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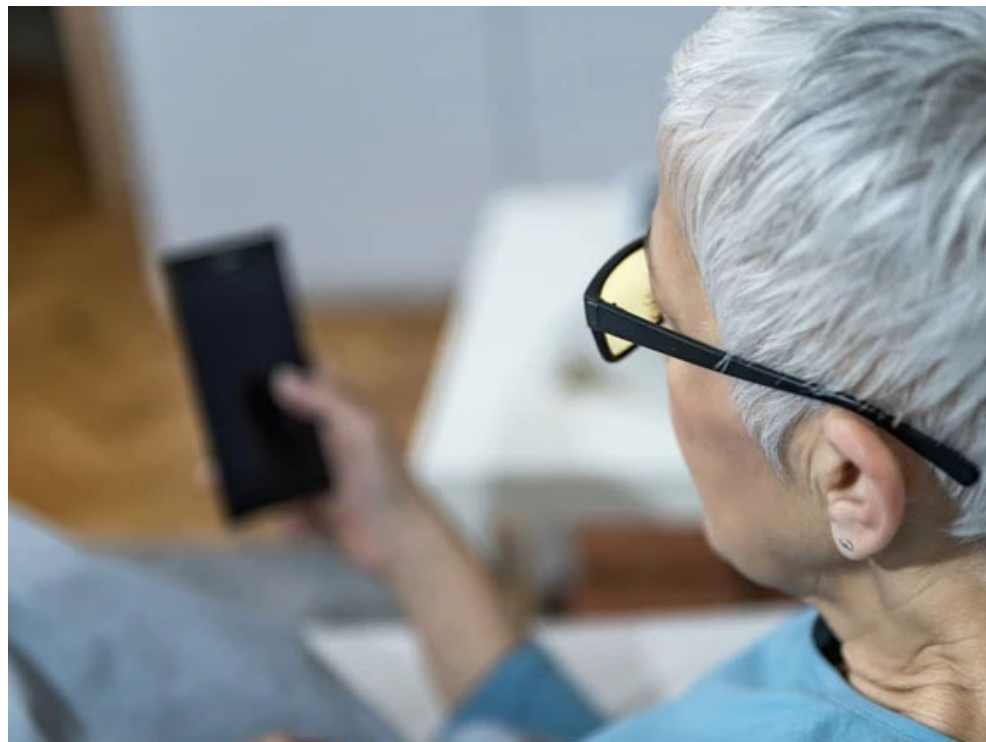
City's call centre log provides snapshot of Ottawans' top irritants

The pandemic might have impacted traffic to the hotline, since there was a significant drop in calls in 2020 when comparing similar data from 2019, but numbers were more in line with 2018.

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Published Jan 20, 2021 • 4 minute read

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Woman holding a smart phone. PHOTO BY MICROGEN /Getty Images/iStockphoto

The City of Ottawa's call centre log for 2020 reveals the bugaboos that bothered Ottawa residents so much that they were compelled to call 311.

COVID-19 added another category to the list of reasons why people needed to contact the municipal government's general hotline.



The pandemic might have impacted traffic to the hotline, since there was a significant drop in calls in 2020 when comparing similar data from 2019. There were 356,715 entries in the 2019 call log for the 311 centre, compared to 297,644 entries for 2020.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

However, the 2020 levels were more in line with 2018 when there were 283,369 entries.

A closer look revealed four significant items residents wanted a municipal response for in 2020, based on the log of service requests to the 311 centre published on the city's open data website.

New COVID-19 rules provided new reasons to complain

The pandemic generated a huge numbers of calls for city's bylaw services going back to at least April 1, 2020, the first entry for an enforcement call related to COVID-19.

According the data, a whopping 11,173 contacts to the call centre were attributed to COVID-19 in 2020 and specifically for bylaw enforcement on matters related to the novel coronavirus. The call log is silent on the specific reasons for the enforcement matter.

As the provincial and municipal governments come up with orders to protect public health, bylaw officers have become the primary enforcers, armed with the ability to write tickets and issue warnings, but with a main role of educating people about the new rules.

New Year's Eve alone saw 59 requests come into the 311 centre for bylaw response as the city was five days into a provincial lockdown.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The temporary mandatory mask bylaw, which council approved in July, also generated thousands of additional calls to the 311 centre.

Of the 2,157 mask-related complaints, 55 described a lack of alcohol hand rub at a premise. The rest of the complaints were categorized as “no mask on person.”

The wards connected to the calls have been scrubbed from the data, so the public can't know what areas of the city were particularly busy for COVID-19 complaints.

Coyotes terrorized south Ottawa, but spotted everywhere

Coyotes became a growing concern in the south end in 2020 and the call centre log suggests the hotspots.

There were 443 entries in the call log related to coyote concerns, with the most calls, 57, coming from Gloucester-South Nepean ward, which includes Riverside South.

On the other side of the Rideau River, there were 42 coyote-related calls in Barrhaven.

Police reported in August that coyotes were approaching people in the southern suburbs. In June, police shot dead a coyote that was threatening public safety in Claudette Cain Park.

Another 36 coyote calls came from River ward.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Even the central urban wards around the downtown area — Somerset, Kitchissippi, Capital, Rideau-Vanier and Rideau-Rockcliffe — generated some coyote complaints.

There was at least one coyote complaint in each of the 23 wards last year.

Dogs (and cats) weren't everyone's best friend

Animal-related calls often keep bylaw services hopping, including those related to cranky or curious kitties.

There were 294 entries in the 2020 call log that cited “cat disturbance” and the ward with the most entries was Barrhaven with 30.

As the city points out in describing its animal bylaw, owners need to “control kitty’s outdoor activities and take responsibility by not allowing their cat to cause damage to or disturbance on other residents’ property.”

The city also encourages people to call 311 if they find a lost cat wearing a registration tag. There were another 360 calls last year from people who were holding a cat.

In this case, Barrhaven ward didn’t lead the way with the most held-cat calls. That would be Rideau-Vanier with 35 calls.

Of course, cats weren’t the ones producing the most animal-related paperwork for bylaw officers in 2020.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

There were 1,875 entries across the city for dogs at large, plus another 2,136 complaints about dogs barking. Seventy-one additional complaints were categorized simply as “pit bull.”

There were 537 entries for dog bites, with Rideau-Vanier being the ward with the most entries at 50.

Perhaps on a sad note: there were 230 entries for people calling to cancel their pet registrations last year.

Music was all the racket

What noises drove people to complain to 311 in a year where more people were working and passing time at home?

Bulldozers, demolition crews and drills weren’t the main irritants, though the call log had 1,155 entries attributed to construction.

Of the 12,311 noise-related complaints last year, music was the category with the most beefs at 6,895.

People shouting generated another 2,100 complaints.

Other noisemakers resulting in gripes to 311 included machinery (659), such as air conditioning units and mowers, car alarms (254) and idling vehicles (202)

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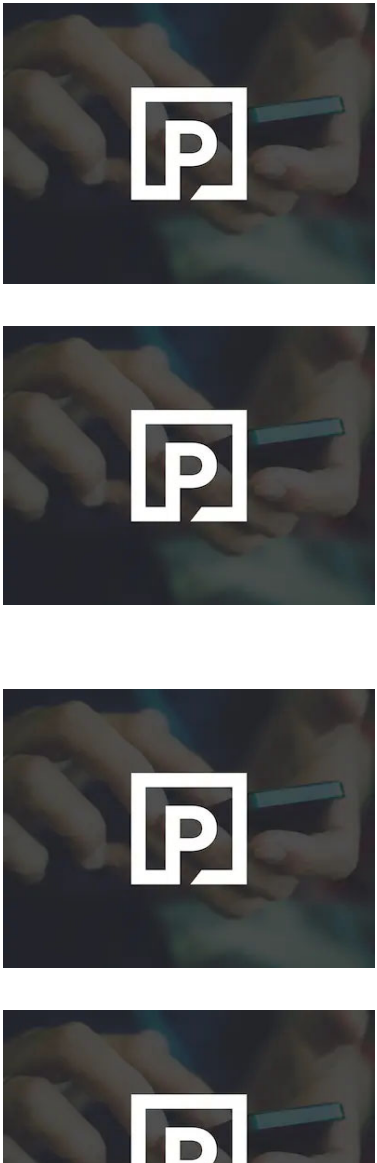
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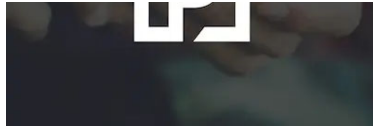
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