



Government proposes changes to province's animal cruelty legislation

Newmarket, ON, (April 3, 2008) - The Ontario SPCA is encouraged by the government's announcement today of proposed changes to the province's animal cruelty legislation. There are several key areas that the proposed changes focus on, which include: making it a provincial offence to cause distress to an animal; stiffer penalties, which include jail terms, fines and lifetime bans on animal ownership; inspection rights at facilities where animals are kept for sale or exhibit; banning animal fighting; and protecting veterinarians from liability when reporting allegations of cruelty. The *Ontario SPCA Act* has not had substantive changes for almost 90 years.

The proposed changes would allow Ontario SPCA investigators to be more effective and would improve the Society's capacity to address critical animal welfare issues. Chief Inspector Hugh Coghill remarked that "the government's proposed changes demonstrate good first steps". He added "it further identifies that animal welfare is a concern for the government and that the government understands the challenges that we face".

Kate MacDonald, CEO for the Ontario SPCA, said that "we are pleased that the government has recognized the need to modernize and toughen animal cruelty laws and create stiffer penalties for those convicted of animal cruelty". She adds that "the government has demonstrated that they recognize the Ontario SPCA as the leading animal welfare organization in the province."

In additional comments, Jim Sykes, Chair for the Ontario SPCA Board of Directors, conveyed that "the Ontario SPCA is looking forward to continuing its work with stakeholders in providing one voice for animal welfare across the province," adding that "the Ontario SPCA works on behalf of Ontarians to address concerns for the well-being and humane treatment of all animals."

Ontario SPCA investigators respond to approximately 15,000 allegations of cruelty annually, in addition to caring for and sheltering tens of thousands of animals that have been neglected, abused or abandoned. The Ontario SPCA is one of the largest and most responsive animal welfare organizations in the country. The *Ontario SPCA Act* mandates the Society to enforce animal cruelty laws and provides investigators with police powers to do so.

To report animal cruelty, please contact the Ontario SPCA at 1-888-668-7722 or visit www.ontariospca.ca to learn more about critical animal welfare issues.

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Images: "Crash"

www.ontariospca.ca/images/crash01.jpg

www.ontariospca.ca/images/crash02.jpg

B-roll: Ontario SPCA

www.ontariospca.ca/video/ospcabroll.mov

Quicktime required to view: www.apple.com/quicktime/

To download movie: save "page as" to disk

Additional Information: Ontario SPCA

www.ontariospca.ca/docs/Critical_Animal_Welfare_Issues.doc

www.ontariospca.ca/docs/OntarioSPCA_Backgrounder.doc

Ministry links

www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/April2008/03/c2077.html
http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2008/04/03/c2077.html?lmatch=&lang=_e.html

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The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ontario SPCA): Protecting animals since 1873, the Ontario SPCA is a registered charity comprised of over 50 Branch and Affiliate Societies relying primarily on donations to fund animal protection, care and rehabilitation for all animals, government and industry advocacy, and public education. *The Ontario SPCA Act* mandates the Society to enforce animal cruelty laws and provides Society investigators with police powers to do so - making the Ontario SPCA unique among animal welfare organizations in the province. The Ontario SPCA is a member of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, and is affiliated with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

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