



February 18, 2011

VIA MAIL, EMAIL & FACSIMILE: (416) 314-2216

The Honourable Linda Jeffrey
Minister of Natural Resources
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Dear Minister Jeffrey:

Re: Prohibited Hunting Bounties - *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*

I confirm receipt of your recent letter responding to my letter of December 16, 2010. Your letter, which is undated, was received by my office on February 10, 2011. It is regrettable that a more timely response has not been forthcoming from your Ministry. In my previous letter, I had indicated that time was of the essence as the contests had not yet commenced. Unfortunately, as the contests are now underway, the opportunity to prevent any violations before they occurred has been lost.

These contests have attracted a significant amount of media attention. However, despite the public interest in the issue, there appears to be a great deal of confusion as to the Ministry's position on the legality of these contests. For example, the January 28-30, 2011 Ottawa edition of 24H reported that one of the organizers of the contests has claimed that he had been "granted permission" from the Ministry to run his contest and believed that the Ministry was "100% behind us". The article then quoted a Ministry spokesperson to the effect that the contests may or may not be illegal. Such an equivocal statement does little to inform the public as to the Ministry's position on contests of this nature. Indeed, similar comments from the same Ministry spokesperson were reported in another newspaper under the headline "Coyote culls given green light by minister – Natural Resources spokesperson says contests legal".¹

¹ <http://www.yourottawaregion.com/news/local/article/933571--coyote-culls-given-green-light-by-ministry>.

Ministry staff still refuses to comment on the legality of the contests. A story in yesterday's Ottawa Citizen noted:

But Kowalski wouldn't directly answer whether two contests held in Arnprior and Osgoode offering shotguns, digital cameras and clothing to hunters who bring in the most coyote carcasses violate Section 11 of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, which states "a person shall not hunt for hire, gain or the expectation of gain."

"Do we support the contest? No. But again, our conservation officers are out there looking for certain things, public safety and trespass issues being two of the main ones when it comes to coyote hunting," she said. "That's all I can share at this point."²

In addition to the legality of the contests, there are compelling policy issues raised by unofficial and indiscriminate culls. If the supposed purpose of such culls is to control the local coyote population, there is reason to doubt their effectiveness. In an article on cbc.ca, a biologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources was quoted as suggesting that an indiscriminate cull would "backfire" and would result in an increased birthrate among the coyote population.³ A similar view was expressed by Donna DuBreuil in a letter to the editor of the West Carleton EMC, who wrote: "Science tells us the consequence of randomly culling a coyote population is only to strengthen its numbers through accelerated reproduction and migration."⁴ Moreover, she noted the detrimental impact on ecological stability that could follow from the removal of an apex species such as coyotes from an ecosystem.

With respect, it is my view that your Ministry ought to show leadership on this issue rather than cause confusion. As you have not authorized these contests, the bounties and inducements to hunt for gain constitute violations of section 11 of the Act. Such violations should be prevented if possible and enforcement measures should be taken if they occur. A cynical observer might conclude that the Ministry is failing to take action or express a clear position on the legality of these contests because it simply does not want to enforce the law in these circumstances. As Minister of Natural Resources, you should make a clear statement explaining why you have taken no action regarding the contests. My client and Ottawa area residents deserve no less.

² <http://www.ottawacitizen.com/life/Coyote+hunting+contests+carry+legality+still+uncertain/4303680/story.html>.

³ <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/ottawa/story/2011/01/25/ott-cornwall-coyote-cull.html>.

⁴ <http://www.emcwestcarleton.ca/20110127/Editorials/Province+must+enforce+the+law+with+regard+to+local+coyote+contests%2C+advocate+says>.



My client has an ongoing interest in how this issue is addressed by your Ministry. As such, I would kindly request that the Ministry staff who are reviewing this issue apprise us of any action or positions that the Ministry may take in relation to these contests. I would urge you to require a timely response from your staff and would appreciate a response from you by the end of February 2011.

Yours very truly,

Peter Copeland

c.c. Premier Dalton McGuinty (*via mail & email*)
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