

# Shelter warns it could close due to increase costs

*Declining donations as well stagnant funding grants have led to 'critical' situation*

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Lynn Walker (left), Fredericton SPCA lead supervisor and Andrea Stone, FSPCA supervisor, are pictured with puppies Tarzan and Buzz. jpg, DG, apsmc

A local animal shelter may have to close its doors in two months, according to a donor letter, due to “substantially” increasing costs to care for animals.

In a memo sent to Fredericton SPCA supporters, the organization said those increases have made it “challenging” to keep the lights on.

“The cost of caring for animals requiring medical attention has increased substantially over the past three to four years as the animals are presenting more complex needs,” it said. “Experiencing these yearly increases has depleted our investments and savings.”

That means the organization is in a “critical” position, the statement said.

“We want to be honest and transparent to the community that supports us. We have roughly two months left to keep our doors open,” it said.

Executive director Annette James said the financial crunch has “never [been] quite this bad” in her 14 years with the organization.

Donations also declined in the last year, according to James.

“Our goal is to stay open,” she said.

“It is our hope that the fundraising letter, and the greater community awareness, can help us raise funds that would provide us with a window to make changes on how we deliver services, so we can be sustainable in the longer term.”

Beyond the appeal for donations, James said the organization is pushing to update its agreement with the city.

The Fredericton SPCA receives \$42,000 in grants from the city now, she said, but that amount hasn’t been updated in at least 14 years.

According to the letter, it costs about \$65,000 per month to provide services to animals. In 2022, the Fredericton SPCA took in 549 animals, 46 per cent of which were strays, with 78 days being the average length of stay, according to the letter.

“Both the City of Fredericton and ourselves realized that that agreement needs to be updated, and we’ve have (had) some discussions with them,” she said. “We are really looking at all avenues and opportunities to move forward.”

The organization is looking at other grant opportunities as well, along with options for keeping more animals in households rather than the shelter.

To generate income in the meantime, the organization is putting on a “Pet Pawlooza” fundraiser on Saturday at the Capital Exhibit Centre.

The event will offer pet photo-ops with Santa, drop-in appointments to get pet-themed tattoos, workshops on understanding animal behaviour and more.

Regardless of the outcome of fundraising, James said animals now in care will still be cared for if the shelter closes.

“Our goal is to stay open, but if we had to close we’ll make arrangements to support animals that we have in-house and in our foster families until they find their forever homes,” she said.