

November 15, 2024

By Laurel A. Beechey

Skunk Haven, Tillsonburg.

OWR Annual Meeting Nov. 17, 2024

This is from Laurel Beechey, in her words:

Hello Adam,

I am sorry I am unable to attend Sunday, so I have asked a friend to read this for me. They are my ideas and thoughts the reader had no input whatsoever.

Since we met the last time, things have gotten much worse between the MNR and Rehabbers. The MNR can't expect that volunteers who have given and cared so much about wildlife, could abide by being treated as drug dealers or murderers in a raid that was not even warranted.

Today I cannot morally sanction or help a potential rehabber to become authorized. Not when they can lose their home, business and reputations, if the MNR continues to act without investigating informants, following their own protocols or trusting their own volunteers.

Since about the year 2000 rehabbers have tried to make realistic changes to the rules. 18 years later Monique Rolfvondenbaumen became the overall manager of all the district managers did more in 6 months than anyone else has managed in the last 18 years! She assisted us in prioritising and listing the changes needed and installed the Right of Appeal, which was revised and unfortunately proven useless with Mally's Raid, as we are supposed to go to the same MNR people who can accuse us.

All of Monique's list is senseless until #1 and #2 of the Authorization are fixed. Thus far it has only benefited the MNR as our numbers only keep going down! Only 46 now. The MNR has done everything to ignore or delay authorization applications until the applicant gets fed up and walks away. Is it any wonder the public gets so upset that they can't find a rehabber? That they get told by the MNR to 'put it back where you found it and let nature take its course!' [Which is starving to death]. Nor can they afford to have a litter put down at a vet. This leads the majority of orphaned rescuers to at least try to save and rehab the animal themselves?

I have rehabbed for over 40 years, however even with my experience, instructing at conference in the US & Canada, and writing booklets, I could not fulfill the requirements for authorization, if I applied today!

I have no diplomas or educational initials behind my name.

Yet, I get calls for skunk help from all over the USA, England [who now has wild skunks] and others who import skunks in Europe.

There is a major difference between our larger centres and home/backyard facilities, yet the rules are the same for the centres.

We offered solutions to the problems on the Monique list. The MNR just makes more rules which eliminate more rehabbers. When rules change...we are not informed. Suddenly you have to have an exit door into the room of your home where you rehab. How many people have a door into the laundry room or spare bedroom?

Potential home rehabbers who pass the written exam feel they can't qualify a under the New Rehabbers check list.

Working with our district reps has gotten better in some areas, however, to be good reps they should have lessons on working with the public from the two Northern Regions. Perhaps from

living there, they know more about wildlife and how to work and treat their rehabbers them with respect.

Rehabilitators have offered to teach MNR staff, about wildlife and what and how we do things. They don't want to know.

The start to fixing this mess is to work on first two items on the Monique list, get them resolved and then we can start to get more rehabbers and calm the public down, who are mad at us because there is no one to help them. We don't blame them; the MNR rules and attitude continue causing more rehabbers to quit or retire early.

At the moment the only way I can see the MNR's vision of rehabbers coming to pass is by educating and hiring people to do the work their way; and providing the funds and facilities to do it properly. Volunteers working full to support are good will towards animals cannot do this.

Adam, thank you so much for giving us your ear, time and consideration in these matters.