



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Vernon to take new steps in goose management within City limits

At its Regular Meeting of January 25, 2021, City Council directed Administration to take a new step in managing non-migratory Canada Geese within Vernon City limits.

Since 1995, Vernon has been a member of a regional partnership known as the Okanagan Valley Goose Management Program (OVGMP). Through this partnership, a regional egg sterilization program (known as *egg addling*) was started in 2007, which operates between Vernon and Osoyoos.

Each year, Vernon participates in egg addling and uses goose scare tactics at Kin Beach, Paddlewheel Park, Lakeshore Park and Marshall Fields to reduce conflicts between people and geese, as well as the impact of large numbers of geese on beaches, parks and sports fields.

“Despite the efforts we’ve made, the number of geese in the North Okanagan appears to be growing, as evident in the 2019 annual count of surviving goslings,” said Mayor Victor Cumming. “Once resident geese settle into an area, it’s difficult to make them leave because they instinctively stay in the same territory that’s familiar to them and primarily nest in the same location each year.”

In February 2020, Council received a report and presentation about the OVGMP and had a considerable amount of discussion about what additional steps could be taken to lessen the impact and conflicts between geese and humans within City limits. At that time, Council directed Administration to expand the egg addling program for one year, increasing the 2020 budget by \$15,000.

Alternatives that were reviewed by Council included landscape changes at Kin Beach and Paddlewheel Park to deter geese from congregating in these areas, using grade changes, fencing, and different plant materials. Depending on the scope of work, landscape changes could cost anywhere between \$20,000 - \$2 million, and may only force geese to relocate.

Another option was to increase daytime scare tactics (such as air horns or dogs) at Kin Beach, Paddlewheel Park and Lakeshore Park and remove waste from these areas, but with a high likelihood the geese would return to the area each night.

Nearly a year after that discussion and a serious review of alternative options, Council has directed Administration to apply for the necessary permits required to initiate a cull program to humanely reduce the non-migratory resident Canada Goose population within Vernon City limits. The program must follow strict Federal and Provincial regulations and is estimated to cost \$41,000.

“This decision was not made lightly,” said Mayor Cumming. “Choosing to initiate a cull is a reflection of the situation we’ve found ourselves in. We have heard many concerns from residents about the number of geese on beaches and in parks, and the health and safety issues they are creating. Egg addling and scare tactics help to a degree, but they do not decrease the number of geese we have now.”

The City will work with the Province to develop a goose management plan and cull program. The City will also continue its efforts with the egg addling program to manage future populations of geese in the North Okanagan. In addition, Council has directed Administration to send letters to local governments between Lake Country and the Shuswap region, encouraging them to consider participating in a regional approach to goose management.

While Canada Geese are normally known to be migratory birds, resident non-migratory geese were introduced to the region in the 1960’s and 70’s, and have since nested and grown in population, settling along shorelines and in parks and sports fields. The prevalence of good habitat and a lack of predators in urban areas has allowed the population to expand.

Goose management is a regional effort. The City needs the public’s help each year to locate nests so the eggs can be addled. Egg addling can only be done by obtaining the proper permits from the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada. Because of this, we ask anyone who finds a nest to report it to the Okanagan Valley Goose Management Program directly.

The City also reminds residents and visitors that Bylaw #5057 prohibits anyone from intentionally feeding or leaving food out for the purpose of feeding wildlife, including waterfowl in a park or public place.

For more information on the regional egg addling program, or to report a nest, please email coordinator@okanagangooseplan.com or call 1-877-943-3209.

Background on the Okanagan Valley Goose Management Program

The Okanagan Valley Goose Management Program was formed in 1995 to address ways to minimize the impact of geese within an urban environment. Members include representatives from several municipalities, regional districts, and interested stakeholders with a common goal of managing the Okanagan Valley Canada Goose population and to reduce conflict between people and Canada Geese.

Following concerns for public health, the local economy and the natural environment, an [Action Plan](#) was developed to help control problems associated with Canada Geese in the Okanagan Valley. Information on the Action Plan is available at www.okanagangooseplan.com.