

Premier Doug Ford  
Premier's Office  
Room 281  
Legislative Building, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

March 21, 2020

Dear Premier Ford,

Covid-19 is leading to unprecedented shocks to Ontario's economy and social safety net. We are writing to you urgently today because Ontario's Humane Societies and Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) need your help, and the help of the Government of Ontario, to meet the growing needs of the communities we serve in the midst of this crisis.

**Ontarians rely on our Humane Societies and SPCAs to deliver essential community services** for our pet owning and animal loving province. Municipalities and the Province depend on our organizations for infrastructure such as shelter and adoption services for homeless and abandoned animals, spay/neuter services for population control, veterinary services for low income communities, pet food banks for those in need, compassionate boarding for those in hospital or fleeing violence, and rescue and rehabilitation for animals in disaster. In the present crisis, we continue to provide essential services and will continue to meet the needs of people and animals in our communities while keeping staff and volunteers safe.

However, the sector is anticipating significant disruption arising from the Covid-19 situation on several fronts and require the provincial government's support to mitigate that impact. **In an average year, Ontario's Humane Societies and SPCAs directly shelter thousands of animals.** In years of crisis such as this those numbers rapidly escalate.

Humane Societies and SPCAs are facing an increased demand for services for many reasons:

- increased animal surrenders and abandonment;
- increased requests from owners for emergency supplies to feed their animals due to economic downturn;
- increased requests for emergency medical services;
- increased need for compassionate (short term) care for those facing hospital stays, quarantine or from women fleeing violence who require a safe option for their animals; and
- emergency medical assistance for pets from owners who are unable to access veterinary care given low income or no access due to reduced services of private veterinarian practices.

**While demand for community services is increasing, our sector is experiencing significant losses in revenue.** All Humane Societies and SPCAs are charitable organizations that depend on the public for their revenue. However, funding is declining due to:

- reduction in adoptions and associated adoption fees;
- increased costs for the staff and supplies needed to serve the animals in care;
- immediate and steep decline in individual donations as people's discretionary funds shrink;
- suspension or cancelation of fundraising events; and
- suspension of Social Enterprise activities such as Thrift Stores.

We have taken steps to mitigate losses by reducing expenses and temporarily laying off staff not directly involved in caring for animals. **However, the provincial government can help us continue to provide essential services to our communities with five key actions:**

1. **Declare Humane Societies and SPCAs with animal shelters an essential service**, so employees are allowed free movement to and from work if/and when we enter into a period when non-essential workers are required to stay at home. Each shelter is currently caring for animals and those numbers are increasing while adoption decreases. We also currently work with the provincial Animal Welfare Service to care for animals that are being removed from poor conditions and require safe housing. If we were unable to continue to operate there will be a significant animal welfare crisis in the community and inside the shelters.
2. **Need for Personal Protective Equipment** in animal shelters where staff are receiving surrendered animals from COVID affected homes. While companion animals can't transmit COVID 19, the virus can live on their fur and skin therefore requiring mandated protocols on intake at the shelter.
3. **Guaranteed supply of food for animals** in our shelters and foster homes, including measures to reduce hoarding and allowing pet food manufacturers to continue to operate during the crisis.
4. **Designate Humane Societies and SPCAs as animal emergency responders**. This designation allows for greater response and for individual agencies to apply for special funding from key charitable partners.
5. **Provide Emergency Funding** through direct financial support and in extending any measures to charitable organizations with equivalent benefits to those that business receive would help us maintain employment and cash flow. It is also important to note that this crisis will likely intersect with the upcoming fire and flood season where Humane Societies and our organizations are called upon to respond to animal issues alongside the human emergency response teams

Simply put, as business and services continue to slow, we expect the need for our sector's services and associated expenses will continue to climb, with no corresponding revenue streams. We are concerned this could create a perfect storm that could significantly impact Humane Societies and SPCAs in the short and long term. We are hoping that with your assistance and quick response we will mitigate this risk.

We look forward to helping the government and our local communities navigate this crisis with your support and thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Jane  
President  
Alliston Humane Society



Doug Shirton  
Executive Director  
Burlington Humane Society



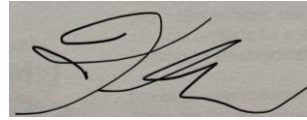
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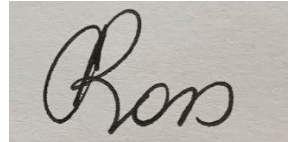
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