

Summary of Comments Given to the General Issues Committee

of

City of Hamilton Council

November 20, 2013

Carolyn Biggs
Office of City Clerk
Corporate Services
71 Main Street West, 1st Floor
City of Hamilton

Delegate: Tom Mason, BSc.

Background: Curator of Birds and Invertebrates, Toronto Zoo 1987-2013

Worked with reptiles on 6 continents 1968-2013

Interim Director of Reptile Breeding Foundation 1991

Member of Animal Welfare steering committee of AZA 2002-2009

Consultant for reptiles at Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust , UK 1978

1/ Requested by Paul Goulet to inspect the Hamilton Facility of Little Ray's Reptiles in August of 2013. Copy of report sent to City of Hamilton earlier. Found facility to be secure and safe for the public and staff. Very impressed by rotating educational theme that changed every six months. Also saw weekend educational program in progress.

2/ Staff: I have known both the owner and General Manager of the Little Ray's Reptile Zoo for many years and can state that both put human safety and education of the visitors as top priorities within the facility.

3/ How Little Ray's can help the City of Hamilton:

- Provides an interesting, changing tourist attraction for the City.
- Provides a solid educational tool for the Hamilton Board of Education.
- Provides jobs for Hamilton residents.
- Provides an important source of information and help for City's Animal Control officers.
- Shows members of the public why large reptiles do not make good pets (e.g. caiman, large pythons).
- Gives people in the City of Hamilton a safe place to volunteer time and learn about wildlife.
- Also provides a place for local children to go to.
- Proximity of animals teaches people tolerance of the wildlife we live with.

I also mentioned that it was estimated that in the United States that approximately 20% of households had reptiles. (Most of these reptiles would be legal varieties under the Hamilton bylaws.)

Something else that I would like councilors to know is that most reptiles and especially snakes are captive born and raised in clean facilities thus reducing the risk of being disease carriers. Many of these reptiles have been modified in captivity through selective breeding. Species such as corn snakes, king snakes, ball pythons and leopard geckos now have forms never observed in the wild. Much like small dogs, these reptiles are bred strictly as pets. The legal reptile trade is a multi- million dollar business and has become popular worldwide. Only a small fraction of the trade deals with the animals that could be considered potentially dangerous. It is through education that people will come to understand this group of animals and this is where educational centers such as Little Ray's Reptile Zoo will help.