

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



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ABOUT US

Our Mission

AEL Advocacy is an intersectional animal and environmental law organization committed to advancing justice for animals, people, and the planet. Through bold advocacy, public legal education, and law reform initiatives, we work to ensure that animals and nature are protected and recognized as essential to a just, thriving, and sustainable future.

Our Vision

We envision a legal system that safeguards animals, humans, and the environment, recognizing their interconnectedness as essential to a just society.

Our Approach

AEL Advocacy is committed to breaking down barriers to justice for a more compassionate and sustainable society. We focus on three core areas:



ADVOCACY

Utilizing our legal expertise to bolster individuals, communities, and organizations striving to safeguard animals and their habitats.



EDUCATION

Raising awareness of animal and environmental law issues through accessible public legal education initiatives and resources.



LAW REFORM

Engaging with policymakers, government agencies, and stakeholders to shape progressive laws and policies that protect animals and the environments where they live.

A LETTER FROM OUR CO-DIRECTORS

Dear friends and supporters,

2025 has been a year of remarkable growth, determination, and resilience for AEL Advocacy. As governments across Ontario and Canada advanced harmful legislative changes, weakening endangered species protections and undermining environmental oversight, our mission has never been felt more urgent. Yet, even in the face of these challenges, our community showed what is possible when conviction meets collective action.

Thanks to increased support from individual donors and grant partners, we significantly expanded our capacity this year. We strengthened our Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service, expanded public legal education initiatives, and made the law more accessible than ever for those fighting to protect animals and the environment.

We also continued investing in the next generation of animal and environmental law leaders. Our student programs, from paid freelance roles and practicum placements to new partnerships with Pro Bono Students Canada and Toronto Metropolitan University's Law Practice Program, provided hands-on advocacy experience, legal training, and mentorship. Preparing emerging legal professionals is not only an investment in their futures; it is an investment in a more compassionate and effective legal landscape for decades to come.

Our impact was further amplified through powerful collaborations with organizations across the movement, including Animal Alliance of Canada, The Fur-Bearers, and Secondhand Stories Chicken Sanctuary. By offering legal expertise and strategic guidance, we supported partners in strengthening campaigns across the country and ensuring that advocacy efforts rest on strong legal foundations.

This year also brought growing visibility for AEL Advocacy in the media. We were interviewed by CBC Toronto, featured on Mornings with Simi on 980

CKNW and joined MPPs at Queen's Park for the introduction of the *Captive Wildlife Protection Act*. These opportunities reflect the increasing recognition of our role in shaping conversations about animal and environmental law across Canada.

One of our most transformative milestones arrived this fall: **AEL Advocacy is now an officially registered Canadian charity**. This achievement positions us for long-term sustainability, expands the reach of our work, and unlocks new opportunities to drive systemic legal change for animals and the environment.

As we look to the year ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to showing up at every decision-making table, in legislatures, in courts, and in communities. We will continue pushing back against laws that threaten animals and ecosystems, and we will work tirelessly toward a future where justice for animals, people, and the planet is embedded in the law itself.

Thank you for standing with us, in moments of hope and moments of urgency. Because of you, our movement is stronger, bolder, and better prepared for the critical work ahead.

With gratitude,



Kira Berkeley
Co-Director and Counsel



Krystal-Anne Roussel
Co-Director and Counsel

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2025



ADVOCATING FOR STRONGER ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

In 2025, we were active in engaging the public and the government through our advocacy efforts, including:

ADVOCATING FOR STRONGER SHELTER STANDARDS FOR ANIMALS IN PROVINCIAL CARE

In early 2025, we submitted detailed comments on proposed Shelter Standards for Service Providers Housing Animals under Ontario's *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019*. These standards represent a crucial step toward ensuring that animals in provincial care receive safe, species-appropriate housing and treatment. The Ministry sought input on facility requirements, shelter conditions, and animal care management, with standards organized into three categories: (1) companion and zoological companion animals; (2) equine and farm animals; and (3) zoo animals and captive wildlife. Our submission emphasized the need for species-specific, evidence-based standards that put animal protection first, strengthen accountability, and safeguard the most vulnerable animals in institutional care.

CHALLENGING LACK OF TRANSPARENCY REGARDING ANIMAL AGRICULTURE POLLUTION

We submitted comments in response to a proposal for an Environmental Compliance Approval (“ECA”) with Limited Operational Flexibility (Air) for Hubbert’s Processing and Sales Inc., a meat processing facility in Brampton, Ontario. The ECA would allow new or previously unregulated emissions, including nitrogen oxides—pollutants that endanger human health, contribute to smog and acid rain, and threaten nearby residential areas and public parks. Although the *Environmental Bill of Rights* (“EBR”) guarantees public participation in decisions like this, the Ministry restricted access to key documents detailing the proposed emissions, effectively blocking meaningful public review and input. We called on the Ministry to fulfill its legal obligations by ensuring transparency, extending consultation timelines, and strengthening regulatory oversight of an industry with significant environmental impacts.

CALLING FOR A CAGE-FREE FUTURE FOR CHICKENS

We submitted comments on the proposed amendments to the National Farm Animal Care Council’s Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens, urging a full transition away from all forms of caged housing. We emphasized that even so-called “enriched cages” severely restrict hens’ natural behaviours and cause profound physical and psychological suffering, underscoring the urgent need for truly cage-free systems.





ADVOCATING FOR STRONGER ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTIONS

Early this year, AEL Advocacy published a report, [At Risk and Overlooked: An Assessment of Ontario's Endangered Species Act](#), providing a comprehensive evaluation of the government's compliance with its obligations under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* ("ESA"). Our findings showed that over time, the Act had been systematically weakened through legislative amendments, regulatory changes, and broad exemptions for development, forestry, and industrial activities. Shifts in species classification and delays in recovery planning further undermined protections, leaving species and their habitats vulnerable.

AEL Advocacy made urgent recommendations to restore the ESA's integrity, including reinstating automatic protections, eliminating harmful exemptions, accelerating recovery strategies, redirecting conservation funds toward direct action, and strengthening the independence of advisory committees.

Following the passage of Bill 5 in June 2025, which will ultimately repeal the ESA and replace it with the far weaker *Species Conservation Act, 2025*, AEL Advocacy has remained actively engaged with government agencies and continues to push for strong legal protections for Ontario's endangered species and their habitats.



PUSHING FOR STRONGER ENVIRONMENTAL OVERSIGHT IN THE ANIMAL AGRICULTURE SECTOR

AEL Advocacy and World Animal Protection Canada jointly submitted an application for review under section 61(1) of Ontario's *Environmental Bill of Rights* ("EBR"), urging the province to strengthen its outdated legal framework governing the environmental impacts of industrial animal agriculture.

Drawing on findings from our 2023 report, [Animal Agriculture and Environmental Protection: A Multi-Jurisdictional Legislative Review](#), the application underscored how Ontario's current laws fail to adequately regulate pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and oversight of large-scale factory farms. We called on the government to conduct a full legislative review and adopt meaningful reforms, including:

- Creating an integrated legal framework to address agricultural pollution
- Implement a moratorium on new or expanding industrial livestock operations
- Expanding government support for plant-based agriculture as a sustainable, humane alternative

AEL Advocacy continues to push for strong, modernized laws that hold the animal agriculture sector accountable and protect Ontario's environment, communities, and animals.



ADVOCATING FOR PROVINCIAL LAWS TO PROTECT CAPTIVE WILDLIFE

AEL Advocacy was present alongside MPPs Lucille Collard (Ottawa–Vanier) and Karen McCrimmon (Kanata–Carleton), World Animal Protection, and the Toronto Zoo when the *Captive Wildlife Protection Act, 2025* was introduced—a landmark bill that would establish comprehensive provincial oversight of wild animals in captivity across Ontario. The legislation addresses long-standing regulatory gaps, as Ontario has more roadside zoos than any other province yet remains the only jurisdiction without a provincial licensing system, leaving animals in unaccredited facilities vulnerable to unsafe, inhumane conditions and putting communities at risk due to the lack of centralized tracking and oversight. The bill would require all zoos to be licensed and regularly inspected, ban the use of wild animals for entertainment, and give authorities the power to shut down non-compliant facilities. If passed, it would bring Ontario in line with other provinces and create a modern, accountable framework for the protection of captive wildlife.

DEFENDING LOCAL BIRD-FRIENDLY BUILDING STANDARDS

We submitted comments opposing Bill 17, legislation that ultimately passed and stripped municipalities of the authority to pass by-laws related to building construction, including vital bird-friendly building standards aimed at preventing millions of bird deaths each year due to window collisions. By overriding local powers, Bill 17 undermined evidence-based, community-driven initiatives that protect biodiversity in urban environments. In our submission, we urged the Ministry to preserve municipal authority and support local efforts to create safer, more sustainable cities for both people and wildlife.

AEL Advocacy continues to call for law reform and to advocate for strong municipal powers to protect animals and the environment.



PUSHING FOR STRONGER ANIMAL WELFARE IN THE CANADIAN ORGANIC STANDARDS

We submitted comments to the 2025 review of the Canadian Organic Standards, calling for urgent improvements to farmed animal welfare. As one of the few legally enforceable and independently verified frameworks in Canada, the Organic Standards set a higher bar than conventional farming, but critical gaps remain. This five-year review provided a rare opportunity to advocate for meaningful change. We urged stronger requirements, including slower-growing breeds for broiler chickens, daily exercise for tie-stall dairy cows, and a ban on glue traps. Strengthening these standards is essential to improving the lives of animals raised under the organic label.

DEFENDING THE ENDANGERED PIPING PLOVER OF WASAGA BEACH PROVINCIAL PARK

We submitted comments opposing the Ontario government's proposal to remove 645 acres from Wasaga Beach Provincial Park, an ecologically significant area that provides critical habitat for multiple at-risk species, including the endangered Piping Plover. The proposal would transfer Nancy Island from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming, shifting the focus from conservation to tourism promotion. It also threatened key parklands, including essential nesting grounds, mature sand dunes, provincially significant wetlands, and a designated Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. We called on the government to withdraw the proposal entirely and uphold its commitment to protecting Ontario's most vulnerable ecosystems.





PROTECTING WILDLIFE FROM HARMFUL TRAPPING REGULATIONS

We submitted joint comments with [The Fur-Bearers](#) opposing proposed changes to Ontario's trapping regulations that could have serious consequences for animal welfare, environmental protection, and transparency. The proposals would allow the sale of raw beaver castoreum by licensed fur dealers, increasing economic incentives to trap beavers, and reduce reporting requirements for fur dealers, undermining transparency and public accountability. They would also expand killing methods for trapped furbearing mammals, including the use of pistols after dark, raising serious animal welfare concerns, and permit trapping on Crown land during the closed season, threatening ecosystems, waterways, and biodiversity. AEL Advocacy and the Fur-Bearers urged the government to withdraw the proposal and ensure strong, evidence-based trapping regulations that prioritize animal welfare, ecological integrity, and public accountability.

SAFEGUARDING POLAR BEARS UNDER CANADA'S SPECIES AT RISK ACT

AEL Advocacy submitted comments on Canada's proposed Management Plan for the Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) under the *Species at Risk Act* ("SARA"), urging the federal government to reassess the species' status in light of recent changes to Ontario law. Ontario's new Bill 5 dismantles key species protections, potentially opening previously safeguarded habitats to development. For the approximately 900 polar bears that depend on the sea ice and coastal ecosystems of Hudson and James Bay, this rollback could have devastating consequences. We called on the federal government to strengthen oversight, ensure consistent protections nationwide, and provide polar bears with the legal safeguards they urgently need to survive in a rapidly changing environment.

#REPEALBILL5: PROTECTING SPECIES AT RISK FROM LEGISLATIVE ROLLBACKS

We submitted comments on the Environmental Registry of Ontario, as well as to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Interior, opposing Bill 5, *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025*—a sweeping legislative package that ultimately passed and significantly weakened Ontario's endangered species protections.

Bill 5 attacks Ontario's endangered species protections in two stages: first, by weakening the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* ("ESA") through harmful amendments, and second, by repealing the ESA entirely and replacing it with the *Species Conservation Act, 2025* ("SCA")—a framework that offers far weaker protections for wildlife and their habitats.

We more recently submitted comments on proposed regulations and legislative amendments that would enable the SCA. In our submissions, we highlighted that the SCA is wholly inadequate to protect endangered species and their habitats. AEL Advocacy continues to oppose these changes and calls for the full repeal of Bill 5 and the SCA to restore meaningful protections for Ontario's wildlife.

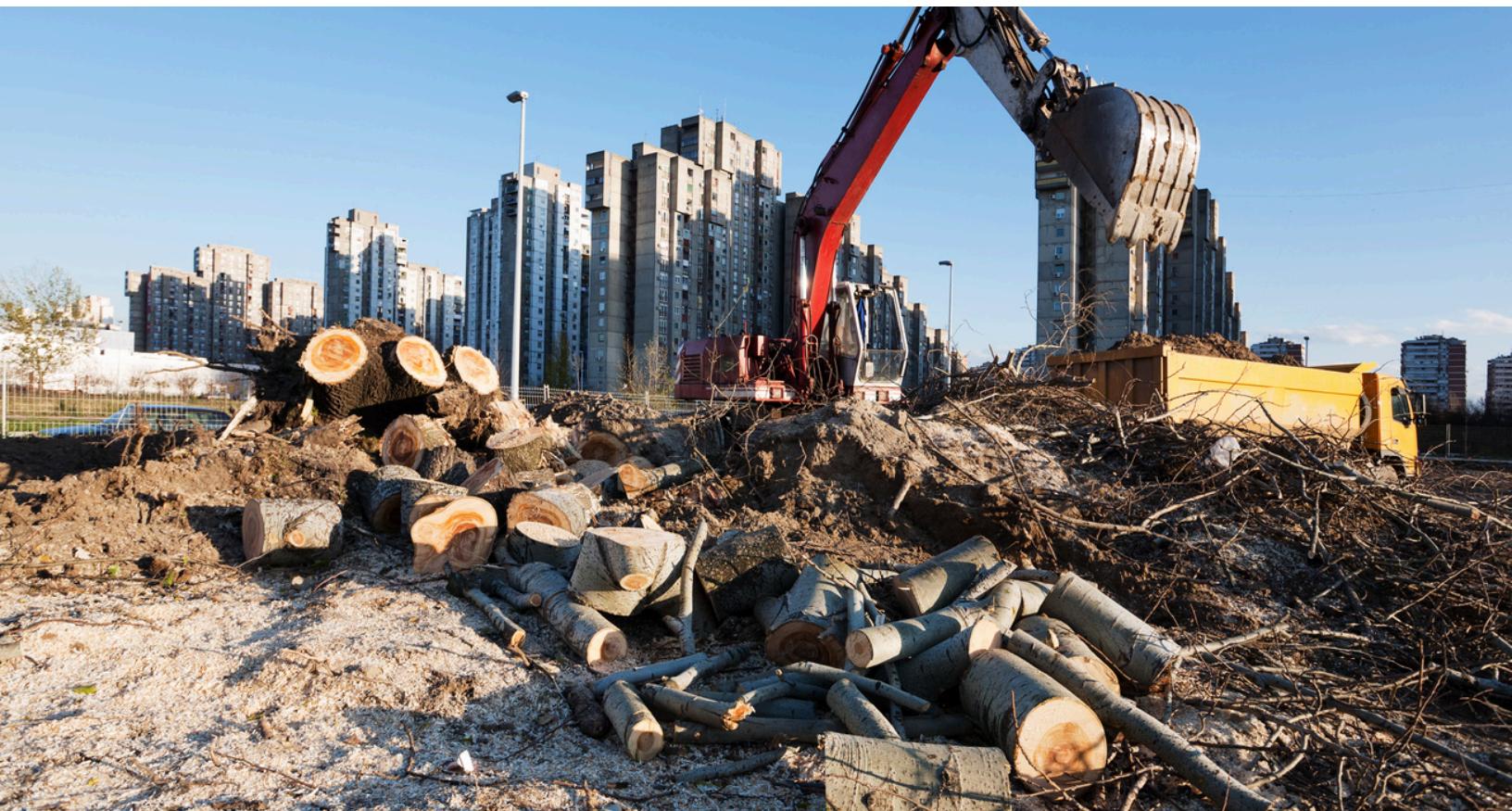


#REPEALBILL5: OPPOSING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES THAT THREATEN WILDLIFE AND HABITATS

As part of Bill 5, the government also introduced the *Special Economic Zones Act* ("SEZ Act"), which allows the establishment of Special Economic Zones ("SEZs"). These zones would permit development to bypass long-standing environmental and municipal planning laws, threatening species at risk, destroying habitats, and enabling polluting industries—including industrial animal agriculture—to expand unchecked.

We submitted detailed comments on both the initial SEZ proposal and the subsequent draft regulation outlining how SEZs would be designated. Our submissions emphasized that the rules give the Minister excessive discretion and undermine decades of democratic, science-based environmental protections. We made it clear that SEZs must not be allowed.

AEL Advocacy continues to oppose these measures and calls for the repeal of both Bill 5 and the SEZ Act to safeguard Ontario's species and the habitats they depend on.



STRENGTHENING PROTECTIONS FOR CATS AND DOGS USED IN RESEARCH

In response to proposed and prospective amendments to Ontario's *Animals for Research Act* and its regulations, we submitted detailed comments to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. While commending the government's efforts to introduce regulatory framework to end invasive research on companion animals, we identified critical gaps that risk undermining the purpose of the amendments altogether. Our submission emphasized the need for precise definitions of "invasive medical research," narrow exceptions for veterinary purposes, mandatory rehoming requirements, independent oversight of Animal Care Committees, and robust public transparency and accountability mechanisms. We made concrete recommendations to strengthen regulatory clarity, enforcement, and public reporting — ensuring the Province's goals translate into meaningful protections for dogs and cats used in research.

We also continue to closely monitor Bill 75, advocating for stronger legislative reform that goes beyond prohibiting only "invasive" research. AEL Advocacy is pushing for a complete ban on the use of animals in research, recognizing that all forms of research pose inherent risks to animal welfare and raise serious ethical concerns.



FIGHTING FOR ENFORCEMENT OF ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LAWS

SPEAKING UP FOR CAPTIVE SHARKS

Last year, AEL Advocacy filed an official complaint with Ontario's Provincial Animal Welfare Services ("PAWS") on behalf of Toothless, a Whitetip Reef Shark housed at Big Al's Aquarium Supercentre Ottawa, and launched a public awareness campaign that drew significant attention to his plight. During this process, we discovered another shark in a similar situation, Carlos, a Blacktip Reef Shark at Big Al's Mississauga location.

Both sharks had spent years confined to tanks far too small for their size and natural behaviour. Whitetip and Blacktip Reef Sharks are active, social animals that require ample space to swim and interact. Yet, Toothless and Carlos were kept alone in small enclosures, unable to express their natural instincts.



Thanks to your incredible support and continued public pressure, this year our advocacy has achieved real, tangible progress. **Big Al's has committed to rehoming both Toothless and Carlos and has pledged never to hold a shark in captivity again.**

Behind the scenes, our team has worked tirelessly to secure suitable homes, reaching out to more than 50 facilities across North America. After a setback with Toothless' originally confirmed placement, we are pleased to report that a new location has been secured and the CITES permit for his transfer has been obtained. We are now awaiting one final permit to move him in the new year, with Carlos to follow shortly thereafter to a separate facility in Canada.

STANDING UP FOR BELUGAS AT MARINELAND

When Marineland threatened to kill the 30 beluga whales in its care after being denied permits to export them to a theme park in China, AEL Advocacy took action. We joined a coalition of animal protection organizations urging Premier Ford to intervene immediately.

Ontario not only has the authority—but the legal obligation—to protect these whales. Under the *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019*, provincial officers can assess their condition, ensure their welfare, and take enforcement steps where necessary.

AEL Advocacy continues to push for urgent, decisive action to safeguard the belugas' lives and ensure their long-term well-being.



Photo: Surviving belugas at Marineland | Credit: Kristy Lynn Murphy and @animaljustice_



FIGHTING FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

In 2025, AEL Advocacy repeatedly pushed the Ontario government to meet its obligations under the *Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993* ("EBR"). Across several Ministries—and directly with the Auditor General—we raised concerns about Environmental Registry postings that lacked the information necessary for meaningful public participation.

This included the government's proposal to loosen trapping regulations for licensed trappers and fur dealers without providing any evidence to justify expanding killing methods, weakening reporting requirements, or allowing trapping during closed seasons. These changes would directly harm animal welfare, biodiversity, and ecological stability.

We also challenged the government's failure to provide required air emissions data for an Environmental Compliance Approval for Hubbert's Processing and Sales Inc., a meat processing facility in Brampton, and the lack of publicly available legislative and regulatory text during consultations to enable the new

Species Conservation Act, 2025. In each case, the absence of supporting documents undermined both the spirit and purpose of the EBR, which guarantees Ontarians the right to informed, meaningful participation in environmental decision-making.

At year's end, following the Auditor General's latest Performance Audit on the Operation of the Environmental Bill of Rights, which again highlighted widespread deficiencies in Registry postings, AEL Advocacy convened a coalition of animal, environmental, and public health organizations. Together, we called on the Ontario government to:

- Uphold the EBR by ensuring that all scientific and technical studies, reports, environmental assessments, and other supporting documents referenced in an Environmental Registry posting are made publicly available—free of charge and in accessible formats—at the time of posting.
- Mandate plain-language summaries of key evidence so that affected communities and non-specialists can meaningfully understand and engage with proposed decisions.
- Create a formal mechanism allowing individuals and organizations to challenge inadequate or non-compliant Registry postings, including through judicial review where a ministry's failure to disclose underlying evidence may lead to environmental harm.
- Reinstate an independent Environmental Commissioner, equipped with strengthened oversight and investigative powers to ensure compliance with the EBR and to hold government decision-makers accountable.

Through this work, AEL Advocacy continues to defend Ontarians' right to transparent, participatory, and accountable environmental decision-making, which are essential pillars of protecting animals, ecosystems, and public health across the province.

MOBILIZING ADVOCATES FOR ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BEHIND THE LABELS: CONSUMER STRATEGIES IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO GREENWASHING AND HUMANEWASHING IN CANADA

In 2025, AEL Advocacy published a new [report](#) and accompanying [toolkit](#) designed to empower Canadian consumers to recognize and respond to greenwashing and humanewashing. By identifying misleading corporate claims and taking informed action, consumers can drive accountability and contribute to a more honest, transparent, and ethical marketplace.

The report and toolkit have been widely shared and discussed at key events, including the Animal Justice Academy's Lunchtime Live session with over 100 registered attendees, the 14th International Animal Rights Conference in Luxembourg, and the UK Centre for Animal Law's Legal Skills Lab. Through these presentations, AEL Advocacy has helped expand knowledge, inspire action, and mobilize individuals to use their purchasing power to advance animal welfare and environmental protection.

This work was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Animal Welfare Foundation of Canada and the Pollination Project.





2025 ADVOCACY TOOLKIT: A GUIDE FOR ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES IN ONTARIO

Advocating for animals and the environment often involves public demonstrations, direct action, and other forms of activism that can bring advocates into contact with law enforcement. Knowing legal rights and understanding potential consequences is essential for personal safety and for ensuring campaigns are effective.

In 2025, AEL Advocacy published its first-ever *Advocacy Toolkit*, designed to equip animal and environmental advocates in Ontario with practical legal knowledge, risk management strategies, and best practices for safely and effectively engaging in activism. By providing these resources, we empower advocates to continue their vital work with confidence, protect themselves, and advance the causes they care about.

ADVANCING LEGAL RECOGNITION FOR FARMED ANIMAL SANCTUARIES

This year, AEL Advocacy took steps to strengthen recognition of farmed animal sanctuaries as a legitimate “charitable purpose” in Canada. We supported Secondhand Stories Chicken Sanctuary in its efforts to obtain charitable status, a milestone that fewer than half of the country’s estimated 60 sanctuaries have been able to reach due to financial barriers and narrow interpretations of what qualifies as a public benefit.

In the coming year, we will continue assisting with the charitable registration process and document lessons learned to create public legal education materials (such as plain-language guidance, templates, and a virtual workshop) to ensure other sanctuaries and advocacy groups can follow this path with confidence.



“As a small sanctuary with big goals, we knew early on that applying for our charitable status would be one of the biggest challenges in our growth and ability to inspire compassion for chickens across Canada. Other sanctuaries frequently warned us of the complications, rejections, and restrictions. We knew we wanted to pave the way for other sanctuaries to have an easier time, but didn’t know how to do it. It was only when AEL Advocacy stepped in that this became possible. We owe this milestone entirely to AEL Advocacy’s legal expertise, which provided the guidance needed to navigate the complex regulations and complete our application. Time and time again, AEL Advocacy has been there to help our sanctuary make our goals possible - by empowering us to make effective & strategic decisions that help improve animal protection.”



— **Liz Wheeler**, Founder
Secondhand Stories Chicken Sanctuary

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

At the heart of AEL Advocacy's mission is an unwavering commitment to building a legal landscape that is accessible and just. This dedication drives our work across various initiatives, ensuring individuals, communities, and organizations can navigate complex legal challenges.

THE ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INQUIRY SERVICE

AEL Advocacy's free [Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service](#) addresses the growing demand for accessible legal support in Ontario. By offering up to two hours of summary legal assistance to inquirers, the service empowers users to tackle a wide range of animal and environmental law issues, including dangerous dog designations, pet custody disputes, land-use planning, and ag-gag laws.



Thanks to a grant from the Law Foundation of Ontario, we expanded our capacity in 2025, increasing awareness of the service and boosting the number of inquiries we receive each month. The grant also allowed us to engage law students through freelance opportunities, fostering their interest and expertise in this vital field of law.

This year, we responded to more than 100 inquiries, dedicating countless hours to providing free summary legal advice to individuals, advocates, and community members. These inquiries covered a wide range of pressing issues, from helping activists understand how to assert their Charter-protected right to free expression after being denied advertising space for pro-animal rights messaging, to assisting individuals navigating complex pet custody disputes, to offering guidance on the legal mechanisms available to challenge a proposed industrial farm facility. Each request for support underscores the essential role our Inquiry Service plays in expanding access to justice and empowering those on the front lines of animal and environmental protection.



PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

At AEL Advocacy, we are committed to giving individuals and organizations the tools they need to understand the law and use it to protect animals and the environment. In 2025, we reached diverse audiences through conferences, digital platforms, and public education initiatives to make legal information more accessible and actionable.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

This year, we presented at the Animal Law and Advocacy Conference 2025, where Co-Director Krystal-Anne Roussel spoke on enforcement failures in Ontario's animal agriculture sector, drawing on our report [Green Laws, Grey Areas: Environmental Law Enforcement Failures in Ontario's Animal Agriculture Sector](#).

We also shared findings from *Behind the Labels*, our report on greenwashing and humanewashing, along with our [consumer action toolkit](#) at [Animal Justice Academy's Lunchtime Live](#) (with over 100 registrants), the 14th International Animal Rights Conference in Luxembourg, and the UK Centre for Animal Law's Legal Skills Lab.

OUR WEBSITE AND BLOG

Our website is a hub for accessing our services, reports, publications, and event information. It also hosts our blog, which offers brief, timely updates on emerging animal and environmental law issues.

Visit: www.aeladvocacy.ca/blog

NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter keeps subscribers informed about key developments in animal and environmental law, highlighting our campaigns, new resources, and upcoming events. Through regular updates, we help readers stay connected and engaged in law and policy change.

Subscribe: www.aeladvocacy.ca/subscribe

SOCIAL

In 2025, our social media presence continued to grow across Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Our YouTube channel also expanded into a rich repository of webinar recordings, presentations, and an introductory video showcasing AEL Advocacy's mission and impact. By leveraging these platforms, we are strengthening public legal education, inspiring informed action, and fostering a deeper understanding of animal and environmental law.

Follow us: [@aeladvocacy](#)



MEDIA INVOLVEMENT

In 2025, AEL Advocacy amplified its impact by engaging with media to highlight pressing animal and environmental issues.

Our Co-Director Krystal-Anne Roussel was featured in an interview with CBC News Toronto, where she discussed amendments to the City of Toronto's dangerous dog bylaw and emphasized the importance of evidence-based approaches to public safety and animal welfare.

We also contributed expertise on hybrid dogs during a segment on Mornings with Simi, helping the public understand the welfare, legal, and ethical considerations associated with breeding and ownership of hybrid animals.

Additionally, AEL Advocacy was featured on The Fine Print Podcast, sharing insights on animal law and advocacy, our legal initiatives, and steps the public can take to protect animals and the environment.

Through these media engagements, AEL Advocacy strengthened public awareness, educated Ontarians on key issues, and reinforced the importance of law and policy in safeguarding animals and ecosystems.



EXPANDING PROGRAMMING FOR FUTURE ANIMAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL LAW LAWYERS

In 2025, AEL Advocacy significantly expanded our student programming to support passionate learners and inspire the next generation of lawyers to use their legal skills in service of animals and the environment.

ONGOING STUDENT INITIATIVES

We continued to strengthen our core educational programs, including supervising law students completing for-credit internships, managing a roster of freelance students who contribute to our Animal and Environment Law Inquiry Service, and preparing for the next offering of the Animal Law Practicum through the newly launched Animal Law Program at the Henry N.R. Jackman Faculty of Law, University of Toronto. These initiatives provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop research skills, gain hands-on experience, and engage directly with legal issues affecting animals and the environment.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED IN 2025

Building on this foundation, AEL Advocacy launched several new experiential learning opportunities designed to expand the scope and depth of student engagement.



PRO BONO STUDENTS CANADA (PBSC)

This year marked our first partnership with Pro Bono Students Canada, allowing us to supervise law student volunteers working on animal and environmental law projects that serve the public interest. This year's PBSC projects include:

[Municipal Advocacy Report & Toolkit](#)

A student from Osgoode Hall is dedicating time towards writing and designing a report and toolkit to support local advocacy and policy reform efforts on animal and environmental protection issues. We anticipate release this report next year.

National Centre for the Prosecution of Animal Cruelty
Case Law Database

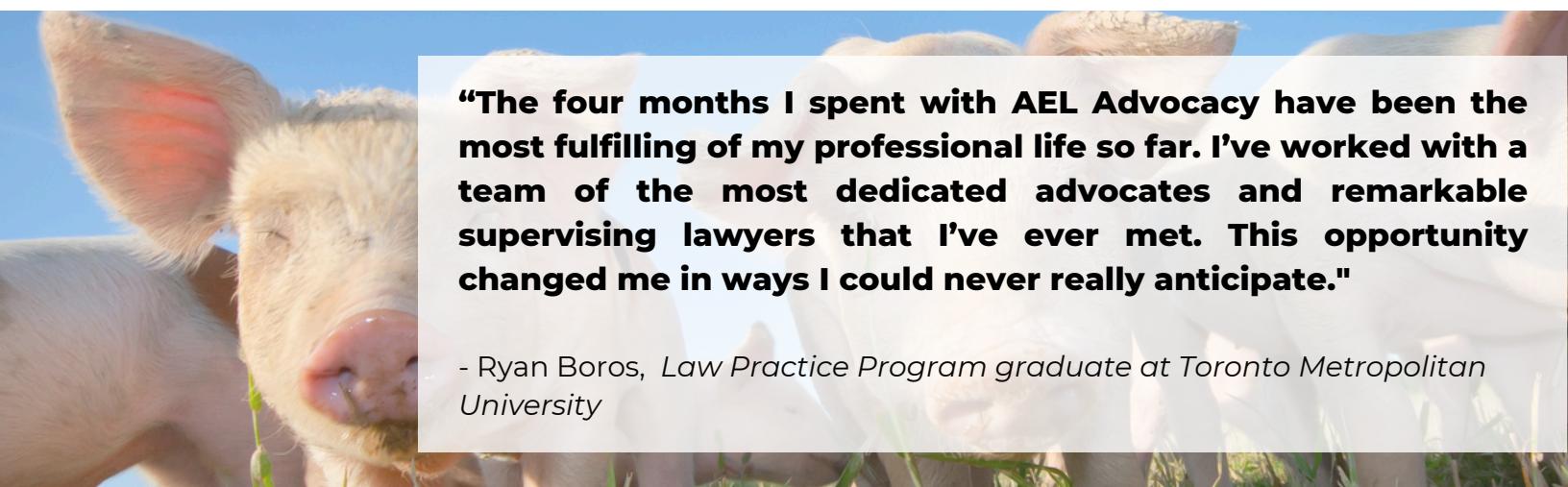
In collaboration with Humane Canada, we are supervising students from the University of Ottawa and University of Toronto contributing to this national legal resource.



LAW PRACTICE PROGRAM, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

In 2025, we were pleased to host our inaugural placement through Toronto Metropolitan University's Lawyer Practice Program—an alternative pathway to completing the Law Society of Ontario's experiential training requirement, designed to provide hands-on legal experience and professional development for candidates seeking licensing.

Our first LPP candidate, Ryan Boros, joined AEL Advocacy from January to April, contributing to legal research, inquiry service responses, a Small Claims Court matter, and a range of public legal education projects. This new partnership enhances our capacity to mentor emerging lawyers and provide them with real-world advocacy experience.



"The four months I spent with AEL Advocacy have been the most fulfilling of my professional life so far. I've worked with a team of the most dedicated advocates and remarkable supervising lawyers that I've ever met. This opportunity changed me in ways I could never really anticipate."

- Ryan Boros, *Law Practice Program graduate at Toronto Metropolitan University*

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION

Our impact continued to grow in 2025 as we deepened our relationships across the animal and environmental protection movements. By providing legal expertise, strategic guidance, and research support to partner organizations, AEL Advocacy helped strengthen campaigns, enhance public advocacy, and advance meaningful legal reform. These collaborations not only extend the reach of our work, they also ensure that change is pursued collectively, strategically, and with the strongest legal foundation possible. We look forward to continuing these partnerships in the year ahead and expanding our network to support even more organizations working to protect animals and the planet.

“The animal protection movement has always had strong lawyers working alongside activists. But working with AEL Advocacy is different since we know they share our values and truly understand our motivations. Knowing that we can rely on AEL Advocacy for their expertise is a big relief. They’re responsive, professional and skilled. They’ve helped us navigate complex legislation, allowing us to make decisions on next steps much easier. Having their memos on hand has made our political outreach that much more efficient and effective.”



— **Lia Laskaris**, Chief Executive Officer
Animal Alliance of Canada

BUILDING A STRONG ALLY WITH THE FUR-BEARERS

A highlight of 2025 was our close partnership with The Fur-Bearers, providing legal support that strengthened their initiatives and amplified their impact:

- **Campaign to ban glue traps:** Together, we urged British Columbia to prohibit the sale, purchase, and use of inhumane glue traps—a motion endorsed by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.
- **Interpreting legal decisions:** We helped translate complex legal rulings into plain language for The Fur-Bearers’ supporters, including a key British Columbia Court of Appeal decision involving mink farms, making it easier for the public to understand implications for fur-farming regulations.

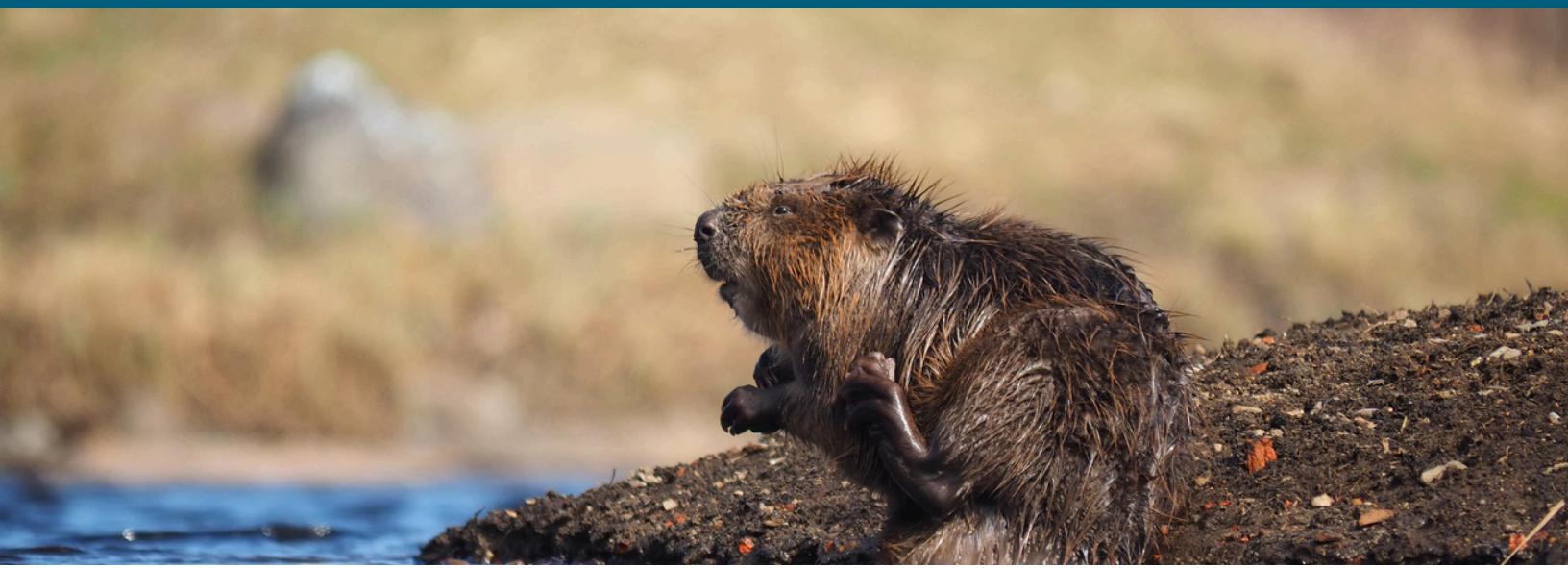
- **Advancing a national fur-farming ban:** We amplified their efforts, from promoting a House of Commons e-petition calling for a national ban on fur farming—which garnered over 10,000 signatures—to providing legal insight to support their strategic planning.
- **Protecting wildlife from harmful trapping regulations:** We issued an action alert opposing proposed changes to Ontario's trapping regulations, leveraging legal advocacy to protect fur-bearing and other wild animals (see page 11 for details).

We are proud to have The Fur-Bearers as an ally and look forward to continuing our partnership into 2026.

"Partnering with AEL Advocacy has significantly elevated our work. Their clear, concise legal analysis helped us understand complex laws and enabled us to communicate effectively with the public and decision-makers. Their work strengthened our ministerial briefs, making them professional, persuasive, and strategically crafted to present real legal options. This gave our advocacy work for animals much more credibility and impact. Every organization working to change hearts and minds needs a good lawyer! AEL has truly been a catalyst in making our work more impactful."



— **Lesley Fox**, Executive Director
The Fur-Bearers



BUILDING COMMUNITY

In 2025, AEL Advocacy strengthened its connection with communities across Ontario by showing up, celebrating shared values, and creating welcoming spaces for people to come together in support of animals and the environment. Through events, festivals, marches, and creative collaborations, we helped build a growing network of advocates united by compassion, justice, and a vision for meaningful change.

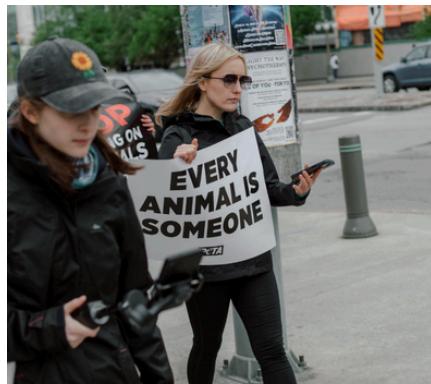
PLANT-POWERED PERFORMANCES: OUR INAUGURAL VARIETY SHOW FUNDRAISER

This year marked our first-ever Plant-Powered Performances Variety Show Fundraiser, an inspiring evening of music, comedy, dance, and plant-powered creativity. Hosted at “Live! on Elgin”, the event brought together an incredible lineup of artists committed to a kinder, more sustainable world. Supporters, performers, and community members gathered to celebrate the power of the arts in activism, helping raise funds to fuel AEL Advocacy’s work to protect animals and the environment.



OTTAWA ANIMAL RIGHTS MARCH 2025

AEL Advocacy proudly sponsored the first annual Ottawa Animal Rights March, standing alongside advocates from across the region to speak out for animals used in food, fashion, entertainment, and research. This powerful event demonstrated the strength of collective action and the growing demand for legal protections for animals in Canada. Our contribution provided the core funding needed for this event to take place, affirming our commitment to community-led activism.



VEGOTTAWA FEST 2025

At VegOttawa Fest 2025, AEL Advocacy hosted a table to connect directly with festival attendees, share legal resources, and highlight our ongoing campaigns. The event provided opportunities to engage with community members, answer questions about animal and environmental law. Our presence helped expand public legal education and build relationships with local organizations and supporters.



SECONDHAND STORIES CHICKEN SANCTUARY OPEN HOUSE

We were delighted to participate in the Secondhand Stories Chicken Sanctuary Open House, where AEL Advocacy tabled and connected with visitors committed to compassionate care for farmed animals. A highlight of the day was a special reading by our volunteer law student, Mark Snyder Jr., of his children's book *Animals Are People Too*, which encouraged families to reflect on empathy, respect, and the intrinsic value of all animals.



2025 FINANCIALS*

The 2024–2025 fiscal year was our strongest yet. We increased revenue from individual donors by nearly 500%, raising just over \$10,000 in contributions. This remarkable growth was driven by multiple community fundraisers and the expansion of our monthly giving program, AEL Advocates.

We also secured our largest grant to date: \$30,000 from the Law Foundation of Ontario, awarded over two years. This funding will support our Animal and Environmental Law Inquiry Service and create meaningful paid opportunities for students contributing to this important work.

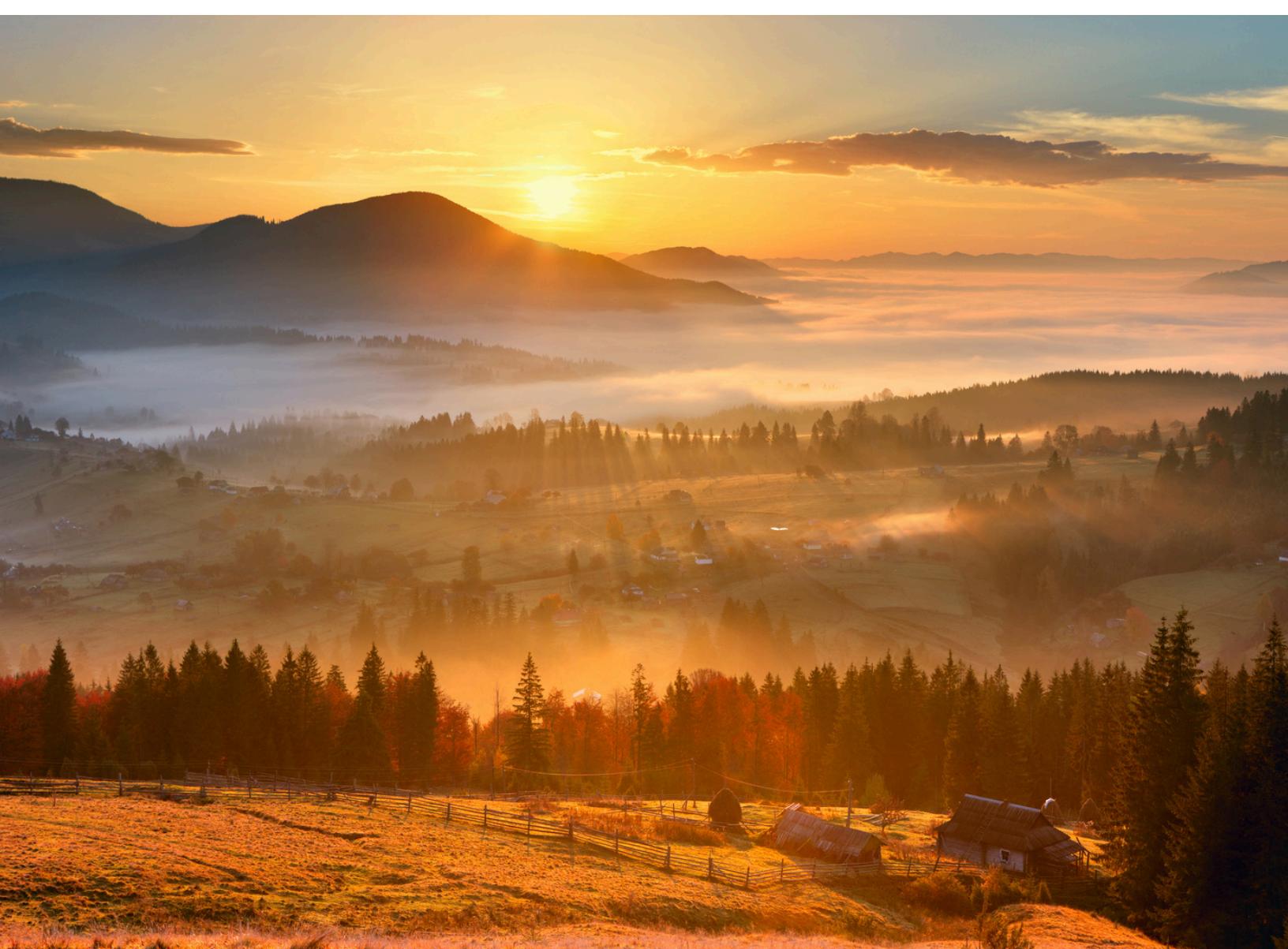
REVENUE	EXPENSES	IN KIND CONTRIBUTION S
Grants: \$7,046.26 Donations: \$10,025.69 Sales: \$202.23	Bank charges: \$369.60 Office Expenses: \$1974.59 Subscriptions: \$757.03 Professional Development: \$297.38 Legal and Professional Services: \$6354.78 Account & Bookkeeping: \$655.40 Advertising: \$3151.55 Insurance: \$494.64 Travel & Accommodations: \$487.53 Consulting Fees: \$4000 Program Costs: \$2998.48	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pro Bono Legal Services• Google Workspace Grant• Volunteer Services• Discounted fees
GROSS PROFIT: \$17,274.18	TOTAL EXPENSES: \$21,540.98	TOTAL EQUITY: \$4,222.91

* These 2025 financials follow our fiscal year (October 1 2024 - September 30, 2025)

OUR NEXT CHAPTER: CHARITABLE STATUS

We are thrilled to announce that as of October 1, 2025, **AEL Advocacy is officially a registered charity.**

This milestone marks a transformative new chapter for our organization. Charitable status strengthens our long-term sustainability, allows us to issue tax receipts to our generous supporters, and opens new pathways for grants, partnerships, and strategic growth. With this foundation, we are poised to expand our impact, deepen our advocacy, and continue advancing legal protections for animals and the environment across Canada.



THANK YOU

AEL Advocacy is deeply grateful for the work of our dedicated staff, Board of Directors and volunteers, and for the financial contributions of our supporters and funders. Each of you plays such an important role in helping us carry out our mission.

Co-Directors

Kira Berkeley
Krystal-Anne Roussel

Student Interns

Ryan Boros (Lawyer Practicum Program)
Mark Snyder Jr.

Board of Directors

Kira Berkeley
Krystal-Anne Roussel
Becky Carpenter

Volunteers

Emma Peckham
Joseph Kim
Russell Berkeley
Tyler Hodgkinson

AEL Advocates

Adam Clasky
Andrew Berkeley
Brent Huang
Denise Carpenter
Katherine Clements
Kira Berkeley
Mark Snyder Jr.
Mary Louise Tree
Nathan Kredentser
Nives Ilic
Remi Martini
Rhea Badhwar
Shannon Nickerson
Russell Berkeley
Vicki Berkeley
Tricia Wagg

Community Partners

House of Barons Barbershop
Live! On Elgin
Strawberry Blonde Bakery

Freelancers

Abhinav Mynampati
Adam Clasky
Danish Khan
Emma Peckham
Kailin Rourke
Mari Lehoux
Mark Snyder Jr
Nada Ibrahim
Olena Stevenson
Oscar Li
Rhea Badhwar
Sasha Harren
Vania Abbasi

Grant Funders

Animal Welfare Foundation
Law Foundation of Ontario
Pollination Project



We Still Need You.

Give a one-time gift or become a monthly donor.

Your donation will help us secure legal protections for animals and the environments where they live. Learn more at aeladvocacy.ca/donate

Canadian Charitable Registration #76952 0404 RR0001



AEL Advocacy

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