

May 10, 2012



City Council Committee Report

To: Mayor & Council

**Fr: Richard Perchuk, Manager of Operations
Kevin Robertson, Building Inspection**

Re: Bear Wise Program

Recommendation:

That the Ministry of Natural Resources reconsiders its position regarding the Bear Wise Program, being a decision to no longer provide site-specific visits and to no longer trap and relocate problem bears from the City of Kenora.

Background:

The City of Kenora has been notified by a letter from David O'Toole, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) advising the City that there will be changes to the Bear Wise Program that they have administered for the past eight (8) years. As part of the MNR's Transformation Plan announced in the 2012 Ontario Budget they will no longer trap and relocate problem bears and will no longer provide individual site visits to help landowners who are having site-specific conflicts with bears, see the attached correspondence dated May 3, 2012.

The MNR has indicated that they will continue to administer the following:

- Operating the toll-free Bear Reporting Line (1-888-514-2327) 24 hours a day, seven days a week from April to November, with trained staff handling calls and determining the appropriate response.
- Educating the public about black bears and bear behavior in Ontario.
- Providing advice to municipalities, the public, and other stakeholders about what they can do to keep bears away from urban and semi-urban areas, and how to manage problem bears.
- Tracking and collecting information about human-bear occurrences.
- Maintaining our comprehensive website to assist Ontarians with tips to ensure that their properties are not inviting to bears.

Although it is the responsibility of the MNR to manage bears, the City of Kenora has worked closely in the past with the MNR in the trapping and relocation of bears within the City boundaries and has received funding and training to cover some of the associated costs in providing the service.

The letter does mention it will provide advice and support for municipalities but doesn't mention that the MNR will no longer permit municipalities to trap and relocate bears. The Kenora District MNR office has indicated that they will not be offering/signing any agreements with the City. Past agreements required that City staff be appropriately trained and bears relocated to approved MNR drop sites.

I have contacted the OPP to discuss the issue of bear complaints in the municipality and they indicated they will respond to any situation where the public is at risk.

Records indicate that in 2011, there were 280 calls to the Bear Wise Reporting Line for service for which 61 bears were trapped and relocated from the city, see the attached.

The MNR must be congratulated for the success of the Bear Wise program but as Kenora's records indicate there are instances that require the expertise and authority of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Budget: 2012 Operating Budget

Communication Plan/Notice By-law Requirements:

Resolution required.

Distribution: R. Perchuk, K. Robertson