[insert date]

Mr. Gérald Tremblay

Mayor of Montreal

Hôtel de ville

275, Notre-Dame East

Montreal (Quebec)

H2Y 1C6

Concerning: Current and proposed animal control by-law in the City of Montreal

Dear Mayor Tremblay,

As a Montreal resident, I am deeply concerned about the new animal control by-law to be put forward by the City, in particular its provisions pertaining to dangerous dogs. As was highlighted by the recent case of Wicca, the way the current by-law deals with dangerous dogs has numerous flaws, in particular that a dog can be sentenced to death at the City’s discretion, without having to consult a qualified canine behaviorist. However, the new proposed by-law is even more problematic. I am writing you to ask that the City revisit its plans for the by-law’s dangerous dog provisions and follow the lead of other Canadian cities that have adopted a more progressive and just approach to this issue.

The new by-law that the City is proposing would provide for automatic and mandatory euthanasia in cases where a dog causes a skin laceration, regardless of the context or the severity of the injury. If a dog were to superficially scratch another dog while playing at a dog park, or bite someone in self-defence, the City would be required to sentence that dog to death. The new by-law could thus potentially result in hundreds or even thousands of dogs being killed, many of whom pose no real threat to public safety. Though the proposal establishes a review process for dog owners who wish to contest a euthanasia order, owners will only have 24 hours to obtain a behavioral evaluation, which is insufficient given the wait list for canine behaviorists in Montreal.

The decision to order euthanasia is a very serious one: it deprives a dog of his or her life, and is emotionally devastating for the dog’s human family. It is a decision that warrants robust procedural safeguards, including an impartial and qualified decision-maker, an opportunity for both sides to introduce evidence and present arguments, as well as a fair and accessible review process. A euthanasia order should be issued only once a thorough understanding of the individual dog and circumstances has been reached. More specifically, the decision-maker should be required to consider the context of the incident; the severity of the resulting injury; the risk posed by the dog as assessed by a qualified canine behaviourist; the feasibility of alternative measures to satisfy public safety concerns (such as mandatory muzzling); and the degree to which the owner is a responsible dog owner. Such procedural protections are currently seen in the by-laws of several large Canadian cities, including Calgary, Ottawa, and Toronto.

I ask that Montreal follow the lead of other Canadian cities and adopt a municipal by-law that addresses public safety concerns in a just and reasonable manner, without imposing undue consequences on the City’s animals and citizens.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert your name]

[Insert your address]

Letters should be sent to:

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