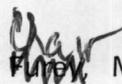


Mr.  Members of the Committee

My name is Lee Steeves. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present the views and concerns of the Halifax Kennel Club (HKC) surrounding Bill 27.

To give you a sense of HKC, we are among the oldest of Canada's Kennel Clubs. Our membership is diverse including veterinarians, vet techs, dog trainers, day care operators and professionals throughout several Nova Scotia communities from the South Shore through Hants County with a common interest in dogs. We have deep roots in our communities and volunteer in many areas.

To give a sense of the breadth of our programs, it is HKC that has fund raised and provided the service vests for HRM's canine police dogs. These are expensive purpose made vests unique to each animal and important equipment in their work lives but not able to be funded by the Municipality. We have also fund raised and provide the oxygen masks for pets that are carried on all HRM fire trucks. Additionally, we offer public support in areas of responsible dog ownership and dog care through our shows and trials. These shows contribute significantly to the NS economy. Most recently, our show in Lantz attracted several hundred international dogs with exhibitors and judges attending from across Canada, Finland and from Texas through Maine from our neighbour to the South. We filled several hotels on a slow accommodation week end (Labour Day), rented a venue that would have gone unused without us, contracted with the local scout troupe for a week ends assistance, hired vehicles, had large groups attend local restaurants, took people sightseeing throughout NS from beautiful Lunenburg to the Halifax Harbour and beyond while other exhibitors noted that they would be here touring the province for more than a week. This was only one show week end. Building on our balance sheet, it is estimated that at a minimum, close to \$100k was realized by Nova Scotians in economic spin off. Other shows throughout the Province offer a scaled down version of this financial picture and none of the Clubs with whom we have been in contact support these Amendments as written.

The second Article of the HKC By Laws comprises our Objects of the Society and reads as follows:-

- 1. To advance in every possible way the welfare of the purebred dog

Animal welfare is our top priority as an organization. We live with our dogs. We own them because we choose to include them in our homes and in our daily lives. We are not their custodians. We take responsibility for their care and work, in partnership with our veterinarians, to ensure they live long and healthy lives.

We applaud the wording in the Amendment surrounding animal fighting. Thank you for recognizing this anachronism and for making its' eradication a priority.

The changes to the Act are numerous and range from housekeeping improvements to substantive issues. Perhaps the most alarming of the proposals is the change in focus. The Act is moved from a 'causal' Act – one in which there requires a reason to intervene and provides a clear definition of the reasons that would require intervention, to one that is totally open and subjective. Gone is the basic tenet of the Act – that an animal must be found to be in distress for a protective action to ensue. With this Amendment, a Special Constable – a person with no formal training as a police officer is able to access a property without the owners' invitation and without the owner even being in residence, enter any premises other than the personal dwelling by force and seize animals. This can be done at any reasonable hour of the day or night. We cannot imagine any other business that could be liable for this level of action from a quasi-governmental organization and feel strongly that it is both unnecessary and dangerous for both the officer and the animals.

It is important to remember that for the position of Chief Inspector the qualifications under the Act NS Reg 17/2010 read as follows:

High school diploma or equivalent

Valid driver's license

Experience in handling and training animals

Necessary investigatory skills and knowledge to act as Chief Inspector

The Officers working under this individual will, in all probability, be required to have less qualifications than their Chief but it is to those individuals this Act would give the right to enter, without cause, the property of Nova Scotia citizens, forcefully break into a kennel building or barn and come face to face with an alarmed group of dogs who could then be seized because they react?

As individuals committed to the welfare of our dogs, we support and applaud the government's interest in furthering animal welfare but we cannot support this invasion of our privacy without cause.

Section 20 is of the utmost concern to the dog clubs throughout NS and is not supported.

Section 21.4 of the original Act stipulated "in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of animal management and husbandry" thus giving the basis on which the Act is written. Without this clause, the Act becomes almost completely subjective and open to individual interpretation. This does not form the basis for good governance nor for protection of the citizen or our animals. Without this Clause, there is no definition of distress and no guideline for anyone to follow in determining the status of an action.

Other areas of note include the lack of reference to the Livestock Pedigree Act of the Federal Government. Purebred dogs fall under this Act of Parliament and are governed accordingly. This legislation ensures that dogs, as well as purebred cattle, horses, Llamas, etc. are managed properly, are traceable, registerable and are among the most regulated and admired in the world. Falling from this Act, we subscribe to Codes of Practice and Conduct and owners and breeders of purebred animals and we are not considered different from them. For NS to attempt a differentiation that the federal government does not seem antithetical at best. We are already well governed. In addition at the Municipal level there are animal control guidelines and controls. A heavy handed approach to dog ownership by the Province appears to be both out of step and unnecessary.

Two other areas of the Amendments should be addressed – the new Section 30.7 noting that even when an animal is not in distress, if the officer believes abuse may have occurred the animal may be seized and finally 36 (8) where it is sufficient for a panel of one member of the Appeal Board be present to exercise the Board's function. This is not a regular court and the members of this Board are likely to have widely diverse backgrounds which may not prepare them whatsoever for the cases to be heard. To leave it to one person to rule on the return of a person's pet is not an adequate process.

Finally, I leave you with the understanding that many dog breeders have now read this Amendment and have expressed the view that it may be time to leave the world of dogs. That is not a good situation for our Province. These are the good people – the members of clubs, the volunteers, the people who are generating the revenues to which I referred earlier. They are discouraged by their Province bringing forward such a threatening Act and know that they are far more visible, open and honest than the people that are not interested in an animal's welfare. Think about our purebred dogs for just a moment. We are a varied group – there are roughly 185 breeds recognized in Canada and 400 throughout the world. Among them is the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. We have a wonderful ambassador for Canada in the Bluenose – we are proud of our sailing ship and of her legacy. We are also proud of our Provincial dog. Only one other Province in Canada has a dog with the Province's name attached and only a handful of breeds are indigenous to Canada. Nova Scotia is known internationally in

dog circles because of the Toller. We are a small island in a large country with a small population but regardless of whether I am judging in Colombia or in Australia, in Sweden or in the US, people will turn to me and say "Oh, I know the beautiful area you are from. You are the home of the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever". Please don't put our purebred dog community in jeopardy. Please consider, before bringing forward dog related legislation, including on your advisory panels the people with the longest history of dogs in the Province and the deepest roots in dog management and care. We would be honoured to be asked to assist in the formulation of sound policy and to be able to support the government in its efforts in this regard.