



Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure

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

February 10, 2011
Fort Smith, 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. Jackie Jacobson, MLA Nunakput, Deputy Chair
Mr. Bob Bromley, MLA Weledeh

Alternate Members

Mr. Kevin Menicoche, MLA Nahendeh

Witnesses

Ms. Lorraine Armstrong
Mr. Kevin Antoniak
Mr. Dwade Hawley, Fort Smith Animal Society
Mr. Sholto Douglas
Ms. Yvonne Champagne
Ms. Geri Ruzicka
Ms. April Alexander
Mr. Ryan Bourque
Ms. Chris Esser
Mr. Joe Paulette

Committee Staff

Ms. Jennifer Knowlan, Committee Clerk
Ms. Alicia Tumchewics, Committee Researcher

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8:00 p.m.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. David Ramsay): Good evening, everybody. Can everybody hear me alright? I'll stand up then, I guess.

Good evening, everybody. I'd like to welcome everybody to our public hearing on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. The first order of business we're going to do tonight is we're going to have our colleague Mr. Menicoche, MLA for Nahendeh, say a quick prayer for us.

---Prayer

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Kevin. I'm going to begin the meeting by saying it's a pleasure to be back in Fort Smith. We don't get a chance to get down here too often. It's nice to see some familiar faces in the audience here tonight.

I'll begin by introducing the committee members that we have with us this evening. To my left here is Mr. Jackie Jacobson. Jackie is the MLA for Nunakput. He's also the deputy chair of the committee. Next to Jackie is Mr. Bob Bromley. Bob is the MLA for Weledeh. On my far left is Ms. Alicia Tumchewics. She is our committee researcher. To my far right is Ms. Jennifer Knowlan. She is our committee clerk. She's the lady you'll need to talk to if you want to get on the list to present to the committee this evening. My colleague here Mr. Kevin Menicoche, as I introduced earlier, is the MLA for Nahendeh and a committee alternate. We're happy to have him with us tonight.

Today the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure is holding its fifth and final public hearing on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. If you're looking for copies of the bill, they're on the back table as well as a plain language summary of the bill. I'd ask you to please help yourself to those. There's also tea and coffee located on the back table. Please help yourself to that as well.

This is our fifth public hearing. We've been in Inuvik and Hay River and have had a couple of hearings in Yellowknife as well. We're happy to be in Fort Smith to hear from the public in Fort Smith on what they think of the amendments to the NWT *Dog Act*. We're looking forward to hearing what you have to say to us this evening.

We have two witnesses that are scheduled to make presentations to the committee tonight. Like I said earlier, if anybody else wants to make a presentation to the committee this evening I'd ask you to just raise your hand and Ms. Knowlan can come and get your name and we'll put you on the list.

With that, I think that there's one other thing I just wanted to mention. The role of the committee in having public hearings is for us to hear from the public on what you think. We're not necessarily here to answer questions. We'll do our best to answer questions, but what we'll do is take the input and comments that we receive from the public at our public hearings and we'll incorporate those into a report that we'll make to the Legislative Assembly when we report back on the findings of our public hearings. Again, I just wanted to let everybody know that we're here to listen to what the public has to say this evening.

With that, I think we'll move to our first witness that we have on our list tonight. That's Mr. Dave Poitras. I'd ask Dave to perhaps... How many mikes have we got, Jennifer? The two? Okay. How it will work is Jennifer... This one's not working? It's recording. We're recording all the proceedings of the meeting. I'm more worried about whether you can hear us or not, that's all. Maybe we'll ask the presenters if they can stand up. We'll get the microphone to them, and just remember that we are recording the meeting so if you can just speak clearly into the microphone and speak loudly so we can hear you. If you can stand up, that's even better, but if not, we'll do our best to hear you and hopefully everybody else in the room can hear you as well.

With that, we'll get the microphone to Mr. Poitras. Is Mr. Poitras here? He might not be here. Okay. There's half of our list. Oh, we have two more. The next on the list -- we'll go back to Mr. Poitras if he comes in late -- Lorraine Armstrong. Thanks, Lorraine.

Presentation by Ms. Lorraine Armstrong

MS. ARMSTRONG: One of the things I like about the proposed amendments is the changes to the fines. I like the fact that the maximum has been increased but also that there's the flexibility in terms of how much of a fine can be assessed.

The main thing I had a concern with is under Protection of Dogs, 3.(2), and similarly under Dogs in Distress, 4.(3). It's the second half of the sentence that reads "A person does not contravene subsection (1) by treating a dog in accordance with the regulations..." I have no problem with that. But then it says "...or in accordance with generally accepted local or traditional practices of dog care, use and management." That's vague. I think it will be difficult to enforce because it's open to interpretation.

One question that came to mind is what happens if you have a person from community A who has a certain tradition, they have one tradition, they move to community B and community B has a different tradition or a different local practice. Whose tradition do you follow? To me it would make more sense to clearly state what's acceptable and what's unacceptable and follow it.

I would also add that standards change over time. Something that may have been an accepted tradition 50 years or 100 years ago might no longer be accepted. As an example, if the housing authority or the band is building a new house, they don't provide housing that was traditional 50 years or 100 years ago. They're going to build a house that meets present-day standards.

My other point was that if you're not using the dog for traditional purposes, whatever they are, then should you not have to follow the same rules that everybody else does? Again, we have precedence for this, if you consider our fishing licences. People who fish as subsistence fishers, if they participate in a fishing derby they have to buy a recreational fishing licence.

Those are the main points. I'm afraid I write policy for my day job, so on 14.(1)(a) there's a typo.

---Laughter

It says "respecting the taking of dogs into custody", it should be "respecting the taking of dogs into custody." Thank you very much.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Lorraine. Over...(inaudible)...in other groups ...(inaudible)...more so than these amendments to the *Dog Act* and the two clauses that Ms. Armstrong spoke of are the clauses that were causing most people the concern. Certainly...(inaudible)...consideration and the overwhelming...(inaudible)... Did any of you guys have comments for Ms. Armstrong? Or we'll move on to...(inaudible)... Thank you very much, Ms. Armstrong.

The next presenter we have this evening is Kevin Antoniak. ...(inaudible)...

Presentation by Mr. Kevin Antoniak

MR. ANTONIAK: Yeah, my name is Kevin Antoniak. I'm a dog musher here. What I mean by dog musher, I don't race; I just travel by dog team. Between my wife and myself, probably in the last 30 years we've travelled over 25,000 miles by dog team around Fort Smith here. When you're talking about traditional users I guess I wonder, am I a traditional user? Because I'm white. But we're about the only people in the area here of one of the other few that we run into. There are very, very few people on the land with dog teams. We just don't understand; certainly around Fort Smith here, we just don't see people out. So then when you hear this traditional user concept, I just don't know where that's coming from. That's what I'd like to say. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much for that. ...(inaudible)...around the Territory. I know in my riding back in Yellowknife it's probably home to the most sled dogs in the Northwest Territories, Kam Lake. We've had Grant Beck, a five-time world champion, present at the public hearing in Yellowknife and I know the issue is out there. The proposed amendments aren't to target mushers in any way, shape or form, so I'm glad you provided the comments to us this evening and thank you very much for those. Did you guys have any comments? Okay.

All right. Next on our list of speakers we have Dwade Hawley.

Presentation by Fort Smith Animal Society

MR. HAWLEY: My name is Dwade Hawley. I'm with the Fort Smith Animal Society. You've already got my first submission, written submission to the group. This is a follow-up to the follow-up to the follow-up that we've gone through.

Okay, Section 3(2), traditional use, has to be eliminated. Abuse is abuse, neglect is neglect, distress is distress. I don't care how you're using your dogs; racing them, running them, couch potatoes, don't care. If you're abusing or neglecting or putting your dogs in a stress situation, you're guilty. There's no reason for that concept to even enter into what we have. It doesn't exist.

Also 4.3. brings up traditional use. So the two sections have to go.

Again, there seems to be a numbering error in the care of dogs. In custody it goes from 8.(1), 8.(2), 8.(3), then you have Disposition of Dogs in Custody starting to be numbered at 8.1. Now, as so often happens with government documents, they just go ahead and get published without getting proofread far enough. So that has to be effective.

Disposition of Dogs, 8.3.(1)(b), specifies three days. The present Town of Fort Smith bylaw states two days for unlicensed dogs and three days for licensed dogs. Which holds sway, the Town of Fort Smith bylaw or the *Dog Act*? If a municipality puts forth a bylaw that is stronger or more aggressive than the dog control act, which holds sway? Which is in force? If the penalties that a municipality puts forward are stronger than the act, which are in force, the municipal penalties or the penalties in the act? Can the penalties in a municipal act be higher than the dog control act? I ask these questions in that the Fort Smith dog control bylaw is up for review. These kinds of questions have to be answered before this occurs. It is clear that in areas with no municipal bylaw in force that the act will be in force, but when a municipal bylaw is in force, if it is less than the act, is the municipal bylaw in effect or the dog control act? That needs to be clarified under the law.

Offence and punishment. It must be shown that an offence occurs for each dog for each day of the offence that it will be levelled. There is an inequality under the act in that one day, one day, one dog being neglected, abused or in distress can bring the same fine as 50 dogs being under distress for 30 days. That's an inequality under the act. It has to be addressed and it has to be changed.

It must be made clear that the act allows for a lifetime ban of animal ownership on conviction. As it reads now it is not clear that a lifetime ban can be issued. It states, "...restraining...from having or continuing to have custody of dogs for such period of time as is specified by the court." One of those options has to be a lifetime ban. It must be mandatory that the courts consider a lifetime ban.

A very minor one, regulation 14.(1)(a), there's a typo; or there appears to be one. It says "or." Should this be "of"? I don't want to be nitpicky but when there is miswording in regulation, the whole act can become null and void.

We would urge the Legislative Assembly to undertake comprehensive animal protection legislation. That the *Dog Act* as it is going to be amended be only seen as an interim step. This is very, very important. We've been dealing with this *Dog Act* dating back probably to the early '60s. The last meaningful amendments were, what, 1985 to 1988? Somewhere in there. It has to change. Legislation and an act cannot sit for 30 years. Time marches on. It's time that the act got with it.

There should be some mechanism set in place when this act goes forward. How does it serve the public? There needs to be a real push to get the local bylaw enforcement officers, the RCMP, to lay charges under the *Dog Act*. That isn't happening now and we all know it. If you don't know how the act is being applied, if you don't monitor it, you don't know what it's doing. Is it doing anything? If charges aren't coming forth, the act might as well be tossed out the window. There should be a standard form and reporting structure, whether that's with local bylaw enforcement or the RCMP once a week, once a month, whatever, submit a report to somebody somewhere stating what they're doing under the act. Otherwise we all know they're not doing anything.

It has been stated that this act is proceeding too fast. I can't seem to understand how that's true. I really can't. This act was last amended in 1988. There's been a lot of input given to this. It is not just the public hearings of the last two months. The Fort Smith Animal Society has been involved in this bill for almost two years. It is not rushed. The amended act must come into force in the spring session of the Legislative Assembly. Time is passed to stamp out the title of the best place to be an animal abuser in Canada. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Dwade. I appreciate your comments. Again, a lot of what Mr. Hawley had to say we have heard from other individuals at our other public hearings.

Again I just wanted to address some of the concerns that Mr. Hawley had. My colleagues and I on the committee, we are proposing some amendments and there will be some amendments proposed to the government on how we move the amendments forward, the proposed amendments. I've gone on record, I know I'm the chair of the committee and I'm not supposed to step out of line in any way, shape or form, but I've gone on record as saying that clause 3.(2) and 4.(3) have absolutely no business being in the proposed amendments.

I've also gone on record as saying that the Northwest Territories needs comprehensive animal welfare or protection legislation brought in sooner rather than later. The government got caught, in my opinion, getting late into the life of their term. Many of us had been asking for amendments to the *Dog Act* and the comprehensive legislation on animal welfare. That never happened. So the government offered up the amendments to the *Dog Act* and I guess as a good first step or a step in the right direction those amendments are before us. If I have anything to do with it, and I do, those amendments will be passed sometime during the budget session here before the first week of March. It's going to take some stick-handling and some work with committee members. Not all committee members may share my enthusiasm on the removal of some clauses. There

might be some amendments brought forward on the floor of the House that will be debated by all Members, but I just wanted to let you know that we're live to the concerns that you brought up, Mr. Hawley.

Now to the paramountcy issue with municipal bylaws and the *Dog Act*, my understanding is when it comes to municipal bylaws they'll take precedence in the municipality. When it comes to fines that are levelled by the town or the municipality there can be charges laid under both pieces of legislation, the municipal legislation and the *Dog Act*, so it could be a double whammy for somebody that is found guilty under the municipal bylaw and the *Dog Act*. So that's the way I understand that working.

Also the committee, to address that, is looking at putting in an amendment to the proposed amendments which would address how we deal with municipal bylaws and respecting municipal bylaws where they're in place. It should really be up to the municipality. If they want to make things tougher, they make things tougher. There will be everything in between. I've seen everything in between. Some hamlets and communities in the Northwest Territories today have some very good dog bylaws in place. Some don't. I think what we need is a fix for everybody that's there, something that if abuse, neglect and cruelty is taking place that charges can be laid. Right now incidents happen in the Northwest Territories where the Crown can't pursue charges because really there's no chance of getting a conviction. We've got to change that and we've got to change it quick. Hopefully, as I said, by the first week of March hopefully the amendments will be passed by the Members of the 16th Assembly.

Mr. Menicoche is going to ask you a question, Mr. Hawley.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thanks a lot there, Mr. Chairman. The question is just an amendment to the *Dog Act* or else how heightened is the need for actual animal cruelty legislation is the question I'd like to ask. Thank you.

MR. HAWLEY: ...(inaudible)...

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Yes, I'll just speak a little bit louder...(inaudible)...Act is being amended because of some high-profile cases. The real issue, I think anyway from my perspective, is actually animal cruelty. The NWT does not have animal cruelty legislation. I was just wondering your thoughts on it. You've been with your society for a while. Have you been lobbying government, or what are your thoughts on animal cruelty legislation?

MR. HAWLEY: ...(inaudible)...legislation versus dog legislation. Right now I can go out and kick a cat to death and I can't be charged. You can't do nothing to me. I can wring the neck of a rabbit and hang it on a fence. You can't do nothing to me. There's a difference in what? Dogs got bigger eyes? We look at them differently? We can slaughter cows, we can slaughter reindeer. We can do it in a humane way. We can kill any animal we want in a humane way. Cruelty is cruelty and it starts where? In the home? Probably. It's very, very telling if you look at serial murderers, people with horrific

pasts in cruelty and offences. They usually start off abusing animals. If you catch them early, you might be able to stop it. Under the territorial law you don't stand a chance.

The *Dog Act* is one step. It's an interim step that is probably 30 years overdue in curtailing this kind of behaviour.

Chaining a dog to a metal post on two and a half feet long of chain and it sits there for the whole winter to the point it is frozen to the ground, it is surrounded by feces, urine, can't even reach its bowl on occasion, and dies being frozen to the ground. Guess what? It happens. It happens much more than we want to admit. If we don't look, we don't see. Times have changed.

When I was a child I went by dog team from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk. At the end of the day we would stop. Guess who got fed first? Guess who got watered first? The dogs. The dogs got treated first. The dogs saved your butt. What's happening now is not tradition. It's not even close. Traditionally dogs were revered. They were praised. Do you see what my dog can pull? Do you see how my dog can go? The lead dogs were taken into the house and given treats. Wheel dogs. Everything. They were precious to their owners. They certainly aren't now.

There's been a comment by a Member of the Legislative Assembly who said having a dog chained in my backyard is a connection to my tradition. I hate to say it, but if you need to chain a dog in your backyard to have a connection to your traditions, something is sadly missing. If I have to come back as a sled dog, I'd like to be one of Kevin's dogs.

---Laughter

You seen what those guys eat? I mean, they eat well. They're treated well. Beautifully.

Comprehensive legislation for all animals has to come forward and has to move forward. This is one interim step.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Dwade and Kevin. Thank you for your comments. Very well said. Next on our list we've got Mr. Sholto Douglas.

Presentation by Mr. Sholto Douglas

MR. DOUGLAS: Good evening. Welcome coming to Fort Smith. I'm a former dog musher. On occasion here in Fort Smith when the bylaw officer is not available and the RCMP doesn't want to do it I get to come to be the nasty guy that has to put dogs down because they're in distress.

You gotta open your ears. That's just the way I talk.

---Laughter

Anyways. I have to put dogs down sometimes and I don't like it. There should be something in this act here that just basically says to amend the *Dog Act*. I think it should

be the Dog Welfare Act. We're talking about the welfare of dogs. I was on the agreement International Humane Trap Standards representing the Northwest Territories where in the end we started with the ISO standard, the International Standards Organization, with the European Union, the European Commission. When it's time to vote on the animal/mammal trap standard for the agreement that took three countries, it took Canada, the United States, and Russia. We all worked together, did all our testing in Vegreville. The day came for the vote to put the standard in place whether we had it or not. I was the individual that stood on the floor for the Northwest Territories and took the vote. It was a successful vote.

One of the things that came up through that process is the word "suffering." Right across Canada, when I travelled, none of the Aboriginal languages have a word for "suffering." We have eight official languages in the Northwest Territories and a number of them are Aboriginal. So when we're going to be putting legislation forth I think you should look at the type of words that you're using and how we're going to come up with the definition so we can translate those into the other official languages that we have.

The main thing I think in this whole thing is that we're looking at something in terms of better care for dogs. Listening on the radio, it's a very broad spectrum that's come across to you guys in terms of what people perceive of where it should be and what the standards should be and where it should be at. The word "traditional" has come up. Some people's opinion tied somewhere with a little bit of spruce boughs. Somebody else -- I looked at another thing in here -- harnessed some of the sled dog races. It seems to be listed in here as abuse and cruelty. Some of the dogs in some of the races are not taken out of their harnesses. Okay? So you have to kind of, you know, it's the type of bedding that are used in those sled dog races. A lot of those guys and ladies have to bring straw and proper bedding otherwise they won't be able to race their dogs and stuff. So some of the things in that nature I think should be kind of put in here. The type of care that's expected.

The word "traditional," how do you come up with a definition? Is traditional having a bunch of sled dogs that are hybrid wolves and huskies? Because I've seen that. My dad got a dog right from between here and Fitzgerald, raised a team of dogs and dropped those dogs off in Behchoko, which was Fort Rae in the '50s; Fort McPherson; Tulita, which was Fort Norman; Fort Simpson. Those dogs became sled dogs. They were crosses. One of the guys that ended up with his dogs was Kevin's uncle Double A, Antoine Antoine.

The thing is those people... There are different ways of caring for dogs out on the land when you're travelling. You can't necessarily get straw here all the time. We import it. When you're out on the land you may not have enough room in your sleigh so you're going to use spruce or you have to come up with something else.

The big thing here I think in this legislation is the welfare of the dog. That's what we're talking about here. What should be the happy medium that we can all try to come to so at the end of the day those animals get the best care that they can. The state-of-the-art care, whether it's in the bush, when you're travelling, or when you're in town here, you

know, having a proper dog house and stuff is difficult to be out on the land when you're travelling. Those old guys in the old days made like a little teepee for their dogs. They put the spruce standing up, covered it with snow, put spruce on the inside, and when they got to an area where they had straw and that, or wild hay, they threw that in there. Okay? But it's not like that everywhere. You can only use what's available.

That's one of the things that come to mind for me, is here we are going to be making legislation that's supposed to be fair to everybody, but we're going to make something that's going to be set up in the community and there's still people that travel, like Kevin says, out on the land. Unless you're going to the same place all the time and doing that, you can set yourself up to build dog houses out there or you can put the proper bedding and everything that you need, food, everything that's there, you can transport it out there, but it's not always like that.

I don't know in terms of, we don't always have a vet here in Fort Smith, and Fort Smith is one of the bigger communities. When we had to vaccinate dogs years ago and the Department of Renewable Resources back then was delegated the responsibility and I as a renewable resources officer back then had to vaccinate all the dogs in Lutselk'e, all the dogs in Fort Res, and just about all the dogs here in Fort Smith. There's a lot of work in doing that, but there was only the one vaccine we used and it was for rabies. There are a number of other diseases and that out there that we didn't vaccinate for. In those communities they don't have somebody available.

The one thing they should look at is the euthanization of dogs, that some of these dogs have to be put down because accidents do happen, other things do happen. A decision is made. There should be something in place that there's a proper standard out there so that if the life of the dog has to be terminated, there should be a certain way to end up doing it, so that it's put in here, so that it's put in here so everybody understands it. It's an awful thing when somebody comes up to you and you know their parents and they come up to you with tears in their eyes and their little puppy dog there got hurt and it's paralyzed or something like that and nobody is around to be able to deal with it. A person like myself, the number of times that happened. It's not a very good feeling. We got to be able to set something up so that somebody can deal with it and have an organization or there has to be something in the legislation to deal with that.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Mr. Douglas. Nice to see you here. I appreciate your comments, and again some of the comments that you make, obviously, we have heard in other communities around the Territory. I especially wanted to mention, I know you talked about having to put dogs down and we want to make sure that there's an aspect to this that when that has to happen, it's done as humanely as possible. Hopefully at the end of this process that will be part of it as well.

Your talk of veterinarians in the Northwest Territories is something that we've heard everywhere we've gone, including in Yellowknife. There just isn't the level of veterinary services in many of our smaller communities. I know Fort Smith is a larger community and that's something that it's an issue that's live to the Regular Members of this House. I know just today in the Legislative Assembly Mr. Bromley got a motion passed, one

which I was very happy to second, that is going to try to instruct the Government of the Northwest Territories to purchase a seat at the University of Saskatchewan for an NWT resident to attend vet school, something the government gave up years ago. We're hoping to get the government back on side on allowing that to happen so that we can hopefully down the road to train and bring back home some veterinarians to the Northwest Territories so that they're in our communities and they can work with residents and dogs and animals back here in the NWT, because it's a big issue.

One very successful program is run in the Sahtu where students do come up. They're fourth-year vet students who come up from the University of Saskatchewan and they're billeted with local families. They get into the community and perform a lot of functions that a vet would take care of. They don't get paid for that service, it's part of their schooling. It's programs like that that we certainly need to look at expanding and maybe work with some other veterinary schools across the country to try to get some more fourth-year vets into some of the smaller communities so that that work can get done. It's necessary and needs to happen. That motion got passed today so we'll have to wait and see. The government doesn't always take the instruction of the Regular Members, but we'll see how that proceeds.

I know, Mr. Hawley, we've got you back on the list, sir, but I'm going to go to our next speaker right now and that's Yvonne Champagne. ...(inaudible)...Ms. Knowlan or if you put your hand...(inaudible)...we'll get Ms. Knowlan to come to you and get your name as well. I'd like to welcome you, Ms. Champagne.

Presentation by Ms. Yvonne Champagne

MS. CHAMPAGNE: ...(inaudible)...Fort Smith resident for the past 55 years. Before that, in my childhood, I lived in Fitzgerald. I grew up in Fitzgerald but the Paulette's took my land away. No.

---Laughter

Then we lived on the trap line. I was raised using dogs. Dogs were part of my life. But sometimes it really ticks me off to you don't want to know where, because when I see total strangers coming to my community and telling me what I should do with my dogs. I call my house my second kennel; a safe haven for dogs in Fort Smith. All the neighbourhood dogs come to my house to eat every evening. I give them a bed, because this gentleman here sometimes helps me and brings me straw to assist my adopted dogs.

In this proposed legislation I see a lot of faults. Number one, traditional dogs. That should be booted right out. I'm very frank. You probably don't know too much of me. Some of you may have met my partner, Karl Hoffman. I come out with things, what goes in my mind comes out the way it's supposed to be. I don't hold back.

And then this legislation, it has to be slow to make sure everyone understands it. There are a few factors in this proposal that don't mean anything. We are a Territory. How are you going to impose those laws?

We just learned recently in Hay River, like this old woman had over a hundred dogs and they were abused. Now, how long did it take people to see that? Recently big time, big shots, rich people in Vancouver when we had the winter Olympics they raised these dogs for these tourists. I don't think they deserved that; at least not in my eyes as a person that raises dogs. I still have dogs in the house. They slaughtered over a hundred dogs just to please the tourists. As far as I'm concerned, they can all go to hell. I wouldn't take my dogs out to be stressed. These are the things you have to watch.

Dog mushers. Like the Yukon Quest is number one on my list. That should be banned. If they want races, don't torture animals. It shouldn't be more than a 25-mile race. From Whitehorse to Anchorage, Alaska? What do they think they have? High-speed skidoos? If they want to race big time, hey, use machines, not dogs. This is outright abuse.

Many years going back, way back in the '70s, the '60s, we used to go to Yellowknife to watch the dog race. It was nice to see. People were very interested. But I seen a lot of abuse. And seemingly no one seen it. How come I was the only one to see it? Dogs were abused. I know this one guy tied his lead dog behind a truck exhaust to kill them. Now, is this a good way to do things? Yes, sometimes.

In this amendment or proposed legislation they have to also bring the vets in. Okay? Because we have a vet comes in once a month. Yes, it's good, but this man wants to be a millionaire overnight. We can't afford it. I took my dog, she had a growth on the side of her belly. Just to look at her was \$95. Is this man nuts? We need some middle... You know, not everyone can afford high vet prices. Yes, it's nice to see a vet. We take our animals there, they need shots. The guy in Yellowknife, I phone him. My dog had an infected tooth. He wanted me to take my dog over there. Can you imagine how much that would cost? These are the things you have to be careful of with this legislation.

It will take many meetings. I think we're going to tire you out from all the concerns we have from race dogs to pets to bush dogs. Everything has to be taken into consideration. The housing, the bedding for these animals in the wintertime. We have extreme temperatures, eh? So this has to be seriously looked at before this passes.

I wish to thank you and for my concerns that people hear me, but the dog mushers are still the ones I'm after, because I've seen many bad things. There's a dog musher here in Fort Smith. He used to take his dogs and put a choke rope on their neck to kill them. Now, is this kindness? This man should be a dog musher? No. he should be in jail.

So thank you very much.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Ms. Champagne. I appreciate your comments to us this evening. You know it's our job to ensure that at the end of the day fair and balanced legislation is put in place. We want to report back on what we heard, and certainly we'll incorporate your comments into our report that we present to the House. Once again I want to thank you for your words this evening and for being with us.

Next to speak we have a second round for Mr. Hawley. Hawley or Holy? Hawley. Like Buddy Holly.

MR. HAWLEY: ...(inaudible)...probably about the 12th for a lot of people in this room. After I made my written submission to the committee I don't know how it got out what I had written, but I got approached on the street. I was against dogs being run, I was against dog teams, I was against mushers, I was against racers, I was against all kinds of traditional use of dogs. That's the farthest thing from the truth. I'm against abuse or neglect of any animal, whether it's a dog or a cat or a bunny rabbit. I really can't disagree.

One of the problems I have is people want to define tradition. Sorry; ain't going to happen. A tradition is defined by what happens now. A hundred years ago it might have been a tradition. We all sat down and ate the dog. There are certain cultures I can go to in Edmonton or Calgary or Vancouver and sit down and eat the dog from the back porch. Doesn't happen. We're not going to do it here. We don't need to enshrine tradition. Get rid of it. If it's abuse, it's abuse.

Sholto Douglas brought up the fact that if you're out on the trail, something happens, you have to put your dog down. Under the amendments you're protected. Anything that you do in the best interest of your dog, believing that it's reasonable, you're protected. Shoot it, slit its throat, whatever you do, if that's best for the dog at that moment in time, you're protected. If there is no vet in Fort Smith at the time that an accident happens and a dog needs to be terminated, I'll do it or I know people that I can call that will do it. They'll do it as humanely as possible. They'll either shoot the dog at the back of the head right through the brain stem or they'll pith it. Pithing means taking a sharp object and pushing it into the very back base of the skull of the dog or any animal and it kills it instantaneously. I can tell you I've done it on the street with a pocketknife, because the RCMP won't shoot the dog lying in the ditch that's been run over by a car. So you take a knife, push it into the dog's brain, rattle around, the dog's dead. I can guarantee you that I remember every dog that I've done that to. I remember every dog that I've shot in the back of the head. I remember most of the dogs that I've been in attendance with when the vet put them down. It's not any nicer. It's just a little bit quieter.

There are things we can do and things we can't do. If you do what is best for the dog under the circumstances, you're protected by this act. It's perfectly legal to do whatever you're going to do. You're out mushing for five days, get caught in a storm, you want to bed your dogs down still in their harness? Nobody's going to prosecute you for that. You do what is best for the animal at the time and it's reasonable. The problem is you can't legislate reasonable. But if you get prosecuted, you can stand up and say, I did what I thought was reasonable. And I think anybody's going to walk.

Is there a happy medium? Yes, there is. They sell it in the local store. It's made by El Paso and it's called Happy Medium. Otherwise, when you're talking about dogs, cats, or anything else, there's no such thing. You do what you do while you can. It's time this got changed and done with. Talking has to quit. I'm bad enough for standing here and keeping it going.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much once again...(inaudible)...next on our list of speakers, we've got a few more people that we've added. There's Ms. Geri Ruzicka.

Presentation by Ms. Geri Ruzicka

MS. RUZICKA: My concern, I guess, relates to 8.1.(3), "An officer may destroy a dog taken into custody if he or she is of the opinion that the dog should be destroyed without delay for the safety of the public." Now, my concern is I have two small dogs and heaven forbid one of them got out and in fear, if they were approached, if they bit or made an aggressive move -- which would be unlike them -- and then they're taken out and destroyed, I think there should be a protocol put in place that is very specific to the situation and it takes more than just one person's opinion as to whether that dog should be destroyed. If it's licensed, if the dog is licensed, then the owner's input needs to be taken into consideration. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: ...(inaudible)...noted. Thank you. Next on our list of speakers we have April Alexander. I believe April had submitted a written submission as well. Thank you for that, April. I look forward to hearing you.

Presentation by Ms. April Alexander

MS. ALEXANDER: ...(inaudible)...moved to the community of Fort Simpson. I was pretty much, apart from a few cases that made the local northern media, oblivious to what was going on in a lot of small communities. Since I moved there in the summer, it started off with my neighbour's dog crying all the time. I realized, after watching -- after we got our stuff moved in -- and it wasn't just regular crying, she had no food and no water in the heat of the summer. I would give her water through the chain-link fence where she would drink a full 600 millilitre plus another half in a one to two-minute span. I eventually, she kept getting off her leash for other reasons and getting under my fence where I gave her food, of course. We ended up adopting here. They didn't want anything to do with her. They didn't. If my other neighbour, who is actively involved in a lot of the community's dog rescues, they were just going to take her out and shoot her. That's not an excuse, in my opinion. If you can't afford it, call the Yellowknife shelter. There are people who will help. There are people travelling all the time to all different communities. It could have gotten to a shelter. I've kind of grown to love her. She's a real pain in the butt.

I have a huge problem with the locally accepted practices, that clause. I know it's been said before. I know you've heard a lot about it. I'm probably just going to say a lot of the same things.

Since that, I've been involved in two other rescues; one involving one puppy that was abandoned on the highway in 47-below weather, no bigger than the size of my purse, just a baby. Luckily enough, it got picked up and with the help of my neighbour we got her a home in Kelowna, B.C., and now she's living the perfect dog life. Another rescue involved a family with a mother dog not spayed, had a litter of puppies, left outside. This dog lives in a concrete dugout. Its feces are a couple feet away. It's chained up. It lives its entire life out there. Most of its litter got taken by wolves in the night. There were problems with wolves. A lot of these dogs just live their lives on chains. They don't go anywhere. They can't get walked because there are people letting their dogs roam wild.

Nobody can really do much about it. People are afraid to walk their dogs. There are ones who want to walk them but they can't because they're afraid they're going to get bit. There were at least five people that were bit last summer.

The locally accepted practices is ridiculous, in my opinion. These two puppies that were left of this mother dog's litter were still being just nursed, no food, no frickin' water. We go and pick them up and they're, like, four pounds, skin and bones. You cannot pinch an inch off of them. Within less than two weeks they tripled their weight. They're now up to 12 and 15 pounds and they're going to get sent to Yellowknife and adopted out.

My neighbour is an amazing woman. She does this all the time. She has kennels loaded up in her backyard. She has dedicated her life to these animals that are just considered just dogs. Forty-seven below weather with these little horrible shacks that they live in, no straw, always outside. Tiny dogs. They're not equipped to live outside. They're not wolves anymore; they're domesticated. It's our responsibility to do what's right for them, to protect them. There has to be more education for dog owners; for anyone even considering getting a dog. I'm not trying to paint myself as a perfect pet owner. I've had to have my pets in the past adopted out because I found myself in a situation where I couldn't take care of them anymore. I couldn't live in a place that allowed dogs; whatever situation it was. I'm not trying to say that I am some angel but I didn't take them out back and shoot them. I didn't go and take them to the dump and slit their throats. I didn't take their puppies to the dump or starve them or whatever.

What is adequate food? What is adequate shelter? There's this huge grey area and there's nobody educating the public on this. So there's a huge belief that these dogs are meant to live outside their entire lives, that it's okay to just leave them on chains. Psychologically think of they're innocent. This can't be good. That it's suffering. They don't go anywhere. They don't do anything. No water. No food. They get let in. They get a bone thrown to them twice a week, maybe, at best. The bus driver was feeding the dog with those puppies. My neighbour had to call and harass. I took her over there. She didn't have a vehicle herself. Their excuse was we didn't have a vehicle. Well, I'm sure he found a way to go to the grocery store and feed himself.

These fines, in my opinion, it's a good step. They're not enough. I went to the police to report this, and he was sympathetic to my cry of help but it's the life of the dogs in the North. This is my home. This is where I'm from. Maybe not Fort Smith; I'm from Yellowknife born and raised. I love the North. I want to be proud of it. I am proud of it for so many reasons, but this is shameful in my opinion. A lot of what's going on and what has been going on I wish I knew sooner. I wish there was more that I could do. I wish I had been writing letters since the moment my vote counted.

Sorry. I'm just going to end it at that. I don't know what else to say.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, April. ...(inaudible)...appreciates your courage to stand up and tell us your story tonight and as well appreciates your written submission to the committee. I just want you to know that we are listening and that's why the amendments are going to be before the House. That's why...(inaudible)...vote on them

before the first week of March. Like I said, we'll get some legislation in place where charges can be laid, fines can be levelled against people who are committing abuse, cruelty and neglect against dogs in the Northwest Territories. We're moving there. Again I want to thank you.

We're going to go to our next speaker. We've got Ryan Bourque.

Presentation by Mr. Ryan Bourque

MR. BOURQUE: I'm a little nervous as well. My thing is about the traditional. Lumping all mushers into the traditional group is not right. I think that needs to be a class of its own. Instead of traditional, you need to make that a working class. Like Kevin, what he's doing with his dogs is considered working them. If you as an employer or anybody else in this room is an employer, if your employees, if you're treating them like crap, they can come against you and they have rights. I basically think those dogs need a committee or something, some kind of outline for working dogs, because traditional, well, what was done a hundred years ago, like you said, is not acceptable now. Work standards change, work acts change, people need protection, dogs need protection as well. What Kevin thinks is good for dogs might be overboard for what other people think and what he thinks is abuse some people might not think is abuse. You have to bring in a standard of will a dog work for you and how well are you treating it.

I guess, sorry, like I said, I'm nervous. What I'm saying is there has to be, to address the dog mushers part, is there a need to have a hundred dogs if you're mushing dogs? I don't know for sure. I'm just asking. But a hundred dogs seems a bit excessive no matter what you're doing or where you are. I'm not sure how many dogs Kevin has, but he uses his dogs, he runs his dogs. He's one person, though. These people in Yellowknife, I've seen one kennel in Yellowknife, I don't know who owns it, I'm not too sure what the name of it is, but they have over a hundred dogs sitting in Kam Lake. What for? Do they have a hundred dog mushers? Ten teams? Do they need that many dogs? And if they do, what for? Get them to prove to you why they have these dogs or need that many dogs, and also prove to you that they're keeping care of all these dogs.

In all breeds there are weight standards. You say there's no way to tell if a dog is in proper weight or proper shape. There are breed standards for Rottweilers, German shepherds, pugs, everything. A pug I think is about 20 pounds, 22 pounds. If a pug is 40 pounds, you know he's overweight. If he's 10 or 15 pounds, he's underweight. I mean, there are standards to dogs that can be followed to address the issues of abuse.

Temperature wise if you go to any breed to look up a breed, it will tell you flat out what the dogs, where they came from, what they were used for, and what they can handle or what their stresses are for at the time of working. Something like that needs to be put in place to address and save people like Kevin who are taking care of their good dogs and to correct the people that aren't.

Anyway, I'm kind of, like I said, I'm nervous. I hope I made sense. Thanks.

MR. RAMSAY: ...(inaudible)...did have a couple mushers come to a public hearing in Yellowknife and I represent a bunch of dog mushers that live in town...(inaudible)...close to a hundred dogs. I think nowadays they just breed dogs and sell dogs. In Yellowknife there's this Yellowknife Dog Trotters Association. ...(inaudible)...like I said, I think they have a tendency to police themselves, those mushers.

...(inaudible)...again getting back to balance and fairness. I think the thing we have to keep in mind is if you don't have anything to worry about, and nobody should have anything to worry about if you're in accordance with the legislation that's going to be in place. It's going to be fair and you don't have anything to worry about, whether you're a musher or working dogs or whatever. You shouldn't have anything to worry about if you're in accordance with the legislation. That's where we need to get and that's why we're listening to the comments here in Fort Smith tonight. Again, I want to thank you, Ryan, for your comments.

We're getting down to Mr. Chris Esser.

---Laughter

---Interjection

MR. RAMSAY: I'm sorry about that, Ms. Esser. I just had Chris Esser; I didn't have Mrs. Chris Esser. My apologies, Chris.

Presentation by Ms. Chris Esser

MS. ESSER: ...(inaudible)... Most people here know that I'm an active part of the animal shelter or the Fort Smith Animal Society. I also work with the vet who comes into town. I do all his booking for him and I also volunteer in the clinic when he's in town.

As far as seeing, like April, things that have happened in our community, I've seen a lot. My good friend Dixie has seen more than her fair share. I think we have a vested interest in the welfare of all the dogs, not to mention animals, in Fort Smith. Obviously, we're here to talk about dogs.

I'm going to reiterate some of the things that other people have said because I don't think we can repeat it often enough. That's, again, the traditional use, sections 3.(2) and 4.(3). If you look at 4.(3) and you take out part of the sentence it states, okay, first it's talking about dogs in distress: "No owner shall permit a dog in his or her charge to be in distress" and then "No person shall cause a dog to be in distress." You take out the next part of the next section it reads: "This section does not apply if the distress results from an activity carried on in accordance with...generally accepted local or traditional practices of dog care, use and management." Rewording that simply states that if you are traditionally using a dog, you can cause distress and legally cause distress. So these clauses have to be struck. Completely struck. I think, I'm not an Aboriginal user, but if we're reading the term "traditional" to refer to Aboriginal users or traditional users, I personally, if I was Aboriginal, would be offended by that. I think anybody who is treating their dog reasonably doesn't need that clause there.

Second of all, I think -- this is just my own personal opinion -- I'd like to see something addressed or some part of this act addressing breeding practices; not just commercial breeders but also backyard breeders. I'm not sure; I didn't see anything in the act about that, but it would be great to have something addressing. Maybe it's something completely separate, I don't know, but backyard breeders and commercial breeding is something that we should be addressing in the North. Part of our biggest problem with overpopulation is backyard breeding.

Kennelling, again not necessarily kennelling for dog mushing but for commercial gain also should be addressed.

And again repeating something that Dwade commented on and that's the need for a centralized reporting system so that an abuser in Fort Smith can't relocate to another community and carry on those practices.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Ms. Esser. I appreciate the comments. Thank you very much. I'm going to go back to April Alexander.

MS. ALEXANDER: ...(inaudible)...the proof for animal abuse or neglect, he said that the dog pretty much had to be dead. I had started writing letters with another lady -- she's all over the media -- Bonnie Dawson. I'm told to take pictures. So I'm literally trespassing on their property with my camera looking like a crazy person trying to get any type of proof. That's so stepping over their privacy. They might, you know, you might say they don't deserve it if they're abusing the animal or whatnot. I don't want to get legally charged for trying to prove it. Even with the pictures, like, for a dog to almost have to be dead or dead to get proof to charge, it's too late then. It's far too late. There has to be something in there.

MR. RAMSAY: Thanks again for sharing that with us, April. Appreciate that. We're going to go back to Sholto Douglas.

MR. DOUGLAS: I was talking to Dave. Dave can't make it here. Dave Poitras. I phoned him and urged him that this was on and he wasn't feeling well. One point that he wanted to make, and I said I would do it on his behalf, he gave kind of the example of the penalties in terms of how our courts handle things in the Northwest Territories and in some instances it seems to be fairly lenient in dealing with people in general and some of our laws and justice. And then we're looking at the penalties in this and we're looking at setting a law up, an act, he says, that's going to be carte blanche throughout the NWT and the law of application is going to apply out in the wilderness and it's going to apply in Fort Smith. In terms of a person out on the land, and like you said earlier, if a person follows everything in there, they shouldn't worry about penalties, but he deemed that maybe the penalty in this case might be a little too strong for somebody that couldn't afford five thousand bucks. So he just wanted to look at trying to make sure that the welfare of the animals are looked after, but still in terms of the human factor in this

maybe somebody can't really afford because they're trapping, and that was kind of a concern of his that he wanted to bring forward.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Sholto. Hopefully Dave is feeling better. You can send our regards to him. Hopefully he's feeling better.

To the issue of the fines, that's an issue that we have heard, as well, in other communities from some folks. The fines that are proposed are maximum fines. They certainly wouldn't, I don't believe, be levelled against somebody who is charged with abuse or cruelty under the *Dog Act* for a first-time abuser. I mean, I just couldn't see, and I've been talking a lot about leniency of the courts this week in the Legislative Assembly and I can't see how they would charge maximum fines for a first-time offender. Those fines are there as a deterrent. I think my opinion is we need strong deterrents in the legislation to ensure that people are not abusing, neglecting or being cruel to their dogs. They have a place in there and I think some people have even suggested that the fines are not enough. It's gone both ways. I think the fines that you see there, the \$5,000 and \$10,000, I think are fair and middle ground, but certainly in some of the smaller communities I know that some of the folks, you know, who's going to come up with \$5,000 or \$10,000 to pay a fine and who has that kind of money? But, again, I think the courts will take everything into consideration when handing out fines under this legislation. At least with this legislation the courts will have a chance to actually get a conviction and charge somebody. Today that's almost impossible.

Again, I wanted to thank you very much, Sholto. We're nearing the end of the meeting. We've got one other person who wanted to say a few words to us. Vern Rowe. If Vern is around, we'll pass the microphone to Vern. Yes, and I think Vern may want to speak to us about something not necessarily related to the *Dog Act*. So if anybody else has anything they wanted to bring up or get on the list...(inaudible)...

Presentation by Mr. Joe Paulette

MR. PAULETTE: Well, I'm not going to talk too much. Can you hear me? My name is Joe Paulette. I'm concerned about, I guess, that one item here. I guess that big fine; that, I kind of worry about for some, I guess.

I was raised in the bush. I was a little boy. I'll just give you a little history of where I come from. I grew up in the bush with my uncles, my father, running dogs. We always take care of our dogs. We never abuse our dogs. Some years when I was growing up I seen some dogs being abused, because some of the guys that I know that they were drinking. So they misused their dogs. That's the thing I disagree with.

Having cruelty to dogs, to animals, you should not have a dog. But I always said, because I grew up with dogs, with animals out in the bush. And I run dogs myself. I know some of the guys I know that have good dogs, because I raised a lot of boys. Some of my friends, they have dogs because you don't have a family so they have more time for that. I know... I don't like talking in the mike because it kind of gets me...

I know there's a history here. I know it's too bad not enough of the dog mushers came out here. There are not too many elders that I know have dogs now because they're all gone. Myself, I have only five dogs, because I have a big family.

You can't paint everybody the same. Everybody lives differently. I know that's, like, I got a lot of stories to talk about, but I know it's a cruelty. When you talk about life, you can talk about dogs, you can talk about family structure. A lot of guys I know, they can't keep dogs. Some of my friends, hey, Joe, I said, Joe, I got some dogs here I can't feed now because I'm having problem, because I'm drinking. So I have to put them down. I know I could talk to you all night about those little critters.

Like I said, I come from a family on the trap line. Now we don't have that much anymore because the skidoos came in. I really appreciated that you could fix it good to make it a balance act. Anybody caught misusing, always said abuse of dogs, should not have a dog. I really look at sometimes deeply more than that. I seen a lot of little guys been abused themselves -- little boy, little girl -- but nothing been done. That's what I'm in fear of sometimes, because take more control, have more rights than a little boy. Because what I heard in the past, you don't have to be a good parent to teach the children. But now we're talking about dogs. Always said dog don't have a spirit. Nothing. But human have a spirit.

I know it's very sad sometimes when I see some guys abuse a dog, a horse, any animal. Same thing with the children. There has to be a balance.

I know I run dogs. I talk to my dogs. I used to trap in the Wood Buffalo Park but I never used the dogs for the last, dog team in the park for, oh, 10 years or a little bit more. Skidoos are faster. Now it's a weekend trapping now. You have to move pretty fast in just a few days, in a day. Years ago I used to run the dogs, I used to stay out. You don't have to come to town. I know I heard when people start talking about dogs there's more things to talk about, more important things in life. Like the water. There's more that we gotta talk about. More, more. Yeah. Just little things is all.

I always said dogs are good to talk about but each community should have their own structure, their own policy, their own. And anybody caught abusing dogs then we fix it here. We'll fix it here. Yeah. But I don't like someone coming to somewhere else and tell me how to live or to take care of my dogs. I take care of my family well for many years. All my boys are grown up. My sons, they can't do it because they have a problem. They have a lot of problems. Like I said, I don't like people coming in and telling me how to live my life or take care of my dogs or check on me or go to my yard. I don't like that. Because I'm drug free for many years. Over 40 years. Yeah.

I know you guys are leaving. It's too bad. Like I said, I don't like this mike here. I like to talk in peace. Talk about good things. This is part of it. It's too bad not a lot of dog mushers come here and talk about how to, you know. Because I'm a dog musher myself. I grew up with dogs. I grew up on the trap line. I trained my own dogs.

...(inaudible)... I used to run dogs for him. So I hope things work well. Mahsi cho. I think it's, you know, maybe I'm kind of a little off sometimes, but, you know. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much for your comments, Joe. Much appreciated. We don't have anybody else...(inaudible)...going to go back to Kevin...(inaudible)...to wrap up folks...(inaudible)...

MR. ANTONIAK: ...(inaudible)... Anyways. I appreciate you guys coming here but I couldn't think of a more contentious issue that's not life threatening to people or anything else like that. But if you have dogs and people, you always have conflict. I appreciate you guys trying to take a stab at it. Thank you.

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you very much, Kevin. We'll give it our best shot, that's for sure.

In closing, again I think I just wanted to thank everybody that's come out. It's always nice to get down to Fort Smith and see the big trees. I always enjoy that. Before I close off here I just wanted to ask my colleagues that are with me if they wanted to say a few words. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically I wanted to echo Mr. Antoniak's comments there and thank all you people. This is a tremendous turnout. It says a lot to me about Fort Smith. I'm very glad we made this trip. Thank you, everybody, for coming out and extra thanks, of course, to those who spoke today.

I just want to say that we've heard a few comments about animal legislation and animal protection legislation and the need for it. I'd say the majority of presenters across the range of our consultation have mentioned that. We brought it up strongly with Cabinet. It's not going to happen this term, but it's definitely on the agenda. If some of us come back, I know there's going to be some allies out there for you to get that done early in the next Assembly.

I'm sure the work like Sholto has been involved in, I guess, is he still here? No, he's wandered out. With the humane trapping and so on, these sorts of things come into it. There are good sets of legislation across Canada in trapping jurisdictions like Manitoba and Ontario that we can draw on, as well as the expertise that you folks have. A long history of that in Fort Smith.

Again, just as a member of the committee here, I want to thank my chairman, and all of you especially, for coming out tonight. Mahsi cho.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, everybody, for coming out again. It's good to hear. This is the biggest crowd we had right through the whole Territory of the communities that we did visit. Just again, thank you very much for coming out. We'll be working hard and diligently to get this put through. Like you say, the *Dog Act* is something that has to be done for all us dog lovers. I guess myself too, I'm a dog musher. I grew up and was raised in Tuktoyaktuk, run dogs with my grandparents all my life. We know when a dog is being mistreated. Like you said before, you used to bring dogs in. We used to have dogs right in our house with us when we were kids.

Again, thank you for coming out and we'll do the best we can with the time we have. Thank you very much. Quyanainni.

MR. RAMSAY: Thanks, Jackie. Kevin.

MR. MENICOCHÉ: Thank you very much. Very happy to be in Fort Smith tonight. Given the late hour of the meeting, I would like to extend my appreciation to each one of you for coming out for an important topic that's near and dear to your hearts, and having the courage, strength and wisdom, like I said in my prayer, to speak out on what matters to you. That's an important part of our consensus government which is important to us as well.

Hello to Sholto. Thank you for mentioning my uncle there this evening. It's been a while since I thought of him, Double A.

Once again, mahsi cho. I'm very happy to be here with you tonight.

MR. RAMSAY: Thanks, Kevin. Again, on behalf of the committee, I wanted to thank everybody for coming out tonight. It sure beats sitting in the Legislative Assembly during session. The best part of the job is when we actually get a chance to go out, get into the other communities outside of Yellowknife and talk to people and listen to people, especially on an issue like this that can be a bit contentious. It gets people riled up and fired up. That's what we're here to do. We're here to listen. We'll take all of your comments and concerns to heart and certainly look at including those in the report that we present to the House. As I said earlier this evening, you know, I have something to do with it and so does the committee on whether or not the amendments get passed in the House. We'll do everything in our power to ensure that happens.

Once again I wanted to as well thank our staff, Ms. Knowlan and Ms. Tumchewics. They were instrumental in putting this meeting together. As well, I know your mayor couldn't be here tonight but she was very adamant that the committee travel to Fort Smith and I'm very happy that we decided to venture down to Fort Smith tonight. It was during session. It was a little bit off the beaten track for us given that session's on right now, so I want to thank the committee members that have taken time out of their schedule to be here tonight as well.

Also, if I can, it's going to be interesting, I guess, to put it in a word, as this moves forward. There might be some give and some take and some amendments might even come onto the floor of the House, but I think at the end of the day what we will get is a piece of legislation that is certainly light years beyond where we're at today and I think that's where we need to get to. So we'll keep working in that way.

Again thank you so much for being here. We appreciate all the comments. Thank you very much and have a very nice evening. Thank you.

---Applause

---ADJOURNMENT