



# **Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly**

## **Standing Committee on and Economic Development and Infrastructure**

Public Meeting on  
*Bill 16: An Act to Amend the Dog Act*

January 19, 2011  
Inuvik, Northwest Territories

Chair: Mr. David Ramsay, MLA Kam Lake

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Chair**

Mr. David Ramsay, MLA Kam Lake

### **Members**

Mr. David Krutko, MLA Mackenzie Delta

### **Witnesses**

Ms. Linda Eccles, Beaufort-Delta SPCA  
Mr. Greg Stromgren, Beaufort-Delta SPCA  
Mr. Brent Kay, Citizen  
Mr. John Itsi, Citizen  
Chief Herbert Blake, Citizen  
Mr. Mike Baxter, Beaufort-Delta Dog Musers  
Mayor Billy Storr, Mayor of Aklavik  
Chief William Koe, Tetlit Gwich'in  
Mr. Peter Ross, Bylaw Officer, Tsiigehtchic  
Mayor Ray Ruben, Mayor of Paulatuk  
Ms. Marie-Anick Elie, Citizen  
Mr. Richard Gordon, Citizen

### **Committee Staff**

Ms. Jennifer Knowlan, Committee Clerk  
Mr. Colette Langlois, Director of Research  
Ms. Alicia Tumchewics, Committee Researcher

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AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
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7:00 p.m.**

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. David Ramsay):** Good evening everybody. Welcome to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure. I'm going to call the meeting to order this evening. The first order of business is we're going to start with a prayer. I'm going to ask my colleague David Krutko, MLA for Mackenzie Delta, to lead us in a prayer this evening.

---Prayer

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Okay, thanks very much, David. Once again, welcome to everybody who has turned out this evening for public hearings on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. I'd like to again welcome you here. It's nice to be back in Inuvik. I always enjoy visiting the Mackenzie Delta. David is a great host while we're up in this part of the Territory. We're glad he's with us tonight.

I'm going to begin with some apologies. We're a little bit shorthanded tonight. Our deputy chair, Jackie Jacobson, was on his way in from Tuktoyaktuk but with the storm last night, he got to a point in the road where it was impassable. He couldn't get through a snow bank, so he had to turn around. Our apologies for being a little bit shorthanded tonight, but between David and I, we'll carry the load for the committee tonight.

With us, again, we've got David Krutko, MLA Mackenzie Delta, I'm the MLA for Kam Lake, a riding located in Yellowknife. Also with us tonight, I'd like to introduce the staff that we have with us. To our far right we have Colette Langlois, director of research; to my immediate right is Alicia Tumchewics, committee researcher; and on my far left is Ms. Jennifer Knowlan, and Jennifer is our committee clerk.

Today the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure is holding a public hearing on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. For folks that want a copy, there are copies of the bill on the back table and I'd ask you to please help yourself to those. As well, there's a plain language summary of the bill. Also at the back, we've got some tea and coffee and water and I'd ask you to please help yourself to that as well.

This is the fourth public hearing that we've had on the *Dog Act*, Bill 16. We've had two public hearings in Yellowknife and one last night in Hay River. We're also looking at trying to get into Fort Smith at some point in time before the bill reaches the House. I must say the turnout here in Inuvik is really quite something. There are more folks that have turned out here than were in Hay River last night, so that's a big feat. Almost as many as were at the public hearings in Yellowknife too, so that's a testament to your interest in the amendments.

We have one witness scheduled to speak to us this evening and that's Linda Eccles of the Beaufort-Delta SPCA. If there is anybody else in the room that would like to be added to the list of witnesses to tell us what you think of the bill, please see Ms. Knowlan and add your name to the list. We've got three others that have signed up: John Itsi, Brent Kay and Chief Herbert Blake. So if there's anybody else, we'll get you added to the list.

With that, this meeting is being recorded. What we're going to do is Jennifer will give you the mike when it's your turn to speak. I hope you don't have problems with the mike. Try to speak into the mike, speak clearly. We are recording our proceedings this evening, so if you could do that, that would be great. So we'll get started. Once again, welcome to the first speaker, Linda Eccles. We'll get the microphone to Linda.

**MS. ECCLES:** Do I stand up?

**MS. KNOWLAN:** It's up to you.

### **Presentation by Beaufort-Delta SPCA**

**MS. ECCLES:** Then I can see everybody then. Thank you. I have to put my granny glasses on, if they'll stay. There. Now I can't see you, but I can see the paper. So, good evening. My name is Linda Eccles and I'm the founder of the BDR SPCA and the executive director. We have run the SPCA for 10 years in Inuvik. My duties for the SPCA are humane educator and animal cruelty officer. I live in Inuvik and I have children and grandchildren in this community. On behalf of the Beaufort-Delta SPCA, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure for taking the time to address this very important discussion on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act* in the NWT.

Our society is hoping the changes will complement legislative change towards an animal protection act in the NWT. Our society stands for Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. In order for our society to help with alleged animal abuse in the Beaufort-Delta region, we need strong legislation in place as follows: clarify the living conditions that are unacceptable for dogs; include a definition of what is considered cruel treatment to dogs; expand the ability of enforcement officers to seize dogs that are in distress; increase the range of sentencing options to include much higher maximum fines and periods of imprisonment; as well as restrictions of owning of animals.

Please do not use, make exceptions for locally accepted or traditional practices. Any person who harms an animal must be accountable for it. There is no such thing as tradition in the laws to hide animal abusers. No one can be exempt from abuse. This amendment statement is offensive.

In the Criminal Code of Canada, the Cruelty to Animal section under Bill C-50 which has been revised and is forever changing to meet higher standards for animal protection. Judges can only work with what they have in front of them and as it stands today, the *Dog Act* only has a \$25 fine or an imprisonment for a term not exceeding 30 days.

RCMP, SPCA and animal control in Inuvik have few animal abuse cases brought before the courts. In 10 years only one of our SPCA cruelty investigations made it to court. Many more should have. We were able to get one person found guilty of animal abuse who served jail time. This was a joint effort with the RCMP and the BDR SPCA.

Our society in Inuvik has seen many horrible, horrific animal neglect and abuse cases. The following incidents are what we have dealt with in 10 years of service and continue to this day. These are only some of the ones that are reported in the Beaufort-Delta region. Bestiality, which is illegal in Canada; pellets from BB guns causing internal damage, blindness and, for some, the outcome death; dogs and cats and wildlife such as ravens have fallen victim; dogs hung in trees, shot in the head, left to die -- I'm sorry for my shaking, I've just come out of having the flu -- one we found still alive, one dog had to be euthanized for humane reasons. This dog stood up and wagged his tail to the very end and he weighed in at 22 pounds. He'd been hung in a tree for a few days. This dog was a husky dog, who normally would normally have a 55-pound-or-up weight.

We found bags of puppies in sacks left to die at garbage dumps, and in and around the Delta we found puppies with slashed throats. Dogs used for baiting on other dogs and leading to injury or death. We found dogs in dog houses dead from no insulation and no bedding in winter sub-zero. We have found dogs who had given birth to pups outside, with no shelter in sub-zero and all dead. Dogs giving birth to pups in dog houses with no bedding, all dead. Mother dogs found with no body weight feeding pups inside dog houses with no bedding and no floor, lying on straight ice.

Most of the dogs had to be euthanized because they had pneumonia and other problems. They tried to keep the pups warm while their body laid on the ice. Sorry.

Dogs found with collars embedded in their necks had to be cut off with cutters. Dogs found with wire attached on their necks as a form of collar for tethering, again embedded. They had to be removed. We had to send dogs out to vets. Kennels not following guidelines for proper animal care for the humane treatment of animals.

Inuvik town pound had 14 dogs euthanized. RCMP had to release dogs in stress. Town bylaws were not followed for standard care. Dogs with pups abandoned in and out of town found giving birth to pups under buildings, in buildings and in the bush. We had one dog running down the ice road with six pups running with her. They were only eight weeks of age. This was in the reindeer station area.

Calls come in from seismic camps where dogs are hanging around looking for food as well as on the ice road endangering trucks coming and going. Dogs and cats are abandoned in apartment buildings and houses regularly. Dogs are left tethered in extreme heat with mosquito infestations at times of the year when it is so bad it leads to injury of a dog trying to get away from the misery that it brings. Extreme agony and stress for the dogs. Dogs found without shelter, no food or water. Cats living under town buildings, cats dumped outside of town, cats used in target practice tied to trees, cats set on fire. Dogs with no shots contracting parvo, distemper spreading around town to other dogs. Most all victims to this end up dying. Dog bite victims.

The NWT animal protection act needs to be written for all persons, with no exceptions to group or person. All agencies need to follow the act and hire trained staff to work in the field to enforce the act.

The term "dogcatcher" should not be allowed anymore as a person who works in bylaw. A dogcatcher is a device meant to catch a dog to restrain it from harming others. We need to respect people in authority.

Bounty for dogs needs to stop. It has proven itself for community pet owners. Some personnel are untrained, they are paid by each dog they catch -- and that's the term "dogcatcher" -- have gone on to private land and taken dogs which never left the yard.

Agencies in towns should connect with other for animal statistics, applications and investigations. The Animal Protection Act should state this: Environmental health, rabies, statistics; doctors at the hospitals and clinics, dog bites, statistics; SPCA - education, relocation of animals, investigation of cruelty to animals, vet medical emergency, statistics; RCMP - application Criminal Code, cruelty to animals, statistics; bylaw officers - bylaws for animal control and animal cruelty, statistics; veterinarians - medical exams, investigation report for alleged animal abuse

Now, I just have a few other things I want to bring forward to you. I'm sorry I'm shaking. I'm on these pills for a cold.

Anyway, the Animal Alliance of Canada and the Federation for Humane Societies, they put some recommendations in, I believe, to your committee and as such have other humane centres around Canada. We are the only province in Canada that does not have an animal protection act. Anyway, I would like to see in the act put in, require that all Northwest Territories ministries and government and municipal agencies who are in possession of animal to comply with the act.

I also want to make a point that it's not just... There is a correlation between abuse and families and family violence and all cruelty. They coincide. It's been recorded with many different departments, FBI and there are workshops about it all over the country. It's extremely important, because we have been in homes where we've seen children who have been hurt and animals are included in this. There are at least three ways that animal abuse and human violence are linked. Abusers use animals to influence or harm people. By abusing an animal another person cares for, the abuser can demonstrate dominance or control. I was hoping tonight one of the RCMP officers would be attending. He was supposed to be here and he hasn't shown up. He might show up in a little while. He wanted to add to this.

One of the things that we see up here in the North is the lack of shelters for animal to be placed into and education and so on. I just want to tell you one more thing about a case that happened in Fort McPherson a year ago. I had a call from a fellow there who's a wildlife officer. He came off the land with his working dog, he went into the post office to get his mail. His dog jumped out, for whatever reason, dragging a chain, ended up getting caught in another building. He didn't know what happened, he went looking for it.

Anyway, someone said somebody had picked up the dog who happened to be the dogcatcher of the town, taken it to the dump and shot it. This all happened within half an hour. In Fort McPherson in their bylaws, it states they have a place to impound their dogs. Well, we went out and did an investigation and the facility as they say, the impoundment, is a chain link fence that is broken down with an overturned kennel, flight kennel. There is no way you could keep anything in there, but it does state in their bylaws that that dog should have gone to whatever that little facility is that they call it for impoundment before it was even taken out. They didn't give it any time. That is a problem caused by the bounty system. At \$60 a head, he can pick up whatever and shoot it really fast and gets himself some money and you can't blame the guy, but you can blame the system. So this happens not just in Fort McPherson but in other small communities. I'd like to see the bounty stopped. It'd like to see it written in.

Anyways, that's all I have to say right now. I'd like to hear from everybody else, so thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Ms. Eccles. That was a good presentation, thank you. We are here to listen too, that's our job. We are here to listen to the concerns of the people of Inuvik and I know there are some others from the area from the Delta that are going to speak later as well. So we are here to listen to the concerns that you have. Listening to your presentation, Ms. Eccles, we have heard loud and clear from your colleagues, both in Yellowknife and Hay River, the issues that you've outlined. So again we appreciate that. David, did you have anything, clarification or questions?

**MR. KRUTKO:** Just in regards to the issue of dealing with local and traditional practices, it's pretty clear that every community does not have a veterinarian and every community does not have a police officer. I think that in the larger urban, regardless of whether it's Inuvik, Yellowknife, Hay River, you have the facilities to accommodate. Yes, Fort McPherson had a situation, but the person that shot the dog was the bylaw officer, and under this existing legislation that is there now, a person cannot catch a dog. They can use whatever methods they need to deal with the situation. You know, the communities have to realize that. I talked to the MLA for Deh Cho with regard to Fort Providence. They are spending \$40,000 a year to bring a veterinarian in to euthanize dogs; \$40,000 a year. Now, if that's the method that's going to be used in all the communities in the Northwest Territories, there is a cost associated to that.

The local practices we have, every community has a dog bylaw. I know you have it in front of you because you were quoting some words from it. I think it's important to realize that. I know your views, but I think people are trying to say that this is a get-out-of-jail-free concept with regard to local and traditional practices with regards to the care of dogs.

In the Mackenzie Delta, the history of the Gwich'in people, the Inuvialuit people with regard to their survival for thousands of years up here, dogs were a very important part of their culture. It still is today, whether it's dog mushers or people going out to their bush camps or people having those tools to do so.

I am not going to argue with the SPCA because I know their views on the situation, but I also have my views with regard to the communities I represent. You've got to realize there has to be a balance here. You cannot implement something that is non-achievable in a lot of our communities. We have to realize that if we are going to pay for the cost of veterinarians to go into every community and you guys just lost your veterinarian here in Inuvik, so where do you go? You got to go to Whitehorse. There's a situations where people had to actually drive from Fort McPherson to Whitehorse to see a veterinarian. So again there's a cost associated with this legislation. I think it's great to have shelters and all this other stuff out there, but do we have the financial means to implement this legislation from a small community perspective regardless of whether it's Tsiigehtchic or Fort McPherson or Colville Lake or Holman Island or Sachs or Paulatuk? This legislation has to be delivered throughout the Northwest Territories and it's got to be in terms of capacity.

So I'd just like to know where do we have the capacity to do that. We have to realize local governments have been dealing with this issue for years. They've had the tools to work with what they can and, in most cases, the last thing they do is destroy a dog. That's why it's in the bylaws. In Fort McPherson they hold a dog for so many days. Yes, there was that incident but the person was fired, they lost their job and the individual was compensated. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thanks, David. I'm not sure if you wish to respond to that, Ms. Eccles, or we'll move to the next speaker.

**MS. ECCLES:** (Microphone not on)

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Okay, sure. Next on the list we have Mr. Greg Stromgren from the Beaufort-Delta SPCA. Mr. Stromgren.

### **Presentation by Beaufort-Delta SPCA**

**MR. STROMGREN:** Thank you, members of committee and ladies and gentlemen. My name is Greg Stromgren. I am with the Beaufort-Delta SPCA. I'm a director. A big part of what I do for the SPCA is medical issues, medical emergencies. I've been here in town for about 10 years or so now. Linda and I -- Linda's my wife -- run a mechanical contracting business in town here. We work in a lot of communities in the Northwest Territories, so we get a chance to communicate with a lot of communities on business issues as well as humane issues; dog issues mainly, of course. I've also got children in this town. I've got two Inuvialuit grandbabies in this town and a big need. These are important issues to go through.

First, it's great that this act is going to be amended. I think that it's got to be amended in such a way that it deals with abuse as it is. I've got to say that an act amended with somewhat of a double standard isn't suitable. It's not going to help the situation that we've been dealing with for years now, and further to that, my personal view is that we don't need a *Dog Act*, we need animal protection legislation. It's across the country



everywhere. As Linda said, the NWT is one of the only places that doesn't have an animal protection and legislation.

That would be far more appropriate and the comments, Mr. Krutko, on putting a facility in each community and that sort of thing, well understood. We're well aware of financial situations, constraints and so on. My response to that, the best way I could respond would be building a framework for something, Inuvik would be a good example. Poor foundation, wooden pilings are found to rot and buildings fall over, so the foundation was improved to steel and the buildings are much better now.

Setting up proper legislation, an animal protection act or amendments to the *Dog Act* starts to form the networking, the pieces in place. It's the foundation we need to be able to get everything else to work together with it, to network together. There are a lot of programs out there that we utilize that get animals removed from bad situations, get them sent out for proper care. They are sent out to be adopted, or fostered until adopted. So proper amendments or a proper act to address those situations would be the foundation that we need to strengthen the communities, and at not a great expense. I don't think we need to build shelters in every community. There's lots of ways we could work around that, but ultimately that would be great if every community had something like that, but it wouldn't be required right now.

I could go on story after story. I've dealt with some ugly issues in communities. What example could I give you? Linda's given you lots of examples. One that sticks out in my mind is one time having to euthanize so many frozen puppies that they were lined up. They looked like victims of the Holocaust, honestly. The only thought I had in my mind, I was shocked and stunned at some of the stuff I've seen. It's absolutely horrible. You know, I'm not going to dwell on that or talk about that anymore.

I think one of the issues that's really important to me, as I've said before, is a proper act, a properly amended act. An animal protection act would be the best answer and the best foundation to work from. As a layperson, as a member of this community, if an amendment goes forward that is exempting groups or individuals or whoever from prosecution, under legislation there's no value to that. I understand that amending legislation is expensive. I mean, the cost of everybody involved, for example, the committee to travel. The committee, I know, had funding to bring people in from other communities. So if there's going to be that much effort put into something, it's really important to me, to my family, my kids, my grandchildren and my community, that we've got real value for dollar. Bottom line, let's not put legislation through that could in effect not be as good as what exists. That would be the main point I want to make here. Like I said, I don't have time to say horrific things, it's not the time or place, but it's important that with this much effort going into something, it's going to be well designed and well figured. Thank you for your time.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Mr. Stromgren, for your presentation. The committee is here to listen, like we were at the other public hearings. There's been overwhelming support for the reference in the amendments to traditional

and locally acceptable practices to be taken out overwhelmingly, that's what people are telling us.

The reason the *Dog Act* is being amended in the absence of the government moving forward with comprehensive animal protection legislation is I think they've run out of time. The government has run out of time. The election is coming up in October and I think they want to be seen as doing something, because as everybody in the room knows, there have been incidents in the past few years that have given the Northwest Territories a black eye both nationally and internationally when it comes to gross negligence, cruelty and abuse to dogs. Most recently the incident in Whati where the mother dog was put outside in minus 35. The mother died, all the puppies died except for one. That stuff hits the national media.

The Northwest Territories today is known as one of the best places to abuse animals, and that's a handle that we don't need, we don't want and we don't deserve. The residents and the animals here in the Northwest Territories deserve much better than that and we do need to continue to pursue comprehensive animal protection legislation here in our Territory. That is something that is going to be left to the next government to handle, but it has to happen.

A much similar situation took place in the Yukon a few years ago, where dogs were being neglected and abused, and the Yukon government took action and they have protection legislation over there for animals. Sometimes you have to get embarrassed as a government to get legislation that has any teeth that is going to result in some meaningful things happening to people who are abusing animals. Right now, a lot of cases are just thrown by the wayside because the Crown cannot pursue charges under the current legislation. It's almost impossible to get a conviction. To me, that's wrong and we need to do something about it. That's why we're here.

To your comment, Mr. Stromgren, on value for money, at the end of this process we are going to listen to everybody and we're fortunate enough to live in a jurisdiction where we can take legislation out, we can listen to the public in as many communities as possible, we can debate and discuss that amongst ourselves, and at the end of the day we're going to get the legislation that the public wants and we'll listen to the public and we'll say what you have to say very seriously, so again I want to thank you for your comments. Much appreciated.

The next speaker we have this evening is Brent Kay. We'll get you the microphone, Mr. Kay.

### **Presentation by Mr. Brent Kay**

**MR. KAY:** Thank you. I'll try to keep this as brief as I can. My references are all to the document available on the Legislative Assembly website, *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. On page 2 of that document, under the heading Protection of Dogs and the subheading Duty of Care, Section 3(1)(b) reads: "...provided with adequate care when it is wounded

or ill.” I suggest this be amended to read: “...provided with adequate care when it is wounded, injured or ill.”

Also on page 2 and also under the heading and subheading mentioned above, Section 3(2) provides: “A person does not contravene subsection (1) by treating a dog in accordance with the regulations or in accordance with generally accepted local or traditional practices of dog care, use and management.” This is simply too broad and open to individual interpretation. It should be changed to read: “A person does not contravene subsection (1) by treating a dog in accordance with the regulations.”

The same sweeping exemption appears again on Page 3 under Dogs in Distress. Section 4(3) reads: “This section does not apply if the distress results from an activity carried on in accordance with the regulations or in accordance with generally accepted local or traditional practices of dog care, use and management.” I cannot imagine why the drafters of this bill believe that causing distress to a dog is acceptable, but if it must be included, then the wording should be limited to: “This section does not apply if the distress results from an activity carried on in accordance with the regulations.”

Another problem I have with this is that traditional practices of dog use and management is not defined. I don't know whose traditions those are. The assumption, of course, when we all speak, is that it's aboriginal traditions. But there are societies in the world that eat dogs. So that's their tradition and if I were to kill a dog and eat it, I could say that's my tradition. There are societies in the world that regard dogs as unclean and members of those societies treat the dogs accordingly. If I were a member of that society and I regarded a dog or all dogs as unclean, then I can pretty much treat the dog any way I want, but it's my tradition.

On page 8, Section 13(1), “A person who contravenes a provision of this act to the regulations is liable on summary conviction, for a first offence, to a fine of not more than \$5,000 to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to both and,” I'll skip over it,”\$10,000 for subsequent offences.”

I prefer that the discretion regarding the monetary penalty be removed. So for a first offence, the fine would be \$5,000 and for subsequent would be \$10,000. This change would demonstrate that the Legislature is determined to make reasonable efforts to eliminate mistreatments of dogs.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Kay, for that. We've got your remarks duly recorded and we'll take them into consideration. Thank you very much for sharing those with us. Next we have Mr. John Itsi from Tsiigehtchic.

#### **Presentation by Mr. John Itsi**

**MR. ITSİ:** Thank you. Can you hear me, Peter? Okay. My name is John Itsi. I am originally from Fort McPherson, but I live in Tsiigehtchic. Since I was a young person we've had dogs. My parents used dogs in their dog teams to move around to our traditional trapping areas and those dogs were raised from when they were pups. They have names; maybe one of them was named John, I don't remember. We treated them

very well. They're kept tied up. You have to keep the dogs tied up or else sometimes they steal or fight with each other, stuff like that.

Traditional use, you've got to remember you've got to keep that in the act. Now, you look at it, not many trappers use dogs. They use dogs for sport hunting and some of them use them for racing. That's not saying that in the years coming, that the younger generation is not going to be using dogs for their living. Look at all the high cost of gas, high cost of food. Summertime, too, we use dogs for hunting and using them as... We have like a saddle on them and they pack our meat for us when we hunt in the summer.

I listened to those two people that talked ahead of me. Some of them I agree to some of the points, cruelty to animals. I know you'll get \$5,000 out of somebody, but jail time, I agree that there should be penalties for people who are not looking after their dogs good. That might smarten up some people. Maybe you should give some people in Tsiigehtchic right now some free dog chains because there have been dogs loose there. I act as bylaw officer once in awhile and I can't shoot those dogs, I don't have the power to shoot them. I could shoot them if I want, but we have to give the owners three warnings or something like that.

The thing is, traditional use, you've got to keep that in there. I think the fines are too heavy. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, John. Thanks for sharing that with us. Next on the list of speakers we have Chief Herbert Blake.

### **Presentation by Chief Herbert Blake**

**CHIEF BLAKE:** Good evening everyone. I appreciate the fact that everybody has come out to speak to some of the amendments before this committee.

If we're talking about an amendment to the *Dog Act*, I see some bias here. We're focussing on those traditional practices or the way that dogs are cared for here in the North. If we are going to have a *Dog Act*, it should be inclusive of all dogs. There should be no finger pointing at how people use dogs in the way that they do.

I'll give you an example. I go to the airport and I see dogs stuffed in a handbag, Prada handbag. It's used as fashion statements now. That troubles me. To me, that's a dog that's in distress because he's not doing what he should be doing. That's being a dog.

Dogs are bred to perform specific jobs, to do specific tasks. Yet, we use them as companions, we use them as fashion statements and I think that's really wrong. So if we are going to make amendments of any acts, I think it should be inclusive to everyone, to all manner of and all breeds of dogs.

The other thing I want to talk about is this is a northern environment, yet there is nothing in the *Dog Act* that speaks to some of the dangerous dogs that we have running around in our community here. I see guys and people in this community taking on pit bulls, bringing Bullmastiffs into the community, breeding those dogs up without any idea of

what they're doing. That's really wrong. They use it not only as a macho image to protect their interest and that, to me, is really wrong. So, again, if you're going to amend the *Dog Act*, be fair to everyone and include all those kinds of things, those dogs that have, you know, reputations as dangerous dogs. I see them running around here in the community, really.

I want to emphasize one thing here. As dog mushers here in the community, we work closely. We support what the SPCA does. We help them to identify dogs in our community. As a dog musher, I go into the communities, I see dogs/pups running around. They look good, they look athletic to me. If I see them running around for two or three days, I go back there and I take those dogs and some of those dogs are in my yard right now. They're good dogs, nothing wrong with them.

As dog mushers, I just want to follow up on what John said. What we do is evolved in some ways, in a lot of ways, of the breeding that we attend to, the kind of equipment that we use, the kind of food that we use for our dogs. We don't buy dog food from the store. We take good care and buy high quality food for our dogs. A few of us feed fish to our dogs. We buy food by the tonne from the south, you know? So we take great stock in what we do. We're very proud of what we own and what we have.

Again, I want to bring this up, it's a northern environment, yet we are attacking northern dogs here. If this is a northern environment, then maybe the *Dog Act* should say northern dogs only. You know, it seems that we are finger pointing here.

I just want to speak to Chairman Ramsay here. I heard your comments the other night on CBC at seven o'clock at night and your comments troubled me. Your comments troubled me because he's already taken a position. You know, so that's wrong. Maybe I'm perceiving that his comments put him in apposition where he's already made up his mind about how this thing is going to play out here. I'm concerned about that. You want to control dogs? What about an electronic chipping program so you can see the history of that dog. You could look at the ownership, who owns that dog, you could look at the medical history of that dog. What about a spay/neuter program? Right? You eliminated dogs roaming at large. When we see dogs here in this community roaming at large, there's usually a little female in front leading a pack of five or six dogs. If you get in the way of any of those, the dominant male there, he's going to challenge you. That's the nature, that's their instincts.

As a young boy growing up in the communities, our people come home, my dad used to come home, the first thing we would have to do as children and members of that family, we would have to go care for those dogs. They were fed first. Even before my dad ate, the onus on responsibility to his dogs was greater than his care for himself. That's how we were brought up. This notion of people having dogs, taking a pup and when the novelty wears off, putting them on a stick outside and chaining them for the rest of their life, that's not our way. I take exception to that. I know people in this community who have had dogs chained up for 10 years; 10 years, my friends. That's wrong. If you want to have your dogs obey you and be mindful of their responsibilities as a dog, you have to spend time with dogs. None of us mushers here, if a dog breaks his chain, which is a

mechanical device, that dog is not going to wander around. He's going to stay where he is because he's fed well, we house him well and we exercise him and we stimulate them. A dog needs to be stimulated.

I know we've had some bad incidents in the Northwest Territories. No different than anywhere else in Canada. We have puppy mills. We have dog fighting in the South. Most of us mushers here in this community, we could drop our dogs downtown and they won't go anywhere. They'll just hang around us. Again, that stems from the involvement that we have with the dogs. We value those dogs very much. In fact, most of us mushers have dogs that are probably 15 years old. We love them animals. They work for us, they provide comfort to us. Again, I don't believe in this practice of taking a puppy, once he gets so big you tie him outside. I don't believe in that. I never saw that as a kid growing up. That wasn't our way. Our dogs were utilized for all seasons. I understand that there are people that see things differently. I respect that. What I don't respect is when we start pointing fingers and bias in how we treat certain species of dogs. This *Dog Act* is going to be legislated and it should be inclusive to all breeds of dogs. We should have a "*Dangerous Dog Act*." Fashion statements should not be acceptable.

Again, I thank you for taking the time to listen to me. I'm not here to say things are wrong. I'm just here to say that we have to be inclusive at how we look at the *Dog Act*. So, Chairman Ramsay, I thank you for your time and the opportunity for you good folks to take time to listen to me.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Chief Blake. Just before I pass the microphone to Mr. Krutko, I just wanted to comment. You know, I am certainly the chair of this committee but the bottom line for me is the eradication of abuse and neglect of dogs and all animals in the Northwest Territories. That's a position that I take and that's a position that I voice publicly.

In response to a clause, there are two parts that are in these amendments, pertaining to locally accepted or traditional practices, my belief is abuse is abuse, neglect is neglect, cruelty is cruelty. Really that has no, in my mind, place in the proposed amendments. That's my belief. If you want to call it a position, it's my personal belief and I can share that with my colleagues and not all of them agree with me on our committee and perhaps not all Members of the Legislative Assembly would agree with that, but that's my belief. Sorry if that offended there a little bit, Chief Blake, but I think the common ground in all of this is we need to move this legislation forward. We need to treat all dogs fairly and we need to get this done soon. I think if the amendments end up on the floor of the House here in February, we can get the amendments to the *Dog Act* passed in the upcoming sitting in the Legislative Assembly, which is certainly a step in the right direction.

At the end of the day, whether that clause that talks about locally accepted or traditional practices, if that stays in there, that's going to be a decision of the committee and it's going to be a decision of the Legislative Assembly. If it ends up on the floor of the House, there could be a motion to amend to take that out. You know, there are other

ways to deal with that if it ends up on the floor of the House, but that's a discussion and a debate that the committee is going to have. I'm ready for that debate and that discussion because, like I said, I just don't see where that fits in with anything because, like I said, cruelty is cruelty, abuse is abuse and there should be no place to hide if you are abusing animals in any way in the Northwest Territories. I'll pass the microphone to Mr. Krutko.

**MR. KRUTKO:** Just a question for Herb. I know there are a few dog mushers in here, but there are two sections of the act and I know this issue has come out and I think some of us have issues with it, especially Section 5. It basically states that no owner shall be permitted to run a dog at large. It's two sections. One talks about within the municipal boundary, but it also mentions outside municipal boundaries. So technically the way this thing is worded, you can't have a dog running at large anywhere in the Northwest Territories. That's what this says.

The other issue deals with the dogs in harness. I thought you guys dealing with mushers might be interested, because basically it states that under 6, no person shall have a dog in a harness. I know you guys are dog mushers. You know your dogs usually have to be in a harness and usually once you finish a dog race, you allow them to cool down before you take them out, so I was just wondering if you had an opportunity to look at that section. If not, maybe you can respond back. I think as mushers, you have to realize that that clause is now going to be in there. Also, as dog owners, for people who run your dogs out at Boot Lake or wherever else, technically with this wording you aren't allowed to do that anymore. They can pick up a dog in the middle of the Mackenzie River and charge you under this act because you're letting it run at large and it's not on a leash. I know some of the Members even from Yellowknife, once they read it, this wording is going to have an effect on everybody.

So I would just like to maybe have Herb respond. I don't know if you had a chance to look at that, but that's sections 5 and 6. I know you mentioned that dogs are dogs and one of the things they do is they run, they want to be free. They want to run and you want to take them out on the river or out on the lake and allow them to run freely. But basically under this thing, you can be charged. Even if it's outside a municipal boundary, anywhere in the Northwest Territories you also can be charged. So I would just like to know your thoughts on that. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thanks, Mr. Krutko. Both of those sections I believe the language will be tightened up and we'll look at amending both of those sections so they're more clear, the language is more clear and concise. Mr. Blake, did you want to respond?

**CHIEF BLAKE:** Another practice that we as mushers do is we like to free run our dogs. Again, it's a controlled environment. The dogs stay close to us. I mean most of my friends here and colleagues and peers could drop all their dogs, like I say, downtown, and they're not going to go anywhere. They're going to hang around us. One of our exercise regimes in the spring and the summer is to free run our dogs. But the dogs stay with us. They don't mind loose dogs running by. They don't pay attention to dogs

tied up beside the road. Their focus is on us because of the time and effort we put into them.

Again, I just want to answer questions about the harness. What does a harness mean? Does the harness apply to a service dog that leads the blind around? Again, we need to be specific about that. Having authority over us when our dogs are in harness when they are doing what it is that dogs are bred to do, that to me is a clear bias on that part.

The other thing I forgot to mention is you talk about making assumptions in a dog in distress. So are the bylaw officer or the animal control officer going to have the necessary training to assess a dog that they assume to be in distress? I can go around this community, I can take you around this community and I can show you dogs that have never been watered. As dog mushers, it's part of our routine. We water our dogs constantly. Especially up here in the North, it's very dry so the dogs need to be hydrated all the time, but there's all kinds of dogs that I see there that I know when I see them voiding that they haven't been watered. The kind of quality of food that owners feed is poor. Look outside your yard; look at how they defecate, look at the amount. If it's a huge pile, you're not feeding the dog properly. Look in a dog musher's yard; you're just going to see small little balls like that because the food is so good, the quality of food is so good. So if we are going to talk about the *Dog Act* and feeding and hydration and all those things, how do you measure that? What standards of feeding and what standards of watering do you put in place and who's going to monitor and enforce them? So we have to be careful about those kinds of things.

That harness bit within the municipality, the biggest draw at our carnivals are the dog races. That's why people come here, is to see us and the dogs perform. It's been going on for as far back as I can remember and even before my time. My dad and my grandfathers were involved in using dogs, whether it was for work or sport. We continue to do that. I'll give you an example. I have a snow machine I bought in 2003. I have 3,000 kilometres on it. I have a dog team. I have over 20,000 kilometres on them. So I spend a lot of time with them, along with my colleagues and my peers here. We are here every day. In fact, after this meeting I'm going to be out there with them for two or three hours spending time with them.

I think we need to be clear on harnesses. What does harness mean, you know? Does that effect or have an impact on the service dogs that we see in the community here? The other thing is people that have dogs for companions, field trials, shows, obedience trials, they need a place to have the dogs exercised here. I see dog owners walking down the street and allowing their dogs to void and to defecate on public property. Is that acceptable? As mushers, you go to our yards, you're not going to see that. We're very clean about how we maintain our kennels.

So I thank you again just to answer MLA Krutko's questions.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Chief Blake. We appreciate your comments. Those two sections on running at large and the dogs in harnesses, those exist in the current form in the existing *Dog Act*. I think what we need to do, as I mentioned earlier,



is tighten up the wording especially on the running at large. The words used at another public hearing were “direct care and control of the owner.” So it necessarily wouldn’t have to be on a leash. It could be off leash. That said, those two sections, certainly we should be looking at those as we move this forward.

We still have a few speakers to get to. We’ve got Mike Baxter from the Beaufort-Delta Dog Musers. Mike.

### **Presentation from Beaufort-Delta Dog Musers**

**MR. BAXTER:** Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. Dogs, like kids, and everybody has one, they’re an authority. I guess the first problem here is we need to have an act that is good for one, good for all. The problem that I have and what you generally see here is generally a lot of these issues are administrative issues. In other words, we’ve hired the dog catcher, he does something, it becomes a community nightmare. Like Inuvik just finished bawling somebody out because somebody’s dog got caught and shot. Those things happen. I’m not going to stand up here and recite about being brought up in traditional manners of how to raise dogs and raise dog teams. I’m not going to go through 25 years of every good thing that happened as opposed to every bad thing that happened. Those things happen, yes. Recognize them, do something about them and move on.

I have a great deal of problem with someone with five or 10 years experience rolling in my yard of which I have over 35 years and that person tell me my dog is thin. First of all, they don’t know what they’re talking about. Relevance of stress, more than likely they don’t know what they’re talking about. To have someone come up and say this is how it should be, you know, they obviously don’t know what they’re talking about. We will go back over to Alaska, do a bit of a survey over there and see how well these organizations that come by and all of a sudden feel you have to carry a bail of straw on the Iditarod so your dog is warm. The only thing that did was add a huge cost. People with dogs that generally on a good dog team today generally run \$2,500 or whatnot. People don’t abuse those there.

One of the other issues is the minute you start talking dogs in the North, the first thing you say is them dog musers, there’s a dog musher down there starved a whole bunch of dogs. My comment to that is because you have some stakes driven in the ground and a few dogs on a string doesn’t make you a dog musher. Your fiduciary responsibility as a dog musher is to maintain proper practices and do your very best to promote the sport. You can’t do that by kicking or abusing your dog. As I said, in all societies there are 5 or 10 percent that just don’t really shape up and give everybody the black eye.

As Chief Blake brought out, our problems are far greater than dog musers, you know? The fact is there are far more greater problems with dogs biting people or incidents like... I remember sitting in on a meeting with the town. Somebody stood up and says well, we should go in and make sure those dog musers clean their yard up. The fact is if you go, you’ll find most dog musers, in the league that I play in anyways, right

around here it's done twice a day. Yet I can go downtown and find somebody's dog tied in the yard, maybe done once in the springtime.

To have things written in there about harnesses or I believe there's something written in there that my dog has to have a bowl of water in front of him all the time. Go out there and drop a bowl of water and see how long it lasts today. You know? It's stupid. I don't even do it in the summertime simply because my feeding and training practices make sure that my dogs are watered up all the time. Basic stuff to do. Frankly, if the pee on the house is yellow, he doesn't have enough water in him. You know? These things here are things that are acquired over 25 years of experience not just because we saw something ugly and the world's got to change.

There's no doubt that we do need an act and there's no doubt that everybody should be under the same measure. The problem is that my impression is there are too many people putting stuff in here that really don't know.

Go back to the eastern coast when the skidoo came in down along Quebec. The very first thing that happened was back then the practice was your dogs are finished, take them out to the island out there, once a week go buy frozen seal, you know? Go back in the fall, what ones you can catch and get around, that's your dog team. Now what they decided to do was, because the government came in, you've got to kill them all. Now they're just barely dealing with that there. They destroyed an awful lot of the fabric of the society. Why? Because somebody got up and decided that it was wrong and knew nothing of the history, nothing of the history of it.

Now again, traditional practices. There's been nothing that I've ever heard of in the 25 years here from very respected dog people, Frederic Blake, Peter Kay, I could go on, Mr. Mayor, I could go on and on and on and on. You can go back and look at pictures and whatnot, those dogs aren't starved, beat up or whatnot. I guess the definition of what are the traditional practices. I guess everybody stands up and puts their pants on one leg at a time. Abuse is abuse. Whereas the Germans tell you, you do nothing to a dog that you don't do to a two-year-old kid, you will have a successful dog. That's about all I have to say. Thank you very much for your time.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Baxter for your words this evening. Much appreciated. Next on our list Billy Storr, Mayor of Aklavik. Mr. Storr.

### **Presentation by Mayor of Aklavik**

**MAYOR STORR:** Good evening everybody. I'd just like to thank you for the opportunity to speak. As somebody that is worried about the safety in the community, that's a big thing, you know. Dogs running loose and biting kids, that's something that has to be dealt with. We look after the safety of the kids. These dogs that are running around loose, usually they aren't anybody's dogs. They aren't cared for. I'm all in favour of a spay and neuter program. That would go a lot further than changing legislation.

My dad, when I was young, we had dogs. We used them for getting wood, hauling fish, going to the net, bringing stuff home. That's tradition. Now I have brothers-in-law that raise dogs to race and they spend more time with their dogs than they do with their families. So, you know, I think that we know what is abuse and I think for the safety of the community, there are certain dogs that you have to spay and neuter. Get a program going for that. I think that would make a lot more sense than to change the legislation just because the rest of the country is saying you should have a change of legislation because everybody is pointing to the Northwest Territories. So just for the sake of it, we're going to change it.

To some of the things that David mentioned about the harness and stuff, this thing is being done in such a rush because the government is going to be done pretty soon, there's going to be elections. Just for the sake of doing something for the rest of the country to act irrationally, people need to think this through. We need to continue to do what's right for the community.

We love our dogs. When I was a younger guy, I used to get pups for our kids and they'd go out and play with them. We'd go out and tie them up. We'd take them out the next day and play with them. Then after a couple of times, you know, they got sick and something happened to them and we had to put them down and then even I cried, my kids cried.

Something else too David mentioned on the vet to come in and put them down. We, as a municipality, we can't, I don't think we have the money for that. I think we need to think this legislation through and we need to go through the motions instead of trying to rush things. I think we should take a step back and take a look at this and see what we're getting ourselves into. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Mayor Storr. Certainly for the spay and neutering program is something we have heard repeatedly at our other public hearings and it's something we will take forward to the government. I know in the Sahtu, they have a program where they get, I believe it's the University of Calgary veterinary medicine, some fourth year students come up and they stay with local families and they have a spay and neuter program that is quite successful in the Sahtu. So as a government, maybe we should be looking at a more meaningful way at getting a spay and neuter program in all the regions in the Northwest Territories. I think that would go a long way.

The amendments, Mayor Storr, to the *Dog Act*, I don't believe we're rushing them through. The *Dog Act* itself is over 50 years old. These amendments are much needed. For example, the fines under the existing *Dog Act* are \$25. That is woefully inadequate. We need to increase the fines to a much more substantive number. The proposed amounts of \$5,000 and \$10,000 get us there. So these amendments need to be moving forward.

We are getting out, speaking to the public. I'm getting the public's input on the amendments and that's why we are in Inuvik tonight. That's why we were in Hay River.

That's why we are conducting public hearings. We want to listen and we want to get input from the public and make sure the amendments that go forward are the best ones we can put forward and the best piece of legislation that we can get at this time. Believe me that when the comprehensive animal protection act does see the light of day, it will be worked on and it will be the best piece of legislation that we can have here and hopefully it comes in early on in the life of the next government so we have some time to work on it and get it in place. I'm not sure, David, did you have anything that you wanted to discuss with the mayor?

**MR. KRUTKO:** Billy, in regard to your comments, municipalities, even as government like I mentioned, the information I got from the MLA in Deh Cho in Fort Providence when he was the mayor, they were spending like \$40,000 just to bring the veterinarian in because they decided to not use traditional practices and bring in a veterinarian.

I think under this legislation the way it reads and if you remove that clause where right now you operate your dog bylaw by way of your local legislation, and again it is a bylaw, you can amend it. It has been in place. You hire a dog officer and how you handle them and how many days you hold them for.

Under this existing legislation, if you become the caretaker, if you pick up a dog as a bylaw officer, the responsibility will rely on the municipality. You're going to be responsible for feeding, watering the dog, providing shelter. Also there's got to be ventilation, it has to have enough space. Also you have to ensure that the protection with regard to heat and cold... For me that is scary. Heat and cold for me means you either have to have something that is ventilated because it's too hot outside or have an air conditioned facility or in the case of cold, you have to have these dogs in a warm environment.

Also the other aspect deals with the whole area of care if the dog is sick or hurt. You, at that point, will have to bring in a veterinarian. This legislation doesn't just affect the individual that owns the dog, it also has an effect on the municipal government when you carry out this responsibility. As soon as you take ownership of that dog, you are classified as a caretaker. That's the way this legislation reads. I think people have to realize you have a bylaw. That is the difference I have between the way people read this and what this legislation does. Right now you have a local system in place that has function in our communities for years with regard to how you deal with dogs. You have a dog bylaw. If that is in place, that will continue if we keep the clause that talks about local practices and traditions.

So do you have any of these elements or responsibilities? Are you able to take those on if you were obligated under this legislation to do so? Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mr. Krutko. Mayor Storr.

**MAYOR STORR:** No, I just wanted a chance to respond to Chair Ramsay's comments about the legislation being 50 years old. It may be 50 years old, but when you start changing it in the last, I don't know how long you've been talking about changing it, that

seems to me like you're rushing it. You've had 50 years to look at the thing. I think people need a little time. I think communities need time to see exactly how this is going to affect the communities. I don't think somebody wakes up somebody, we need to change this, we are going out of office in two months.

I think we need to put some heavy thought into this, because it may be something that is going to be around for another 50 years maybe. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you, Mayor Storr. We've got one more speaker on the list this evening and that's William Koe, Chief of Tetlit Gwich'in. Chief Koe.

### **Presentation by Tetlit Gwich'in Nation**

**CHIEF KOE:** My name is William Koe, I'm chief in McPherson. Can you hear me?

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Yeah.

**CHIEF KOE:** Oh. As far back as I can remember, my parents had dogs. My grandfather had dog teams and we used them for travelling. We travelled with them about 40 miles out of town from Fort McPherson down the Peel. We travelled many times and we used them for travelling and hunting. We also used them for travelling. Today I've got two brothers, one is 67 the other is 61, and they still have dog teams. They've still got about eight or nine dogs. My brother told me it's fall, we have to use them again. They have to use them for the trap line because there's so much water they can't use skidoos. So you can see, traditionally we are still using our dog teams. We are still travelling out on the land.

So in this regard, in our tradition, that's how we use dogs. I was watching on TV tonight, these guys are driving guys and they said that's our partners, they're the ones that keep us alive, is dogs. That's how we worked many years ago and we still did that in 1970, 1980. My brothers still have dogs. There are a lot of dog teams in McPherson. I don't know why the committee here hasn't gone to the communities where most of the dogs are and all the mushers are. Our people take good care of their life because those dogs are just like partners to them. They are their best friends. They train them, they teach them, they do things like that with them. When they travel, they know how to handle those dogs and they know how to talk to the dogs just like you're talking to your own brother, your own friend, you know?

This is very important to us, because if you talk about the stress, tying up a dog for 10 years, that's just stress when he's got to run around a stick every day and smell urine and everything like that. Nobody cleans it up. That's stress. When you let your dogs go and they get exercise, they feel good. That's just like us. Later on, we get heavy and stressed up and everything like that, but if we get exercise, we feel good. It's very important.

You've got to define tradition. I heard the other day somebody saying he can't define tradition. But if you lived on the land all your life, you'll find tradition pretty fast. Our people hunt with them. They hunt caribou. They went to the mountains, many miles. They come back. In spring they go out and trap. They stop at every trap. They know how to work with them.

Those dogs were working dogs from the time they're small, they raise them up. You guys have to seriously look at the locals in the community, how they use their dogs. We've got a bylaw in McPherson that you're only allowed three dogs in the community. If you've got three dogs, you're okay. If you're past that, then we look at the situation. But the traditional dogs have to be outside the community. So my brother keeps his dogs at the river and he tends them every day. He's downriver. We're just about a mile from McPherson and he has them not far from the community just walking distance down the hill out of the way, so they don't interrupt anybody. He drives them out so they can get their exercise and he runs them and he keeps them clean all the time. He keeps their places clean. He's got nice houses for them and they've always got pails to clean them out all the time so they'll be healthy, you know?

So all these things have to be taken into consideration, especially in terms of tradition, locals, stress. Where are we going to get a veterinarian in in Fort McPherson? Our hamlet can't afford it, our people can't afford it, you know? But again we pay for our dogs. I know what these guys talk about when they talk. I know all the dog mushers. I know how they look up to their dogs. I've seen them and I help my friend once in awhile. He takes beautiful care of them, you know?

Yesterday...(inaudible)...yelling at me. I thought he was going to grab me, you know? So how do you determine pet dogs versus traditional dogs, local dogs, you know? So I just want to raise that. At the same time, I think we've got to have more time for this legislation. Don't try to rush it just because of the election. I hope you're not all in a hurry to get elected again, you know?

Seriously, let's take serious thought about this. Maybe down that way they don't take good care of their dogs. Up here, a lot of people take good care of their dogs. We've heard of it in Yellowknife. Those people who have 50 or 60 dogs, they spend hours and hours looking after them.

I just want to thank you. Mahsi cho and I'm going to tell you I'm going to give this to my brother and I'm sure he's going to look at it and he's going to respond because he's got a lot of dogs. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much. We really appreciate your comments and your time. We've got a couple more speakers that wanted to join us. We've got some time left. We're going to go now to Peter Ross, he's the bylaw officer in Tsiigehtchic. Peter.

### **Presentation by Tsiigehtchic Bylaw Officer**

**MR. ROSS:** Thank you, Mr. Ramsay. I'm the bylaw officer in Tsiigehtchic for the last three years and a lot of my dealings are with loose dogs and I would like to see a program, a neutering program, you know, to control these dogs. I'm a person that grew up on the land too and I really love dogs. Sometimes when I have to shoot a dog, it takes a hell of a lot out of me. It's pretty hard.

We don't have an incinerator in the community to dispose of a dog. We can't afford that. I'd like to see a vet come to Tsiigehtchic to put dogs away more humanely. But to shoot a dog, you know, that's a very hard thing for a traditional person to do, because that dog is your partner whether it's somebody else's dog, it still really takes a hell of a lot out of a person. We can't afford a lot of these luxuries that Inuvik can afford or the larger urban centres like Yellowknife, Hay River.

The problem lies, I see Hay River, I don't think any person should have more... I think it was 103 dogs or something. That shouldn't be allowed. In our bylaws, Chief Koe said their bylaw in the community is no more than three dogs in the yard. I think that should be even lower. I got three dogs. I got a little pup there, he looks like a little owl. He's my best friend. He comes in the house, he knows where he's got to lay for the night. He doesn't run around all over the place. They're well trained. You know, you look after those dogs and they're just like kids.

Changing this legislation, this whole thing here, I think you guys should take your time on it. It took 50 year to get here. Let's look at this until everybody understands it, all the dog owners understand what our government is trying to legislate in the new *Dog Act*.

Once again, I'll say to put a dog away is the hardest job for a bylaw officer to do. It's no fun when you take a dog out to the dump. Then the owner goes out there and a kid goes out there and sees his pet dog out in the dump. Who gets the flack for it? The bylaw officer. So that's what I'd like to say. Just take your time on it. Don't rush something like this, because there's a lot of dog lovers in the country. Traditionally, traditional teams, people look after their dogs good. They call a dog in distress. I've seen dogs tied up for years in the same spot. They run around their pole. That's the only exercise they get. But as a dog owner, my dogs go with me, too, whenever I travel. They get their exercise. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much for sharing that with us, Peter. We've got a couple of other people that we've added to the list of speakers. I'm going to go to Mayor Ray Ruben from Paulatuk.

### **Presentation by Mayor of Paulatuk**

**MAYOR RUBEN:** Thank you, Chair Ramsay, Member Krutko. Good evening everybody. I apologize; I came a little unprepared. I wasn't sure how the flow or what the flow of the discussions were going to be on. Thank you for notifying us yesterday.

I'll speak first on my thoughts as a mayor for the hamlet. If we are to be made to be responsible or to erect shelters and that, the obvious is we are going to need funding. I understand the treatment of dogs is expensive. Bringing them out to the small communities flying alone, you realize it is expensive. So funding is going to become a major aspect of any processes of giving us more responsibility.

On the other end of things, I'm also a member of our aboriginal group and I've been hearing a lot of good things on both ends. I think we can all agree in terms of abuse, you paint some pretty gory pictures and I agree they are abuse to animals. In thinking on that end of things, I also owned a dog team as a teenager and I know what you mean when you say you love your team. Growing up, that's what we used. Without the dogs, we couldn't survive. We depended on the dogs or we couldn't survive at that time.

I was thinking a lot of things while I was sitting. Each time somebody spoke, a newsflash came on and I'm sorry I didn't have a pen to take notes, so bear with me. I'll say as much as I can remember.

One of the things that I think that Chief Blake had mentioned was being biased in what animals you look at. We struggle as a community to deal with just that. To a certain degree the use of the value of the dogs are changing. I don't own a dog team anymore, I do have a skidoo, but I do have a dog. I need that dog for the camp. It's a working dog. I don't treat it as a pet. It's not allowed in the house, he's got his own station. We take it for runs. In the springtime when we go out, he's running, following us. And they know, like a dog team, they know when they're going to go. The dogs know when they're going to do something. They're jumping, screaming and hollering. They want to go.

I remember as a young boy before we had skidoos, we knew when the men were going to go out hunting. All the dogs screaming and hollering, they want to go. I want to use some examples, as I heard, in saying how much we have that relationship with the dogs. I think somebody used a child as an example. The closest thing I can think of is we had an RCMP member with two dogs, two German shepherds. He was taking them out for a run and he accidentally ran over one of them, and he wasn't sure what to do. He came into town and picked me up and asked me if I could help him. He couldn't put the dog down. He asked me to do that. I saw how badly he felt because he really loved his dogs. The good end of that story is we didn't end up putting it down. I advised him to bring it home, keep it for a couple of weeks and see what happens, because the dog was still moving. After about three weeks it was up and running again, so a good end to that story. But for that one I use as closely as I can how much we loved our dogs.

We've got some gory stories way back when we had to survive. I know one time conditions were pretty bad for a long time and we couldn't get enough food. The dogs were hungry, you know, and we couldn't find anything. So we had to find one of the weakest ones, put it down and feed the other dogs. As gory as that, we had to do what we had to do back then. It was not easy. I remember more than a few occasions that they had to put a dog down.



Again, going back to the smaller communities and how we look at dogs, we know in the small communities whose dog is whose. We're lucky. Our bylaw officer usually goes, when dogs are running at large, they know whose dog that is. He's not going to grab it and put it down. We have to force him because we had a few biting incidents. It's not safe for the kids. But we deal with that every day and how we deal with our dog issues.

We know, again, like the other people, which are working dogs. I know the value is the same. You love your dogs whether it's a pet or a working dog, but that working dog means more in terms of livelihood, traditional lifestyle to that person than a pet. I had a pet and I had a dog team. I relied more on the dog team than I did on the pet. I'm not saying having a pet is any less in terms of value than your team, the relationship, but I'm trying to stress the importance of a working dog team and how you treat that team.

The dog team I had ran at large, there were seven dogs. You know what I called them? Puppy. Come running to me and I'd walk all over town. I'd go and visit somewhere, they'd wait outside and walk me back home. We had that relationship with the dogs. How you legislate, how you change the legislation, consider this. I agree that there may be a couple of grey areas in terms of what a traditional lifestyle is. Maybe what should happen is the people who know the proper traditions and how you raise a team versus a pet. It takes a lot more work and a lot more motivation, will, to raise a team. It's not something you do every second day. It's something you do every day.

I went out on a couple of bear hunts and I had to take care of the dog team. It's a lot of work. You feed them every day, make sure they are watered, they're clean. It's a lot of work to maintain the team.

I think maybe I should leave it at that. I'm losing my train of thought. Thank you for the time.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Mayor Ruben, for your comments. David.

**MR. KRUTKO:** I would just like to thank Mayor Ruben also, Mr. Koe and other presenters. All the publicity seems to be around this clause in the agreement in regards to local and traditional practices. Most of the presenters here, if you didn't get the message that this is part of the culture and history of the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in in this region. Those dogs are what people were able to strive and survive on. Inuit dogs are known for basic survival over a long period of time.

One of the clauses in here that's going to be an issue is how people interpret traditional and local practices. We all have local bylaws. I know Mr. Koe talked about a couple of incidents. I grew up in Fort McPherson all my life. I was also a dog officer. I had to put a few dogs down in my day too. I think that people don't realize we have bylaws that have been around longer than some communities in the Northwest Territories. Those bylaws are developed through the community process of amending your bylaws, implementing your bylaw. The way people interpret the cultural aspect and traditional cultures, people still, like Mr. Koe mentioned his brother still runs dogs. We've got people visiting Fort

McPherson from Old Crow coming over with dog teams still today. That tradition is part of who you are. You mentioned the thing with regard to the polar bear hunts. Most of them are done basically with dog teams along the coastal communities. They still depend on dog teams to carry out that activity.

One thing that I'm very much afraid of is how are people going to interpret local and traditional practices? I mean most people that travel in the Delta, you go past somebody's fish camp in the summertime and in most cases you will see a dog running either along the shore, they're tied up along the coastline. Most people, if there are no human beings there, these dogs are basically strays and no one is looking after them.

People in the past, the reason they tie them down the shorelines or coastline is because they have access to water. They have access to fish because in most cases that's where your fish nets are. That part of our tradition, that's the thing that scares me, is I'm getting lots of fan mail from people in southern Canada from Toronto, Ontario, Victoria, you name it, I'm on the top of their list because I made the comment that traditional lifestyles or traditional practices are going the way of the Google bird because people thought they were doing the right thing and destroyed cultures. That's the way I read this. If you take that out, I know Mr. Ramsay and his boys from Yellowknife, they have their views. This legislation wouldn't be where it is today if that wording wasn't in there. All the MLAs that represent aboriginal people in the Legislative Assembly demanded that this wording be put in there because we are different because of where we live. We have 33 communities in the Northwest Territories. Out of that, 10 of them don't have police officers. Thirty percent of our communities won't have the capacity to implement the responsibility of the RCMP in those communities because we don't have RCMP in those communities. I think it's important that those people that are going to implement this legislation have to be trained and also given cultural awareness courses to understand there's a cultural component to this legislation.

I think that is the issue for myself and I know the other Members who represent most of the aboriginal communities and the outlying ridings, and I was hoping Mr. Jacobson would be here because he's going to say the same thing. I think it's important for people to understand that we have seen what groups can do in the world regardless of whether it's Greenpeace and what they've done to our trapping culture and our trapping communities. They almost destroyed that. We've seen what they've done with regard to the Inuit seal hunting which is going on right today.

So when people say it's cruel to have aboriginal cultural practices, those are not just cultural practices, those are survival tools that people have survived with for thousands of years in the North.

We just had a celebration in Fort McPherson, it wasn't much by way of air time but the RCMP's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary where we lost four officers in the famous lost patrol. They survived 58 days in the wilderness. If it wasn't for their dogs, they'd probably... Again, they came to a point in which they ended up having to eat their dogs. They had to feed their dogs to...(inaudible)... That is documented history. We have books on the history of the Northwest Territories and everything that is done from the RCMP in the North and

settling into northern Canada and becoming part of the Canadian society and because of sovereignty and everything else, but it was the Inuit dogs that were able to sustain those people in those communities. We've heard what they've done, where they actually destroyed all the dog teams so those people wouldn't leave their communities.

A lot of people say they can't translate what we mean by traditional practices, but the people that live it and the people that present it here today, whether it's a dog musher or a person who has had dog teams or communities that have depended on dogs, one of the practices that the communities have always had is a protection measure for our communities. We've got wolves, bears and other predators coming into our communities and because the dogs are around our communities, that is our first line of defence. That is a traditional way the people have been able to sustain that type of tradition. People say how come you've got all these dogs tied around your communities or around the coastline or whatnot. That's when the polar bears come in or a wolf or bear comes into your community, they usually will start barking and they won't stop barking because they are making you aware.

For those people that say how can you measure traditional practices or local practices, you're measuring a society that's been here for 10,000 years. If you don't understand that this was basically a survival tool or survival kit that people have to live on to sustain themselves in the Northwest Territories, northern Canada. If this clause is removed, I know you're going to have an outcry in the Northwest Territories.

For me, we have means of making amendments. Yes, we do have means of motion and legislation. Again, people know I can talk, and I can talk to this bill for three days if I have to and it ain't going to go nowhere. We have to find that balance. It's important that we do increase the penalties for cruelty to animals and how people basically treat their animals, but it's important that we realize it's got to be measured with regard to how an individual in the community and Granny who is attached to a dog that does not want to put it down, you know it's in distress because it's probably 16 years old. That's the only pet they've ever had. That's the only companion most of them had in their communities, is an animal or a dog. Because the dog is in distress, you charge Granny? Under this legislation, you can. If you can show that that dog is suffering from old age or has a bone disease or some other ailment, under this legislation if you can show that that dog is in distress, you have to charge that individual.

So I think it's important to read exactly what we have in place, but more important how it's going to be implemented. I'm running out of time.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Yeah, I forgot to hit the clock on you. Obviously David and I and other members of our committee are going to have a thorough debate and discussion specifically on that clause. I just wanted to say, and I don't want to debate this with David here this evening, we're here to listen to you guys, but in my view these amendments aren't out to take away any cultural component of aspect of anybody's lives. It's not targeting mushers. I represent a riding, Kam Lake, it's home to the most, they call them athletes, dog yards and mushers in the Northwest Territories. I've got a lot of constituents who are dog mushers. This does not target dog mushers and I can't

be more clear about that. This is a grey area and we've heard not just tonight, but we've heard from other people, there is no clear definition on what traditional or locally accepted practices are and in my mind there never could be a clear definition. It's wide open to interpretation and if it's wide open to interpretation, should it be in there? I don't think it should be in there. If you can drive a truck through it, it shouldn't be there. If you can neglect or abuse animals through that, it shouldn't be there. As long as you are in accordance with the legislation, you've got nothing to worry about, period. That's the debate that David and I and our colleagues are going to have undoubtedly.

We're getting close to nine o'clock, sorry about that. I didn't want to get into a debate with my colleague, but we've got two other speakers we want to get to, Marie-Anick Elie. I hope I said that right.

### **Presentation by Ms. Marie-Anick Elie**

**MS. ELIE:** Oui. I just wanted to respond to a question from David earlier in regard to the point on public safety...(inaudible)...on dog harnesses. I do believe that that section should be completely abolished for a few reasons. One, it says no person shall leave a dog in harnesses. I don't understand what "leave" means. Is that a duration of any...or is it running the dog with a harness? To me it doesn't make any sense. The thing I think is wrong in that section is no dog musher would ever run a dog with a muzzle because a dog cannot breathe properly with a muzzle, so that actually would be mistreating the dog to actually run the dog with a muzzle.

On point (e), it says that youth under the age of 16 can run the dogs in harness. So that means Arctic Winter Games, for example, wouldn't be able to have dog mushing as an event in their activities. So I don't see any issue with dogs in harnesses and why it should be a public safety issue.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you.

**MR. KRUTKO:** I'd like to thank you for that, Marie, because the way I read it, it does put a restraint on junior mushers. We do have a lot of good young mushers in the Northwest Territories, but if they are under 16, technically they can't drive a dog team. The same thing with the muzzling thing. That's why I raised it. That section, if it goes forward, it will have implications on dog mushers. It will have implications on the whole area. Again it's a similar clause which talks about dogs running at large. Basically you have to have them either on a leash, or in the case of a harness, you have to muzzle them. Again, that's why I raised it earlier when Herb was talking, because I think as dog mushers, this will have an implication on you if it goes forward the way it's worded. Again, there is a possibility of getting more input from the mushers association here in Inuvik or elsewhere and other mushers throughout the Territories. I think you should take a position on this, either amend it or suggest wording that we can look at, because it will have an implication on what you guys do by way of mushing. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thanks, David. That harness section that is in the existing *Dog Act* as it stands today, moving forward maybe we can suggest different wording to

the government and tighten that up, as I said earlier. We can work with the mushers in the Northwest Territories to do that. We had Grant Beck at our public hearing in Yellowknife, too, and he talked a lot about education, educating the public. That's a good thing to be doing. I know he does a lot of that and I'm sure the mushers here in the Beaufort-Delta do as well. Next on the list tonight, and our final speaker, is Richard Gordon.

### **Presentation by Mr. Richard Gordon**

**MR. GORDON:** Good evening. I wasn't going to come tonight, but I just got a pup a few minutes ago. This debate, like you guys say, it's been there 50 years or so, whatever. I think just listen to everybody's concern tonight, we've got another 50 years more to work on this to satisfy everybody's need. In traditional ways, these bylaws, as I was reading them and looking at them, were built way back when the communities were under community law, not under hamlets or anything like that. So they can go under those and people were really floating back into the communities. We had to control traditional dogs within the community boundaries. So you've got to reflect back. Today, what are traditional values in the communities? You know, we're losing our traditional culture as fast as laws are written today. We're fighting to keep our traditional lifestyle going out there on the land.

Paulatuk was mentioned and now people use skidoos and dogs are trained to help on the hunting trails. There are a few families that do that. As a person, I saw in the community, I lived in Aklavik and sat in the community too and we heard a lot of complaints coming in from the communities about loose dogs and how the municipal government is going to handle this. Sure, we have our own bylaws in the communities. I think in this review, rather than rush it and trying to please one's election or future politics of doggies, I think we have to take our time and reflect back on to where we're going.

Are we going to use traditional dogs versus mushers? We have to find the definition, because to me I see more mushers out there who are trained more than traditional values today because they are brought up in a different style of life. They're not made for the heavy work. They're not made for that hunting out on the land. They're made for a certain breed is to run. They are built for long distance running.

I was raised with a dog team. My father and mother brought us up on a dog team. Yes, we had to do the same thing as Herb said. We had to go out there and greet our parents when they came into town, hook up the dogs, prepare the food for them and feed them. They were your key to the outdoors.

Today, what do we do? We have to have a job to have a key to the outdoors because we need the gas to get out there. We have to pay for it. Back then, traditional way of life is we had to have the animals to survive. A traditional dog team can be my definition, and when I read harness, is the ones that are made the old ways with the bells on the back and they are in one line. To me that's tradition in the Delta. You see a traditional dog team coming down the trail, you are going to pull over and get out of the road

because they're probably going to have a load of fish, a load of wood, stuff like that. How many times now do we go out on the land and stop and pull over for a traditional dog team coming through the trails? No, we don't. The dog mushers, they're on the open road because their style of running dogs is different from the traditional way of harness where you have two dogs beside each other.

So we have to really define those when we sit down and amend these laws to make it work for everybody. Not just for one group or one person or one's feeling for, southern feelings, whatever. We have to. Our culture is changing, our world is changing. We're going to have more Southerners coming into our area. Are we going to stand back and let them change the laws because this is the way they see it down south? We have to do that. We can't just do this in three months. It may take a few more years, but jeeper's sakes, it's going to be the community. We're here as one group, but there are six, seven, eight communities out there that have to deal with these problems day after day after day at that community level. They have their own bylaws. Do their bylaws reflect what is going to be in here? They will have to go back and do that too.

So, yeah, there is a lot of work to be done yet. If it's going to cost money to change it, so be it. Same thing. I didn't go out there and traditionally shoot a caribou, harvest it and carry it out, whatever, but to go and take my dog down to a dump area or an area that I have to destroy it, I can't do that too, because our culture, our tradition has changed in cruelty to animals because we read about it, we are understanding of it.

So what we are going to debate today is just a start of a paragraph to a chapter. We have to go out there and listen to each community, each individual, because I know as a person sitting on community government, I heard that mother cry about the dog across the street that is running around in that circle when you're walking down and he's just jumping at you. I'm scared to walk down by that chain, what happens? But nobody does anything about it because they don't understand what's in there, understand what their bylaws are in the communities. We have to make sure we understand that to make this work, because we're not going to come back here in another five years or whatever. If we're going to do that, then we should put in here too that this thing should be visited every five to 10 years, not 50 years later.

So I think there's a lot of work to be done yet. I think if there's going to be any amendments and changes to the dog bylaws and our government, the NWT and the federal government has to be ready to put the funds forward, because they are going to be talking about incinerators or humane ways of destroying a dog. That money has to be upfront. If you are going to make changes, you have to make changes to reflect all those. You can't just do it for one side and one side, we'll have bickering in the middle. Everybody has to gain from this. It's 50 years old. Well, let's make it 50 years young and ready for everybody to use today, tomorrow and in the future.

**CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay):** Thank you very much, Mr. Gordon. For information how we got to this stage, there have been a number of Members who have been asking the government, since this government was elected three years ago, to get its act together.

Pertaining to the amendments to the *Dog Act* and the comprehensive animal protection act, the government has dragged its feet on it, to be honest with you. That's why it's here. That's why it's at the stage it's at. That's why there's an election in eight months. It is what it is. We are dealing with it now and we are going to try to listen and take under advisement everything we hear at these meetings. This is part of the public hearing process. We get out to communities we listen to what people have to say and we'll go back and deliberate and make a report to the government on what we heard. That's the process that we are under and we will try to do our best. That's all we can do is our best.

Again, we don't have anybody else on the list of speakers. It's ten after nine already. I just wanted to close by thanking all of the presenters we had here this evening. This issue is an emotional one for many people. In the almost eight years I've been a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I've never had as much e-mail or phone traffic on any one item as I have on the amendments to this *Dog Act*. People take it very seriously and obviously, judging by what we heard here this evening, this is a big topic here in the Beaufort-Delta as well, a big issue for folks. We take that seriously. Again, I wanted to thank you very much for your time this evening. I know your time is very valuable so I appreciate you sharing the better part of your evening with us and wish you well. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT