

ITEM 2  
MANAGER'S REPORT NO. 17  
COUNCIL MEETING 88/03/07

RE: CANADA GOOSE POPULATION CONTROL IN CENTRAL BURNABY  
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation as contained in the report from the Director Recreation & Cultural Services be adopted.

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1988 MARCH 03

TO : MUNICIPAL MANAGER  
FROM: DIRECTOR RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES  
RE : CANADA GOOSE POPULATION CONTROL IN CENTRAL BURNABY

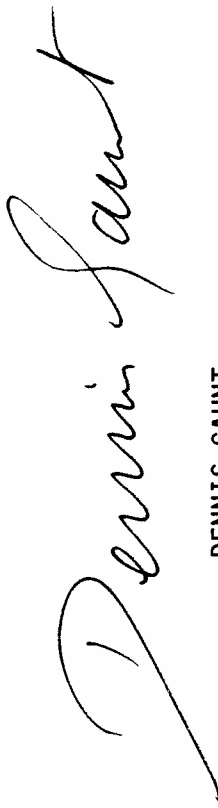
RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.

REPORT

The attached report on the above subject was tabled by the Parks & Recreation Commission at its meeting of 1988 March 02 in order to allow absent Commissioners to participate in discussion. It is being forwarded to Council at this time to give Council the opportunity to convey any concerns or comments to the Commission prior to the Commission considering the report on 1988 March 08.

There is some urgency because if carried out the program must be applied in mid-March.



DENNIS GAUNT  
DIRECTOR RECREATION &  
CULTURAL SERVICES

PAL:ps  
Attach.

cc: Chief Public Health Inspector

**RE: CANADA GOOSE POPULATION CONTROL IN CENTRAL BURNABY**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT the proposed program for the control of Canada geese in Deer Lake Park and Burnaby Lake Sports Complex be approved.
2. THAT the Canadian Wildlife Service be so notified.

**REPORT**

**I. OVERVIEW**

When Canada geese were first introduced into the Lower Mainland in the late 1960's, they carried a lot of notoriety and special appeal. Now, their numbers have increased to approximately 5,000 - 8,000 birds within the region, largely as a result of a lack of natural control measures and because the urban environment offers ample nesting and feeding habitats. The birds' preference for short grass and aquatic habitats found along the beaches, golf courses and larger parks places them in direct conflict with human visitors. The birds are undoubtedly messy, pose health hazards in aquatic environments and can be aggressive to people during the breeding season.

Complaints from the public are numerous, particularly for Deer Lake Park, Burnaby Lake Sports Complex and the golf courses. Acting on these complaints staff have recruited the assistance of the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Fish and Wildlife Branch to develop a long-term, permanent solution. These authorities have recommended a gradual program of reducing the population size by preventing any eggs from hatching. This is very much akin to replacing the natural predator cycle.

A one year trial program is recommended for Deer Lake Park and Burnaby Lake Sports Complex, including the Still Creek and Brunette River water courses. The actual program would be financed through a park maintenance account. Work would be conducted by students in the Wildlife Management Program at B.C.I.T., with supervision by the provincial and federal wildlife authorities. The success of the program will be monitored and referred back to the Commission at the end of the nesting season. The G.V.R.D. Parks Department has given their approval of a trial program on Burnaby Lake and G.V.S. and D.D. has given approval for the program on their property fronting Still Creek and the Brunette River.

**II. EXTENT OF PROBLEM**

Canada geese were first introduced to this area in the late 1960's primarily as a game animal for sport hunting. The first geese in Burnaby were introduced at Burnaby Lake. Since that time the numbers of birds have skyrocketed to an estimated count of 6,427 birds on 1987 November 20, which included 569 birds within Burnaby. There are two main reasons why geese have been so successful here:

1. There are virtually no population controls on the geese in urban areas, and
2. There is an increasing abundance of goose habitat in the form of playing fields, golf courses, beaches and cemeteries.

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The problem has become particularly acute at Deer Lake Park as evidenced by Environmental Health's recent report on the lake's water quality which recommended stringent controls over the goose population as a means of reducing the fecal coliform counts that contributed to the frequent closures of the lake to swimming last summer. However, problems also exist at Burnaby Lake Sports Complex, the golf courses and to a lesser extent, at Barnet Beach. Complaints from facility users are frequent and there is no doubt that the birds can leave an area in a very unsightly and unhealthy condition.

Parks maintenance staff have employed two control measures in previous years but these approaches provide only temporary relief. The "cracker shell" gun is effective at scaring birds away from a small, localized area but they simply move to an adjacent spot and return shortly afterward.

The other approach has been to round up flightless birds during the annual molt and transplant them to more wilderness areas within the Fraser Valley. This eases the problem through the summer months but most of the birds return once their flight feathers have grown back in.

### III.

#### PROPOSED CONTROL PROGRAM

The provincial and federal wildlife agencies that are responsible for the management of Canada geese have proposed a long-term control program.

It involves an artificial form of population control by severely limiting the success of the individual goose nesting effort. Because adults cannot be removed or harvested from the population through hunting restrictions and the relocation of goslings is not desirable, the only point at which population control can be effected is egg production. The method involves the location of goose nests, the adding of the eggs by shaking which breaks up the yolk and membranes within the egg, and the replacement of the eggs in the nest. If the eggs are broken or removed from the nest the geese will simply renest; the eggs must be left intact in the nest.

If this procedure is carried out each year and includes most of the nests in the problem areas, annual increases will be severely depressed. The goose population will begin to decline as the population ages and there are very few young birds being added. It will take several years of effort, however, before major changes are noted, and will require a continual effort thereafter.

The specific procedures necessary to implement the program are outlined below:

1. The Corporation will contract with B.C.I.T. to have students from the Wildlife Management Program conduct the fieldwork for a cost of \$950.00. This expenditure will be charged to the Commission's park maintenance account.
2. Canadian Wildlife Service (C.W.S.) and Ministry of Environment and Parks (M.O.E.P.) will assist with and supervise the operation in the first year. They will also review the program in subsequent years and assist as necessary.
3. All nests located will be mapped and the number of eggs in each nest recorded as part of the monitoring program.
4. Eggs will be added in nests located in the Burnaby Lake - Deer Lake area over a 30 day period beginning roughly in mid-March.
5. Eggs will not be added in nests near the viewing tower at the Piper Avenue Nature House or near the Wildlife Rescue Association facility on Glencarin Drive, as requested by the G.V.R.D. Parks Department.

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6. C.W.S., M.O.E.P. and Burnaby will remove molting geese from Deer Lake in late June and will discuss the possible removal of molting geese from Burnaby Lake.

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7. Burnaby will investigate ways of making the playing fields at the west end of Burnaby Lake less attractive to geese.

8. A review and evaluation of the program will be conducted at the end of the season by all agencies involved.

#### IV. LOWER MAINLAND PROGRAMS

Initially this program is being implemented in Burnaby and on Discovery Island, a small island which is located off Stanley Park and managed by the Department of National Defence. It is not being considered for Stanley Park because there is a very low survival rate for the young birds as a result of high natural mortality from predators. However, the population there is being maintained by migration from the Discovery Island population.

No other control programs are being considered in other locations at this time but there are expectations on the part of the wildlife officials that the efforts will be expanded following the demonstrated success of our program.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The Canada goose problem in Burnaby has arisen as a result of human intervention into natural systems. The birds were introduced here, their numbers skyrocketed as a result of favourable man-made habitats and man's control over natural predators. Further human intervention is now required to bring about a successful control program.

The course of action suggested above is done so with some reluctance on the part of all people involved in the formation of the program but given the number and intensity of complaints from park users, there is no other option. The birds have increased to levels that are interfering with human use of these same areas to a point where the problem must be dealt with as effectively and humanely as possible.

JWK/seo

cc - Chief Public Health Inspector

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