



Lisa Partridge <lisa@pacsdogs.com>

Law Ammendments committee remarks.

1 message

Cous Cousineau <pawsfurthought1@gmail.com>
To: Lisa Partridge <lisa@pacsdogs.com>

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Lisa, can you read the following remarks please :

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee

Firstly, let me thank yourselves and Lisa Partridge for hearing and being my voice today. About 2 years ago a discussion over coffee with a Guide Dog handler made the disparity and inequity of the Blind Persons Rights Act and the Human Rights Act treatment of Guide and Service Dogs an issue. 2 disabled Nova Scotians, both with a disability, both living with the exact same Medical Assistive device and yet treated very differently in the eyes of the Law.

The hard fought gains of the visually impaired communities over the decades since guide dogs came into use is commendable and has paved the way for many other types of service dogs as we as a society begin to utilize these animals to a broader capacity. But that is not without challenges.

There are confusions under what is and is not allowed under the law, what is or isn't acceptable under the Human Rights Act. This confusion causes issues for not only the Handlers and their service dogs, but society as a whole, and for certain industry sectors the confusion is mind boggling and a misstep can result in a Human Rights Tribunal.

As a Service dog handler, a disabled Nova Scotian who relies on the very necessary aid of his service dog, I welcome the steps that the government is taking to protect both my rights as a handler, and to open the door to enhanced education and awareness amongst the general public.

In all legislation, there is a balance, and trade off. There are those with a disability who may question why they need an ID card and a visually identifiable patch. The answer is probably found in the following: When you are looking for a Policeman, a Fireman or an EHS worker, one tends to look for the uniform with those clearly identifiable markings of office. If one has a service dog in an area where one is not allowed to have animals, if you are there with a dog, you are either breaking the law or the dog is a service dog and should be identified as such. Much like parking in a Handicap parking spot requires the blue permit displayed this will provide same to the handlers. They do not have to disclose the underlying medical conditions or history, but it will add clarity to a very uncertain situation.

The fact that the legislation will also make it against the law to attempt to pass off an untrained, unqualified dog as a service dog will also protect the qualified teams in public and all Nova Scotians.

From the initial meetings with Kevin Murphy, to the tireless work of Joyce Treen and Angela Poirier, Nova Scotia is on the verge of some landmark legislation. If we can synchronize our legislation, with that of BC and get the provinces to recognize each other's certifications, just like we do with driver's licenses, we will have made some of the largest strides forward to make not only Nova Scotia, but Canada a much more inclusive world.

Thank You

Medric Cousineau, Captain Retd RCAF

Co-founder Paws Fur Thought