



The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie

COUNCIL REPORT

August 11, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Dan Perri, Director of Public Works
DEPARTMENT: Public Works and Engineering Services
RE: Goose Management

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to address a Council resolution from July 15, 2024, which reads:

Whereas it is important to maintain a healthy balance of wildlife and people in our community; and

Whereas according to Environment Canada temperate-breeding Canada geese can damage grass, plants, parks, crops, and other green spaces, while goose droppings foul footpaths, docks, beaches, lawns, parks and contribute to contamination of nearby water with parasites and coliform bacteria; and

Whereas both geese with nests or young are known to be aggressive toward humans and pets; and

Whereas geese are particularly attracted to grass near water, which leads to conflict between humans and geese at places like the boardwalk, Bellevue Park, Clergue Park and many other main City attractions; and

Whereas these attractions have been put in place for the use of citizens and to encourage tourism to our city, but the presence of geese and goose droppings deters people from being able to utilize these areas to their full potential; and

Whereas municipalities such as Orillia, Barrie, Simcoe, and Ramara have successfully implemented goose management plans;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that staff be requested to report back to Council regarding the cost and feasibility of a goose management plan in Sault Ste Marie;

Further Be It Resolved that the report include the current amount being spent to manage geese, including clean-up, and any current tactics being used to curb goose and human interaction.

Background

Canada geese are migratory birds that are protected under Canadian law by the *Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994*. This Act prohibits the killing or capturing of Canada geese, as well as any actions that damage, destroy, remove, or disturb their nests. Exceptions to these prohibitions are only permitted under conditions set out in the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022*.

Most Canada geese migrate between remote northern breeding areas and southern regions for the winter, making them typically migratory; however, some geese have become permanent residents in several areas of southern Canada, including Sault Ste. Marie. These resident geese often remain year-round, though many may still move south briefly during the coldest winter months. These resident geese are the product of locally established breeding populations. Young geese usually return to their birthplace to nest, and since migration behaviours are taught by parents, these resident populations continue to expand each generation, resulting in a higher number of Canada geese residing in the City.

Analysis

Staff have adopted strategies recommended by Environment and Climate Change Canada for the management and population control of Canada geese. Currently, staff are performing the following activities to curb Canada geese and human interaction on City property:

- Installation of natural barriers between the shoreline and land, such as large cut limestone blocks, large stones, and various shrubs;
- Where ecologically beneficial vegetation is present, installation of 0.6m green snow fencing between the shoreline and the land;
- Installation of signage advising the public not to feed the birds; and
- The provision of deterrent strategies such as reflectors, coyote decoys, and electronic goose distress calls.

Landscape modification through the installation of natural barriers and snow fencing has proven to be the most effective strategy. This is likely due to the fact that there are insufficient staff resources available to consistently provide the deterrent strategies noted above. The cost to perform these activities is approximately \$1,500 per year, but does not include the staff time needed to accomplish these tasks, which could be dedicated to providing other much-needed services across the community.

In addition to the costs associated with the strategies listed above, there is also significant staff time and resources dedicated to the cleanup and restoration of City property as a result of the presence of Canada geese. During the spring and

summer months, there are two full time equivalents (FTEs) dedicated to the maintenance of the Boardwalk and the walkways through Clergue and Bellevue Parks respectively. The majority of the time is dedicated to cleaning goose droppings along pedestrian facilities and restoring damaged vegetation.

Rather than using their own forces for goose management, many municipalities across Ontario have opted to engage qualified service providers to implement a Goose Management Program. These programs are intended to significantly reduce goose populations that are feeding, congregating, nesting, and leaving droppings on public spaces.

Typically, as part of the Goose Management Program, a qualified service provider will use a combination of varied methods to control Canada geese. Examples of such methods include canine patrol, predator decoys, pyrotechnics, egg and nest depredation, laser devices, distress calls, and relocation initiatives. Many of the initiatives listed require a permit under the *Migratory Birds Regulations, 2022* and are outside the expertise of City staff.

Examples of Goose Management Plans can be found at the following links:

- Township of Ramara: <https://www.ramara.ca/en/municipal-office/goose-management-program.aspx>
- City of Orillia: <https://www.orillia.ca/en/living-here/goose-management.aspx>
- City of Barrie: <https://www.barrie.ca/community-recreation-environment/parks-trails-waterfront/living-wildlife>
- City of Guelph: <https://guelph.ca/living/pets-and-animals/goosemanagement/>
- City of Pickering: <https://www.pickering.ca/property-roads-safety/animal-services/wildlife/goose-program/>

It is recommended that a qualified service provider be retained to provide this service. It is anticipated that a Goose Management Program for the City's waterfront parks and the Boardwalk would cost upwards of \$70,000 per year.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report; however, a service level increase request of \$70,000 will be included as part of the 2026 budget deliberations to fund this program.

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Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

This report is linked to the Quality of Life focus area of the Corporate Strategic Plan

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Director of Public Works dated August 11, 2025 concerning Goose Management be received and that Council direct staff to refer operating costs required to support a Goose Management Program to 2026 budget.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Public Works

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