



Mark Holland

Member of Parliament – Ajax-Pickering

News Release

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For Immediate Release:

Holland launches campaign for animal cruelty bill

Liberal MP Mark Holland today kicked off a campaign to reform Canada's animal cruelty laws, and he hopes to make it an all-party effort.

Holland today introduced as a private member's bill legislation identical to the former C-50, a bill that died on the Order Paper when the January federal election was called. That bill, with some changes, has been introduced in every parliament since 1999.

"The failure to pass this legislation previously is a national embarrassment," says Holland. "There were mistakes made on all sides. The important thing now is that we work together to correct this wrong. It's not easy to work cooperatively in today's highly partisan minority government environment, but I intend to give this my best effort."

Holland acknowledges that under the current rules for private members' bills, his bill has little chance on its own. Instead he will be reaching out to the public and to MPs and Senators of all parties in an effort to convince the government to reintroduce it as a government bill.

An earlier version of the bill was passed several times in the House of Commons in the spring of 2003, but the bill died as a result of a deadlock with the Senate, which insisted on several amendments that were not accepted by the House. The current bill does include some of the Senate's amendments, and also addresses the issue of traditional aboriginal hunting rights, which was a sticking point for the Senate.

“This bill has had countless hours of hearings and debates in both houses, and at various times it has had the support of almost all major stakeholders,” says Holland. “Enormous efforts have been made to balance the need for protection of animals from cruelty while recognizing the rights of hunters, anglers, farmers and others who use animals in a responsible manner in their livelihoods.”

Major stakeholder groups reached an agreement in support of the bill in the fall of 2004, notes Holland. This agreement was shattered, he says, when a competing bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator John G. Bryden. That bill, now known as S-213, would bring in tougher penalties for animal cruelty, but in most other respects it retains Criminal Code provisions that have changed little since 1892.

“Senator Bryden’s bill is nothing but a diversionary tactic on behalf of some who want to keep the status quo,” says Holland. “Animal welfare organizations oppose it. I will fight it with every ounce of my strength. I call upon MPs and Senators to stop Senator Bryden’s misguided bill dead in its tracks.”

Holland notes that the issue of animal cruelty has come to the forefront recently with a shocking incident in which Daisy Duke, a lab-border collie cross in Didsbury, Alberta was tortured and had to be euthanized. Her owner and a juvenile have been charged.

“The existing law and S-213 aren’t adequate to deal with cases like this,” says Holland. “We need to move now to convince the government to make my bill a government bill with the support of all parties.”

For further information:

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