at by his boss, angrily swinging his briefcase, and then kicking his dog as he comes through the front door. Evidently, this tradition is alive and well at City Hall.

Ghandi once said: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals." In our view, with the unrepentant arrogance and dishonesty of the civil servants and politicians in charge, we still have a long, long way to go. And that is a terrible thing for all of us.

Sincerely,



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(Note: The City claims there are 250,000 dogs living in Toronto and if each one is walked three times a day and encounters only one person, this results in at least 750,000 encounters each day).