

Dear Committee Members,

Reference: Marineland of Canada Inc.'s application for consent

On behalf of our more than 300,000 supporters across Canada and 1.5 million worldwide, I'm writing to express our concerns about the health and welfare of the animals at Marineland and our hopes for their uncertain future.

According to media reports, 18 beluga whales, an orca and a dolphin have died at this facility since 2019, in addition to several other animals. This is an alarming number of animals to die at one facility in a short amount of time and only heightens our long-held concerns about this facility and the acceptability of keeping wild animals in an amusement park.

While the applicant suggests that this variance request is minor, we want to make you aware that the impact on both the local community and general public is major.

While the request might be about severing the lot, it may contribute to the continued viability of Marineland and the exploitation of animals for entertainment.

This is clearly a matter of significant public interest as evidenced by the level of media coverage Marineland continues to garner. Repeated polling shows a steady decline in Canadian acceptance of using wild animals for entertainment purposes.

We are particularly concerned about the 'expeditious removal' of marine mammals required by Marineland's bridge-loan financier and the likelihood the whales would be sold to a venue that will breed them under the guise of 'conservation,' in contravention of the intent of Canadian legislation banning the breeding and display of cetaceans for entertainment.

We are also concerned about Marineland's plans to have a year-round amusement park with exhibits. We presume this means Marineland intends to still keep some wild animals on display. This would have significant public opposition.

Polling indicates that 81% of Canadians think people should not make an income from keeping wild animals for entertainment, if the animals suffer.

A 2022 Nanos poll found 88% of Ontarians support provincial regulations that would require all zoos to have a license and meet animal welfare and public safety standards.ⁱⁱⁱ

As Ontario is the weakest jurisdiction in Canada when it comes to regulating captive wildlife, it is up to municipalities to take on the responsibility of governing zoos, aquaria and other captive wildlife facilities.

We applaud Mayor Diodati for publicly stating that “Marineland needs to change” and that he would “like to see them move right away from animals”. And we commend City Council for adopting a resolution on May 28, 2024, supporting our campaign urging the Ontario government to pass stronger regulations to address the captive wildlife problem. In keeping with that position, we are urging the City of Niagara Falls to facilitate Marineland’s transition out of the captive wildlife display business and to work with the provincial and federal government to bring animal welfare experts to the table to find an emergency solution for the animals.

The staff, board and scientific advisors of our partner, The Whale Sanctuary Project as well as World Animal Protection’s staff across 14 offices around the world are standing by, ready to assist.

Sincerely, Melissa Matlow,

Campaign Director World Animal Protection