



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **A Legacy of Care and a Vision for the Future: The Board of Directors of the Sarnia and District Humane Society Shares Its Heart and Clarifies Recent News**

**SARNIA, ON — June 16, 2026** — For more than forty years, the Sarnia and District Humane Society has been far more than just a building on the northern edge of Centennial Park. It is a sanctuary of second chances, a place where thousands of vulnerable animals have found safety, and a cornerstone of compassion for our community. Every day, our dedicated staff pour their hearts into caring for the lost and forgotten, our selfless volunteers give their time to offer comfort, and our deeply generous donors make our life-saving work possible.

In light of recent local media coverage regarding the City of Sarnia's upcoming June 22 council agenda, the Board of Directors wishes to share a clear, heartfelt message about what this shelter means to all of us, while providing vital context to recent reports regarding our future home.

"Our shelter is woven into the very fabric of Sarnia-Lambton," said Bob Farlow, Chair, on behalf of the Sarnia & District Humane Society Board of Directors. "When people walk through our doors, they see the tireless dedication of staff and volunteers who treat every animal like family. We owe it to them, to our incredible donors, and, most importantly, to the animals in our care, to protect this legacy. We are not just building a structure; we are securing a permanent, safe, and loving future for animal welfare in our community. That is why we are fighting so hard to make sure our new home is built on a foundation of absolute fiscal responsibility and emotional permanence."

To ensure our supporters have the accurate facts during this emotional and pivotal time, the Board of Directors, on behalf of the Sarnia & District Humane Society, wishes to share the true heart of our ongoing journey:

Recent comments suggesting we are simply "back looking at Centennial Park again" do not capture the deep meaning of this location. For over four decades, this footprint has been our home. It is where we have built beautiful, trusting relationships with our neighbors, and it remains easily accessible to the community we serve. Crucially, this area is also the *only* property presently zoned to legally permit an animal shelter within the City of Sarnia. Staying here is not just a casual preference—it is a legal necessity and the safest, most logical place for the animals and community who depend on us.

Our community's donor dollars are very important to us. In 2022, when the city offered us adjacent land strictly under a lease agreement, the Board and our major donors made a difficult but compassionate decision: it would not be responsible to invest \$10 million in community funds to build a state-of-the-art facility on land we do not own. Our donors deserve to know their investments will protect animals for generations to come. This mandate for permanent land ownership is what led us to the Wellington Street property.

We want to reassure our supporters that the subsequent \$1 million legal settlement regarding the Wellington Street property, was not a standard property sale or an attempt to make a profit. We purchased that land in good faith, only for the city to later alter its infrastructure plans for a municipal roundabout, making our shelter project impossible. The settlement was a necessary legal resolution to rightfully recoup the land costs and legal fees incurred by our charity due to those changed city plans.

While waterfront land use is a sensitive topic, the Humane Society enjoys a beautiful harmony with our surroundings. Unlike proposed residential developments, our shelter does not conflict with local harbor operations, local businesses, restaurants, or the pending Cargill MZO. Our neighboring waterfront businesses have been incredibly supportive of our presence here. We belong together.

In May, driven by our mandate to own our land, on information provided by us, to City staff, met with council in a closed session to request a direct purchase of the adjacent parcel. While council's 7-vote majority turned down a direct sale, we understand this was a procedural step. City policy requires land to be declared surplus and opened to the public first. We fully support this transparent process.

## **Standing Together: A Call to Action for Our Community**

An animal shelter is a unique and lively environment. Our greatest concern is protecting it from future conflict. If an incompatible commercial or residential buyer purchases this adjacent land, our operations could be put at risk by future complaints regarding noise and barking dogs.

To protect the peace and safety of our animals, the Board has formally asked Mayor and City Council to grant the Humane Society a ***Right of First Refusal*** on this land.

Before the City Council meeting on **Monday, June 22**, we respectfully ask our volunteers, donors, adopters, and friends to reach out to the Mayor and City Councillors. Ask them to support our bid to purchase this land and urge them to grant us a ***Right of First Refusal*** so that the dedication of our staff and the safety of our animals are protected forever.

Our day-to-day care, adoptions, and community outreach will continue, with the same compassion, commitment and devotion as always, in spite of our current daily physical challenges with an aging building.

## **About the Sarnia and District Humane Society**

The Sarnia and District Humane Society is a non-profit organization, that has been a part of the Sarnia Lambton community for over 70 years and is dedicated to protecting animals from cruelty, providing shelter for the homeless, and promoting responsible pet ownership through education and advocacy in the Sarnia-Lambton community.

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