



April 11th, 2022

Dear Ontario New Democratic Party,

Re: Captive Wildlife Party Survey

World Animal Protection (formerly known as the World Society for the Protection of Animals – WSPA) is the global voice for animal welfare, with more than 70 years' experience working to protect animals from cruelty through practical, science-based, and sustainable solutions that help people and animals alike. We have offices in 12 countries and work across 47 countries. We collaborate with local communities, the private sector, civil society, and governments to change animals' lives for the better. We have General Consultative Status with the UN and are members of the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) and Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) and founded the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI).

Animal welfare is important to our supporters and is becoming increasingly important issue to Ontarians. According to an August 2019 nationally representative poll, 75% of Ontarians believe animal welfare is important. And a more recent poll shows that almost 54% of Ontarians are more likely to vote for a political party that supports animal protection issues, while only 4% would not be more likely.

In preparation of the June 2022 Ontario election, World Animal Protection will be highlighting to our more than 160,000 Ontario supporters where each of the parties stand on one of our key issues; captive wildlife. Responses will be posted on our website - www.worldanimalprotection.ca. We would welcome your responses to our survey questions below by Friday May 6th, 2022.

Thank you for your time and acknowledgement that animals matter to voters. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 416 369 0044 x 115 or MicheleHamers@worldanimalprotection.ca.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michèle Hamers".

Michèle Hamers
Wildlife Campaign Manager
World Animal Protection

Animal welfare survey

Please check the appropriate answer and feel free to provide additional comments to explain your party's position on this issue.

Captive wildlife in Ontario

In Ontario, several wild animal species that pose significant risks to the public are nonetheless legally permitted to be kept as pets, used for interactions with the public during mobile zoo events, and displayed in zoos which are for the most part unregulated. The risks to the public and the environment include:

- public safety (e.g., tigers, large constrictor snakes);
- disease risk to people (e.g., primates, parrots); and
- risks to the native environment through establishment of invasive species or the introduction of novel diseases into the environment (e.g., red-eared slider, Chytrid fungus).

Ontario is the last major jurisdiction in Canada that has not regulated the keeping of exotic wild animals, whether it is for pets or for zoos. Instead, this has been downloaded to municipalities, which often lack expertise or resources to address these issues comprehensively. This has resulted in a patchwork of different bylaws across the province, leaving many animals and communities unprotected. It is estimated that about half of all Ontario municipalities do not have any bylaw to address the presence of exotic wild animals.ⁱ

There is strong public support for addressing captive wildlife issues through regulations. A 2022 Nanos pollⁱⁱ found:

- 88% of Ontarians support having provincial regulations that would require all zoos to have a license and meet animal welfare and public safety standards.
- 83% of Ontarians support having provincial regulations to restrict the trade of exotic wild animals kept as pets which can pose a danger to human health.
- 72% of Ontarians support provincial regulations that would prohibit zoos and mobile zoos from offering close interactions with wild animals if those activities pose a public health or safety risk to people or animals.

1. Would your party support the implementation of a comprehensive zoo licencing system for native and exotic wild animals, to safeguard animal welfare and public health and safety? Zoos that are unable to meet the licencing standards would be phased out.

Yes

No

Additional comments:

2. Would your party support regulations to prohibit close interactions between people and wild animals that pose a risk to public health and/or safety?

Yes

No

Additional comments:

3. Would your party support regulations to restrict the trade, keeping and breeding of exotic wild animals as pets, in cases where these animals either cannot be kept humanely or may pose a threat to public health and/or safety?

Yes

No

Additional comments:

4. Would your party support a ban on the training and use of wild animals for performances and circus-style tricks where animals are forced to perform unnatural and demeaning behaviours (e.g., elephant rides and shows, monkey shows)?

Yes

No

Additional comments:

ⁱ <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2020/04/24/the-truth-about-exotic-animals-in-ontario.html>

ⁱⁱ Nanos March 2022 polling:

https://dkt6rvnu67rj.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/media/ON_election_polling_on_captive_wildlife_iss ues_Nanos_March_2022.pdf