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From: Darryl Burke

Sent: 22/02/2022 12:43

To: accessyork@york.ca

Subject: Letter to York Regions Council for Feb 24th meeting

York Region Council Members

The reason why I'm writing you is that after attending the virtual Committee of the Whole meeting on Feb 10th, I had left the meeting feeling that something was absent about the whole process and presentation, and that it was hard to put into words until I had a chance to sit back and think about what was recommended (of which I am in full support of).

Being a regular user of the forest for dog walking (about 2-3 times a week), I myself have had similar issues with other owners/dogs that were well represented in the surveys results. After reflecting back on a particular issue I had, where one of our dogs who was off-leash (as per the pre-covid rules, and has great recall as a trained working dog) was attacked by another dog, which the other owner also had off-leash, and also had issues with aggression towards other dogs (the other dog had a muzzle on, thankfully at the time). This is a similar issue raised by survey respondents, as well as clearly raised as a concern at the Committee of the Whole meeting.

After a lot of reflection about the incident, and what is being proposed by the staff in the report for upcoming Council approval, I have to honestly say, that I do NOT see a solution or mitigation to this "type" issue in what is being proposed. While the new proposed changes my concentrate the use of particular forests for off-leash dogs and owners. I fail to see how the proposal will reduce these types of incidents. If fact, I think the likelihood of these issues will increase based on the following:

- 1) Owners will now feel encouraged to let their dogs off-leash in these areas, even though their dogs fail to have proper behaviour/training to be off-leash in a forest environment. (where before it was allowed when the dog was "under control")
- 2) The region is now concentrating these dogs and owners in 2 particular tracts which will increase the amount of interactivity amongst dogs/owners compared to previously.
- 3) There is no mention in any new signage/rules where it reiterates that owners are legally responsible for their dog's actions if any incident should occur? (Eg. What about an incident reporting line, where people can report issues when they do happen? New signage reminding owners about responsible dog behaviour.)

I see a lot of encouragement about getting owners out into the forest and having facilities for off-leash dogs (which is awesome and should be promoted). However, I think the underlying issue of why this whole process was started, is not addressed in the recommendations put forward by staff. Some dogs should not be off-leash even in an off-leash area, if they are going to cause problems/safety issues with other users of the park. I do not see that concept addressed in what has been put forward to date, and hope that some additions to the staff's recommendation can be made, to address the safety and responsible dog behaviour issue.

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