



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 18, 2011
Hay River, 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. Bob Bromley, MLA Weledeh

Acting Alternate Members

Mrs. Jane Groenewegen, MLA Hay River South

Witnesses

Ms. Bonnie Dawson, Action for the Protection of Northern Animals

Mr. Ken Comeau, Citizen

Ms. Jennifer Blackman, Hay River SPCA

Ms. Beatrice Lepine, Citizen

Ms. Sharla Carroll, Citizen

Constable Jack Keefe, RCMP

Ms. Diana Yeager, CA, Hon. Paul Delorey

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): Thanks everybody. We're going to call the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure to order. I'd like to start off by thanking everybody for coming out tonight. It's nice to get a chance to be back in Hay River. We're going to start the proceedings off this evening with a prayer and I'm going to ask my colleague Mrs. Groenewegen, to say a prayer before we start.

---Prayer

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Mrs. Groenewegen. And, again, welcome to the public that have come out this evening for our public hearing on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. Before we get started, I think we'll introduce the Members that we have with us this evening. We are a little bit shorthanded here tonight. To my immediate right is Bob Bromley, he's the MLA for Weledeh; and no stranger to you folks in the room, Mrs. Groenewegen, MLA for Hay River South has joined us as well; and my name is David Ramsay. I'm the chair of the committee and Member representing Kam Lake, which is in Yellowknife.

I'd like to also introduce the staff that is with us this evening. To my far left is Ms. Colette Langlois, director or research; seated next to her is Alicia Tumchewics, committee researcher; and to my far right is Ms. Jennifer Knowlan, she is our committee clerk.

Again, today the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure is holding a public hearing on Bill 16: *An Act to Amend the Dog Act*. There are copies of the bill on the front table as well as copies of a plain language summary of the bill, so I'd encourage everybody to help yourself to those. Also on the side table we have water, tea and coffee, so feel free to avail yourself to that as well, if need be.

Last week, on January 13th, the committee held its first public hearing on the bill and we heard the Minister's opening comments as well as Members' comments. We had our second public hearing on this bill in Yellowknife yesterday, and tonight we'll hear from members of the public in Hay River, and tomorrow we're off to Inuvik for a public hearing tomorrow night in Inuvik. We also hope to get into Fort Smith at some point in time. We want to hear about what you think about the proposed amendments to the NWT *Dog Act*.

We have witnesses scheduled to speak this evening. We have Bonnie Dawson of Action for the Protection of Northern Animals. Also Ken Comeau and Jennifer Blackman, and there are others on the list. I would encourage you, if there are any other members of the public that want to let us know what they think of the amendments and the bill, please see Ms. Knowlan and she can add you to the list this evening. Before we

start the proceedings this evening, I'd like to see if any of the Members that are with us, Mrs. Groenewegen or Mr. Bromley, might say a few words as well, so maybe I'll pass the microphone to Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm just very pleased to be in Hay River. We have already been welcomed by a councillor, Kevin Wellington I believe his last name is. I appreciate that. I'm looking forward to the comments we heard tonight. We had a lot of comments, yesterday I guess it was, and we had a lot of good discussion within the committee on Friday. Certainly I think there's a lot of commonality where people are focussing their attention. So we'll be looking to see if the same sorts of messages are here tonight and, again, looking forward to what you have to say and I appreciate you coming out. I know you're all busy. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks very much, Mr. Bromley. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Thank you. It's nice to be back with my colleagues tonight to join them in this public hearing. This is a topic, an improved, revised, updated, modern... The *Dog Act* is something that I think is long overdue in the Northwest Territories and a lot of the information that we're getting and feedback we're getting from people, is that what was on the books was not viable any longer and that this is something that needs our attention. So it is good to see the amount of feedback that we've had. Sometimes we do things and we don't get a lot of feedback. This particular topic has generated a tremendous amount. I had asked our director of research tonight if she could recall ever receiving as many letters on a piece of legislation as this one, and she has said she has never. So it is something obviously very important to people. So I'm glad the committee decided to include Hay River on their schedule for public consultation, so I look forward to what you have to say tonight. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mrs. Groenewegen is right; this topic has generated a lot of discussion, not just in the Northwest Territories but around the country and into the United States. I've been a Member of the Legislature for over seven years and I don't recall another issue that I've received as much e-mail or feedback on as the proposed amendments to the *Dog Act*. There are people watching the proceedings as we move this along all across North America, and just yesterday I did an interview with Carol Off on *As It Happens* on CBC Radio, and have already gotten a bunch of feedback from people who have heard that interview across the country. So it's a national issue and people are certainly paying attention to what we're doing here in the Northwest Territories.

We're looking forward to hearing what you have to say to us this evening. We're going to call our first witness, Ms. Bonnie Dawson, and I'd just like to let people know you can stay where you're at and the clerk will bring the microphone to you and as we are recording the proceedings here this evening, I'd ask that you'd please speak clearly and into the microphone because we are recording everything, so I'd appreciate that. With that, I'll get the clerk to pass the microphone to Ms. Dawson. Thank you.

Presentation by Action for the Protection of Northern Animals

MS. DAWSON: Good evening, everyone. As Mr. Ramsay is aware, there's...(inaudible)...testing this loophole and I've got more for him here from Spain, Portugal, around the world. This loophole -- to quote an individual from Fort Smith -- is basically "a get out of jail free card." It's a free pass to continue the abuse and neglect that's been perpetuated through decades.

There seems to be some confusion as to up... That those who want this loophole deleted, there seems to be some confusion from specific MLAs such as Mr. Krutko who seems to believe we don't want them using their sled teams for hunting, for fishing, for trapping. That's not the issue at all. We want to see humane treatment of the animals, be they sled dogs, be they a poodle, be they a Chihuahua, whatever. A dog is a dog, has a right to food, water, shelter, medical treatment, if necessary. I think it was the CVJ put out a report in October 2010 which basically evaluated the needs required for the Northwest Territories with relation to animal care. That was quite a lengthy report and we have one veterinarian hospital in Yellowknife to service all of the NWT and that has to change. We have approximately two shelters. That has to change. We have the one here in Hay River, we have one in Inuvik, we have the one run by Dr. Pisz in Yellowknife.

The other thing is bylaws don't work if they're not properly enforced. That was evidence in the Inuvik case a couple of years ago. It was evidenced here in Hay River in 2010. The bylaws are good ones. There are good bylaws in Inuvik. They weren't enforced. As a consequence, many, many animals suffered and died needlessly, so that has to change.

Mr. Ramsay, you know I've been looking for an established trained, qualified animal cruelty investigator to assist. RCMP are mandated under the federal Criminal Code to investigate reports of animal cruelty and that's their job. Under the federal Criminal Code of Canada, no one is exempt. There are no loopholes to squeeze through. The law is very clear and sections 448 and 429, the animals in themselves are evidence of wilful neglect. So there's a lot of change and it has to be made clear. We aren't opposing using your animals to hunt the traditional methods. It's the care. No more slitting throats and throwing puppies in dumpsters. No more tying dogs to trees and shooting them in the face. No more abandoning animals because they're sick or you just don't want them. That has to change and the offenders have to face the consequences of their actions. I guess that's it for me.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks so much, Ms. Dawson, and thanks for your efforts in putting this together for us and all the other information that you've sent us in the past, thank you.

We'll open it up. Does committee have any questions for Ms. Dawson or anything they want to clarify with Ms. Dawson?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'd just like to know what the loophole issue she's referring to, because nothing is stated...(inaudible)...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): We can get Ms. Dawson to clarify that.

MS. DAWSON: ...(inaudible)...so I don't mess up the wording. "The bill makes an exception where distress is caused by activities that follow generally accepted local or traditional practices." That major loophole would render the new *Dog Act* virtually useless, because in a lot of communities, it's what I call tolerated, unacceptable local practice to shoot an animal, to slit its throat, to starve it to death, to fail to provide it shelter in sub-zero temperatures. As far as traditional practice is concerned, there is the confusion. Some people believe that oh God, they don't want us to use our teams for hunting and fishing and trapping. That's not what we're saying. We're saying if you're doing that, make sure your animals receive the care, be it food, shelter, medical care if need be, and follow the guidelines as set out for conscientious and moral obligations to the animals that provide your way of life. That's part of the tradition. These animals traditionally provided a means of transportation to hunt, to fish. So the respect needs to be there and as the Colville elder heard on the radio the other day said that his great-grandfather passed that down to his father, passed it to him, that you're animals are very, very important and these animals are sentient beings. They are intelligent, they've saved lives, they're used by the RCMP, they're used in hospitals as well. So be it a husky, a working dog, or be it any animal, you don't leave it chained outside without shelter, and feed it once or twice when you feel like it to let it starve to death. That's what we're fighting for. That's why we want this loophole taken out, because otherwise, like I say, it's a free pass. Does that answer your question?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. DAWSON: Okay.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Ms. Dawson, and that section she refers to is under Dogs and Distress, section 4.3 or 4(3) in the legislation. Does committee have anything they want to ask Ms. Dawson or clarify with Ms. Dawson? If not, again, thank you very much, Ms. Dawson, for being here this evening, sharing your views on this and for all the work you've done in getting us the information. Much appreciated.

Next we've got on our list of presenters Ken Comeau, private citizen. Mr. Comeau.

Presentation by Mr. Ken Comeau

MR. COMEAU: Thank you. A lot of the issues have already been said by Ms. Dawson. I'll make my comments brief. My name is Ken Comeau. I've been living in the Northwest Territories since 1980. I've always had a pet. I've always had a dog and my concern is about the fact that traditional or local practices are a means of special interest groups to escape the conditions of a law while the majority of the population has to abide by it. I would like to know what traditional or local practices are. Is there any definition? Are there any guidelines that stipulate what traditional or local practices are? I would like to know the true definition followed by tradition or local practices. Do they allow killing of pups by slitting their throats and dumping them in the garage or the garbage? Do they allow starvation or no water? Some traditional practices say that you don't have to feed

water to the dogs in the wintertime. They can eat snow. Do they allow no protection from severe heat and cold? I've been in the Northwest Territories for a lot of years and I've witnessed this. Do they allow beating a tied up dog beyond submission? Do they allow no treatment for injury, sickness or suffering?

Now, is this an escape? Do they say this is traditional? This is the way it's always been done? Is that going to be allowed? Are they not going to be subject to fines or penalties?

I know that people use a defence that it's the way that it has always been done. I believe that good people can make a change and not allow suffering. Gandhi, a true spiritual leader, once said that a society can be judged by how it treats its animals. The new law is a good start. Why neuter it?

I want to know, there's nothing in the legislation, I didn't notice anything in the legislation that said anything about humane destruction of a dog. That should be in there. You don't just tie a dog to a tree and shoot it in the belly or something and allow it to die. There should be a humane way of destroying it. Again, does this *Dog Act* apply to other animals, like cats? I don't know. It doesn't, just dogs. That's my submission.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Comeau. Starting off with your last question, our job here this evening is listening to the public and the concerns that you have with the amendments that are here. But we'll do our best to answer the questions that you have. As far as cats, I know you talked about cats and other animals, no, this refers specifically to dogs. This is of great interest to me and it has been for a number of years and a number of my colleagues is to, at some point in time, get comprehensive animal rights legislation in front of the Legislative Assembly, so we can get with the times and follow the footsteps of other jurisdictions around the country who have passed comprehensive animal rights legislation. So this is a small step forward, but certainly my eyes are on the bigger prize and that is comprehensive legislation that covers all animals in the Northwest Territories.

On the humane way of destroying animals, that was brought up at our public hearing in Yellowknife. That's something that's been highlighted, and ultimately I think we've heard that from a number of people now. We can certainly report that back to the government.

I guess the big one is that clause on traditional and locally accepted practice. That is the crux of everything. Why is it there? What's the definition? Really, there isn't a definition on what that is. Some Members wanted to see that included and fortunate enough for us, we live in a jurisdiction where we can debate and discuss openly the merits of having that clause in there, and my personal belief is it doesn't have any place in this legislation. There might be some committee members -- not the ones that are here this evening -- but they might feel a little differently about that. At the end of the day, it's going to be a discussion and a debate that we have and we'll see if it survives. My personal belief is it doesn't have any place in this at all. Cruelty is cruelty; there shouldn't be any place to hide if you're abusing animals in the Northwest Territories,

period. So we hope to at some point in time get that out of there. I'm not sure; does committee have anything they'd like to add? Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just, I talked about the commonalities. We've also heard the quote from Gandhi before. I think this sort of consistency in public feedback tells us a lot. I think basically with the traditional use management clause, just about I think every person has said that's not acceptable. But in discussions with those that would perhaps like to see it in, if we move away from that and talk about what's acceptable and what traditional practices, there's common agreement that proper traditional practice was done with respect and dignity. I think perhaps the most straightforward testimony I've heard or that met my interests was Georges Erasmus yesterday who said we don't need shields, get rid of it. We don't want cruelty and that should be plainly said. So very much in line. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mr. Bromley. Mrs. Groenewegen, did you want to add anything?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: In specific relation to this clause or just about the act in general?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): The clause of clarification from Mr. Comeau.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I guess tonight I'd be curious to know about people's ideas about how we deal with some of the realities or how we raise awareness. Families, people like to have pets and dogs and a wonderful pet. You know, you go by the pet store or you see that sweet, cuddly little puppy and everyone thinks that's a great idea at the beginning, but people embark sometimes on these relationships without any knowledge or preparation or anticipation of the kinds of responsibilities associated with owning a pet. And let's face it, it's expensive. I think sometimes people get to a certain point and they either can't afford to have their pet neutered or can't afford proper food for a good nutritious diet. I have a little Shih Tzu poodle and I know when she has to have her teeth cleaned, she has to go under general anaesthetic. Bonnie knows my little dog, she follows me around everywhere. That was like a six hundred dollar vet bill. That's not a small thing, but what am I going to do? I mean you want to provide your dog with care, but sometimes I think that people think that undertaking the care of an animal or pet from they are cute right through their aging, everything, you know, is just something to be taken lightly and I don't how you create that awareness.

And then when you get out into the communities as well, we are very fortunate in Hay River here because we have a vet that comes in and you can hire the services of a veterinarian. We can jump in a vehicle and drive to High Level if we need to. But you get out into the communities and you don't have those services. You take that dog home, and all of a sudden there's litter after litter and then there's dogs running around the community and people can't afford to manage the situation. And so I know that that's not the responsible thing, but unfortunately in many cases that is the reality. I can't tell you how many people I've met who have a dog and I say where did you get that dog -- a little dog, a little dog like my little Roxie -- and they say we found it on the side of the

highway or we rescued it from a pound. So somewhere, people have made a decision to take on the responsibility of an animal without a good concept of what's involved in doing that in a responsible way. I think that it gets even more complicated when you get out into remote areas where you do not have ready access to affordable dog food, veterinary services, the ability to have your pet neutered or spayed.

So I don't know what role NGOs have in this kind of protection for animals. I don't know what role the government has. Certainly the monitoring of the humane treatment of animals is a responsibility of the government. That's this legislation, but in the actual carrying it out... I went to Fort Good Hope one time a few years ago for a Woodblock Music Festival and there was this really cute litter of black lab puppies running all over the town and I was told they had tried to shoot them before music festival because all these people were coming to town, but every time somebody would go out with a gun and try to shoot them, they'd run underneath somebody's house because all the houses are open underneath, so they'd run under there. As soon as they got under there, well, nobody could shoot them because they were under somebody's house. So they ran around the whole music festival. I thought they were the most entertaining part of the whole weekend, but the fact is nobody was responsible except the bylaw officer in the community for those puppies. I'm sorry, folks, but that's the reality and what are we going to do about it? Where are the resources and where is the will, I guess, to address those kinds of situations? Because I'm sorry, the Northwest Territories is not just Yellowknife and Hay River. It's a whole lot of small communities out there as well.

I've gone to many of those communities and I have observed animals. Maybe working dogs, tied, they have shelter, they have food. And I'm sure their owners use them for the pursuit of their traditional activities. It's not something that I quite relate to as much, because I find it hard to see a dog tied. I know we had a Siberian husky that was always out at the beach until they changed the rules and you can't have dogs at large, but it was a good life as long as there was no leash required. But tying a dog up for its entire life to a stick or a pole with a house and throw it food, I mean I guess it's all kind of in the eye of the beholder too.

But anyway, I think this whole legislation is going to be the impetus and the start of a greater discussion and debate which I hope is going to bring awareness and highlight this issue, which I think for a long time has just been ignored. So I'm really interested in people like Ms. Dawson and people who have a real proven, demonstrated interest in the welfare of animals, how we together are going to work to address these kinds of challenges. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Mrs. Groenewegen. Yes, the clause that's there, I've never, as I mentioned, received as many e-mails in opposition to something ever. The only folks that seem to think that it should stay in there are a few Members. So we're not finished the process yet. We're going to Inuvik tomorrow night. We'll be in Fort Smith hopefully at some point in time. Everyone's got our e-mail addresses if they feel otherwise, but like I said, the support to take this out of there has been overwhelming so far. With that, thanks again, Mr. Comeau, for your remarks. We're going to go now to Jennifer Blackman with the Hay River SPCA.

Presentation by Hay River SPCA

MS. BLACKMAN: Like those who have spoken so far this evening, the Hay River SPCA is also very concerned about this clause that does make exceptions for locally accepted or traditional practices. This clause essentially is going to undermine any good that these revisions will bring. We've talked about the fact that it's not defined. It's not qualified in any way, shape or form. I'm from Nova Scotia. I have local practices too. You know, it's not even defined as aboriginal. There's an implication there, but it's not defined as such, even. So anyone could use this potential loophole as a justification for the treatment of their dog or dogs.

You know, tying your dog out on a three-foot chain and not providing the necessities, adequate food, shelter, water, okay, that could be called a local or traditional practice. Moving away and abandoning your animal, that could be called a local or traditional practice. I had a conversation recently with an administrator on the Hay River Reserve about two weeks ago, he was actually... There is an ongoing stray and feral dog problem there, and he was looking for some suggestions, looking for some ways they could humanely euthanize the dogs. That is another topic, but we got onto the conversation that even humanely euthanizing this large number of dogs is not going to solve the problem. And he talked about how the community, it's just accepted to let your animal roam and scrounge what food it can. So the animals now congregate, they get out there and they congregate around the store and the school and the daycare and that's major concern for the members of the community.

He admitted there was a certain way of doing things and the community being a bit of a transient community at times, that includes people moving away and abandoning their animals and just leaving them there. So this is something that is, I realize, happening all over the North. It's happening right there in Hay River. The Hay River SPCA, of course we're trying to focus on Hay River and trying to do whatever we can to help here. I agree with Mrs. Groenewegen that education... This is not going to change overnight, but education is going to be a key factor in this. You're not going to be able to change people who get that cute little fluffy puppy and then it gets too big and it pees in the house, so they tie it outside and then it spends the rest of its life out there. You're not going to be able to change that overnight, but this is a start. The changes to An Act to Amend the *Dog Act* are a good start, with the exception of this one clause that does make allowances for locally accepted or traditional practices.

I also agree with Mrs. Groenewegen, that this is something that has been highly ignored. We pass it every day. Whether it's in the "suburbia" of central Hay River where you see an animal that's constantly tied out in the yard or it's more on the outskirts of town and you pass by it every day and you turn a blind eye. Does that make it accepted, locally accepted because that person has had their animal for five or ten years and nobody has said anything so far? It's going to be a challenge. Where do you start though? Well, there's going to be a lot of people who technically are going to be in violation once hopefully this act is passed without this particular clause. There will be lots of people that will be in violation of the act. And that's going to be a challenge. Where do you start?

So I would like to again reiterate we support the revisions, the tougher penalties. However, we would definitely like to see the clause that makes the exception for locally accepted traditional practices stricken from the act. That's all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Jennifer, for your presentation. Anything from committee members? Clarification? That's good? Thanks very much, Ms. Blackman. Next on the list of presenters we have Beatrice Lepine. We'll get the mike to you there, Beatrice.

Presentation by Ms. Beatrice Lepine

MS. LEPINE: Thank you. A couple of things. I agree with what Bonnie, Jennifer and Ron have stated here about the inclusion in the bylaw or in the law about that traditional or local practices. I don't think we need that. I simply think we don't need it.

There are a couple of other areas that I want to talk about which I think has to be clarified a little better. Section 5, Public Safety - Prohibitions, Running at Large, no owners shall permit a dog to run at large contrary to a municipal bylaw or in an area that is not within a municipality. Now, in our bylaw, running-at-large means a dog that's not on the owner's property and not on a leash, which means if you're off the property, then you have to be on a leash. I don't understand how this is going to fit with my animals when I go out on the land and I don't have them leashed. I don't have them leashed because there's a need for protection. When I go berry picking, my dogs are with me and they're not leashed. So that section there doesn't make sense. I know we've recently... I see our bylaw officer has arrived, I won't be too hard on him but I will say this: we haven't had our bylaws enforced for about a year. Before that, we had a bylaw officer who wasn't as strict with us as some municipalities are perhaps, but I do know in the past several months, people who are responsible dog owners are the ones being targeted rather than these people... Like in my neighbourhood, there's a dog who's been tied to the post for how long and I don't know how long he'll stay there, probably for the rest of his life. Here I am every day walking with my two dogs and occasionally I let my Labrador off his leash so I can throw his ball for him and have him retrieve, but I could be liable for an offence, you know? I could wind up in court over something as simple as... I am a responsible dog owner and I totally object the heavy-handed enforcement that's being followed in this town right now.

Now, another area which I think needs clarification is the next section, Section 6, no person shall leave a dog in a harness contrary to a municipal bylaw or in an area that is not within a municipality unless the dog is muzzled or under the custody and physical control of a person who has attained the age of 16 and is capable of ensuring the dog will not harm the public or create a nuisance. Now, I'm not sure what the meaning of this is. I know I went on a dog tour, dog team tour, and the dogs weren't muzzled. But there was a dog team driver who had the dogs under his control. So I think you're getting too specific in some areas about how we are to handle our dogs, and other areas are leaving vague wording like in terms of that local traditional use and what is it? I need to state it because it bothers me. Is it 4(2) or 4(3)? Uh, 3(2). "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.” Like, how vague that is, yet when it comes to this section on dogs in harness, they prescribe such methods. It seems like I don’t know if this writing is really well done. I must say I’m confused by that.

The other thing I wanted to say is a few years ago I was involved in a dog rescue. There was a couple of Rottweilers that were running at large and they were basically not being cared for. Both of them were pregnant. This was after a couple of years of feeding them at my office. We had fed them because they weren’t being fed, not being watered, not being cared for. So Pam Taylor-Cook and I rescued one of the dogs. The second... We were going to rescue two, both were pregnant and just due to deliver. We knew the dates when they were going to deliver. Pam and I were able to rescue one and she gave birth a couple of days later in her home, 10 puppies. The other one was killed by wolves the night before we were able to rescue. It taught me something.

Jane was mentioning people get a little dog and they think it’s cute and we’ll keep it. They don’t realize the implications of getting a dog. You know, I have two neutered animals that are with me for all of my life and I’m going to retire in a year-and-a-half, and honestly I’m not looking forward to caring for those things for the rest of their lives, which is another few years. I jokingly say that, I mean I don’t mean that, but it’s a big responsibility and vet care. Like, my vet bill is out of this world with cats and dogs.

So I don’t know how we go about changing attitudes, but people have to recognize that Labradors and Rottweilers, and there’s probably other breeds, are not really suitable for these conditions. I rescued the Labrador I have, but I would never tie him outside. He’s never had to be outside. The other dog I have is very well-furred, and I know the dog you’re referring to, Jane, he can live out in these conditions. People don’t have a clue. I wish there was some way of preventing them from acquiring those breeds unless they can prove that they’re looking after them in a suitable manner. No one could tell me a Labrador could be tied outside in these conditions, no one, knowing that they have bare bellies. Rottweiler is another one with bare bellies and they are not adapted to this with no hair between their paws like a husky is. So that’s another area that I really wish this bill would look at, is those breeds, and prevent them.

Another one I saw is somebody has a Great Dane, I think, or some kind of large dog that has very little hair on it. I would hope that owner is keeping them inside. So that’s another area of the act that I think if they see that a dog is... I guess they will. It’s covered under the Dogs in Distress.

I grew up with dogs. My father and my grandfather were in the fishing industry. They fished with dogs, so I grew up amongst dogs. A couple of us were bitten by those dogs. They had to be tied. They were not pets and we had to be trained to not go near them and they were tied on our two properties there where we lived in the Old Town, but those dogs were sheltered with dog houses, fed and watered, because they depended on them. That was before the Bombardier and the skidoo. Once the skidoo came along, they got rid of the dogs so there was no need to tie a dog up outside anymore. But I see that clearly if that provision stays in, then someone is going to have to go to court to

argue and show that that person is not living a traditional life. That's what we are going to be faced with, and as Bonnie says, it just creates a loophole for someone to use.

So I want to thank the committee. I want to thank you for the work you're doing to create this legislation that's going to be more helpful to us. When we tried to rescue those dogs, RCMP would not act. So that was a problem for us. They would not act. They said we can't help you. Certainly the town bylaws didn't apply over there. I want to thank the SPCA for the work that they've done in terms of rescuing animals in this town. It's just awful to see. Jennifer was talking about people abandoning their animals when they move houses or leave town, for example. That's awful. It's going on right now. My sister-in-law has rescued two cats from neighbours who just moved away and left their animals behind. So I just want to thank them for the work they're doing and we need to continue to support that. So thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Beatrice, for your presentation. We had Dr. Tom Pisz at our public hearing yesterday in Yellowknife and there was a lot of discussion about the traditional use of dogs in the Northwest Territories, and obviously a number of us have travelled ourselves to a number of communities across the Northwest Territories, and traditionally the working dog was the husky breed with a thick layer of fat and the fur coat that would accommodate it being outside for lengthy periods of time. If you go around the Northwest Territories today, those dogs just aren't evident like they were in the past. Dogs are smaller, they are more mixed breeds. They don't have the fur or the fur between their pads to protect them in the cold weather. But things are changing, and traditionally folks aren't utilizing dogs like they have in the past, period. I challenge some of the other Members, especially the ones that are supportive of this clause staying in there, to show us where all these traditional working dogs are across the Northwest Territories. There's not a whole lot of them and things are changing.

Just recently I was in Alaska and we had a tour of the community of Barrow. It's on the North Slope of Alaska. One of the things I noticed on that tour is there just weren't any dogs around. I asked the gentleman who was giving us the tour, where are all the dogs. We don't use dogs anymore traditionally. You know, we've gone to skidoos and four-wheelers. Dogs right now are pets. That's happening in a lot of northern communities, not just here in Canada but also in Alaska. So that's not lost on us.

The other thing you mentioned, Beatrice, is the running at large. We've heard that from other folks as well. I think part of the recommendation perhaps back to the committee back to the government will be to tighten up the language on the running at large. One of the phrases that was brought up at the public hearing in Yellowknife was if it's under the care and control, it doesn't necessarily have to be on a leash, but if the owner is nearby, close proximity, it shouldn't matter. So we've got to tighten up the wording on that, as well as in Section 6. We appreciate your comments on that and we'll take those under advisement as well.

MS. LEPINE: Can I just add one thing?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Sure, sure. We'll just get you the mike.

MS. LEPINE: I neglected to add that...(inaudible)...annual Kamba Carnival Dog Races and have been for a number of years here in town as timer and it's something, an area I see when I watch those animals run, how well cared for those animals are. The dog mushers, we have one here, you know I guess it goes back to a traditional practice, racing dogs, you know, but there's an area where people use the utmost care of these animals. You know, it's just amazing. I was looking at a dog once and I said boy, that dog is kind of skinny. The guy says he's actually got a little bit too much fat on him. They're racing dogs, eh? They race and sprint for short distances and then are put back in their dog boxes, and I must say from my involvement there and seeing a number of teams that come from all over Canada and the North here, that's an area, a sector where they really look after your dogs and you wouldn't find anyone there abusing their dogs in any way.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you for that, Beatrice. We did have Grant Beck at our public hearing, five time world champion dog musher constituent of mine, and in my riding I've probably got the most athletes, they call them, dog teams of any riding in the Northwest Territories. There are yards and yards of sled dogs down in Kam Lake. I know a number of the mushers personally and I know that they take really good care of their dogs. They're athletes, they call them. I have a question from Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Just a question for Beatrice. You mentioned the dog rescue endeavour that you had undertaken and you mentioned that the RCMP had failed to act in that situation. I wouldn't understand or wouldn't know what role the RCMP would have had in that situation. Like would they have...

MS. DAWSON: I can answer that.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Okay, good, because I'm just a little bit ignorant of that. Would the RCMP get involved in... Anyway, you'll need to get the microphone, just one sec. I just also wanted to mention that Corporal Jack Keefe has joined us. He's with the RCMP, actually. I didn't know if Beatrice thought that was the bylaw officer, but this is Jack Keefe with the RCMP, not to be mistaken with our new bylaw officer who we all have a lot to say about.

---Laughter

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, Mrs. Groenewegen. We are recording, so we're going to get the mike to Ms. Dawson. She's going to clarify the...

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Yes, the role of the RCMP.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): ...role of the RCMP.

MS. LEPINE: It's good that she will, because I never asked him what section.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Okay, we'll have to get you the mike, Beatrice, because we are recording this, so if we want to get this on the record, we'll give... Sorry about that.

MS. LEPINE: ...(inaudible)...not the food. They were really thin. In forty-below weather, they were sleeping under our stairs at work. So they said, I don't know, they were kind of vague and said, no, they couldn't really help. But there was a provision in the Criminal Code, I know that, but Bonnie could probably explain it better.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you, Beatrice. Bonnie.

MS. DAWSON: In 2008, the Animal Defence League of Canada, at my request, sent out letters questioning the Attorney General of Canada, as well as the Prime Minister of Canada, as well as some MPs in Ottawa. The letters that the Animal Defence League of Canada, in turn, received, they forwarded to me for my file. Well, according to the federal government's Minister of Public Safety, RCMP, by their very office, are to investigate and to assist in any reports of animal cruelty. Under Section 11 of the current *Dog Act*, RCMP are officers under that act as well. So basically they are mandated under the federal Criminal Code of Canada to uphold all federal Canadian laws, which includes the federal Criminal Code pertaining to animal cruelty. They are also being officers under the current *Dog Act*, Section 11 of the old act, the current one. They are officers under that, so they are again required to investigate.

In more remote communities across the North, a lot of the smaller communities don't have the population to support paying a bylaw officer, so they depend solely on RCMP detachments within their area. Now, there was a situation here, for example, in 2009, whereby I received about eight phone calls from a woman whose dog was left seven days without food, water or shelter, while these people enjoyed their Christmas vacation visiting family out of territory. Now, this animal is in sub-zero temps, being thrown food over the fence to keep the animal going. This person who reported it to me reported it to town hall, who at the time said we can't do anything because we don't have a bylaw officer. As I pointed out in a registered letter to the mayor and also in my meeting with the mayor in January when I proposed the zero tolerance policy on animal cruelty for Hay River, it was irrelevant that we didn't have a bylaw officer at the time. All anyone at town hall had to do was pick up the phone, contact the detachment, request that an RCMP officer attend the property to assess this animal. And when I say assess, don't just look at it and say oh yeah, it looks fat and happy, do a physical hands-on assessment. Underneath that thick fur could be a skeleton. Are the gums pink? Is the animal dehydrated? Does the skin go back when you pull it up? These are signs of dehydration. Is the animal suffering from the cold? Obviously this animal was. I raised the concern. I raised the alarm three times, nothing was done for that animal until those owners came back and no consequences did these owners have to face. So there was (a) the municipal bylaws in place were not upheld and are all the fingers broken at town hall, they couldn't pick up the phone and request the RCMP to attend? SPCAs do not have the legal authority to enter upon a property. They can take a report. They, in turn, can pick up a phone and request an RCMP officer attend the property to investigate. That's what Linda does in Inuvik. She assesses, the officer goes with her. If need be,

she'll file an animal cruelty investigation report with the RCMP that they can use to pursue charges, okay? Here that's not being done. Animals that are reported... Oh well, that's too bad. There's dogs tied in backyards here on three-foot chains or on leashes that snap and they're running loose. How many... I picked up eight inside of a week and held them at my place, because you can't turn them into the shelter here, you have to turn them into town hall first, they become wards of the town. After seven days, then the SPCA can adopt them out. You can't pick up an injured or hurt animal and take it directly to the shelter, that's a no-no. How ridiculous is that? So you end up taking them into your own, like I have. I would get people dropping them off to me as well because bylaw wasn't working on weekends. the shelter couldn't take them in immediately upon pick-up, so you got to hold them over a weekend or a long weekend before you can turn them into town hall. So unless the bylaws are properly enforced and reports of neglect and cruelty are actively investigated, the bylaws don't mean anything.

I got a call this summer from a young woman whose neighbour happens to be employed as a health care worker, has three kids living in her home, throws her dog downstairs, doesn't feed it for days. The home is apparently feces and urine, she's got cats as well. The neighbour is concerned and I told her what you have to do is put it in writing, because that's how town hall wants it, put it in writing, keep a copy for yourself and cc me a copy and I'll follow up. Now, whether she was too scared to do that, I don't know because I never heard back from her. The point is, this is a health care worker that should know better, with three small children living in her home. Is that acceptable? No, that's not acceptable. So if a report of cruelty or something like that goes into town hall or goes, say, to me or goes to any one of the volunteers here, it should be acted upon. The volunteers can forward it to town hall, like I've done, but town hall's got to act on it. If they have to call in an RCMP officer, as the federal Minister of Public Safety stated, RCMP are mandated to investigate under the federal Criminal Code of Canada. So does that answer my question?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: It was my question.

MS. DAWSON: Or your question. I think it was both your questions. There you go.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Ms. Dawson, for that. You're okay? Ms. Dawson, did you have another question you wanted to ask or did you just want to clarify that?

MS. DAWSON: No, I just wanted to clarify that.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Okay, I just wanted to be clear there. Did anyone else have any questions for us, or issues?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: ...(inaudible)...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Well, if public opinions mean anything, and in our line of work it does, obviously, it won't last. It can't last. Like I said earlier, the support for getting rid of it has been absolutely overwhelming. The only people I've talked to that have any support of keeping it in there are a few Members. They're not with us tonight

and we'll have that debate. Once the public hearing process is over, we've been having wrap-up meetings and discussing it as we go along, but at the end of this process we'll get together and my feeling is it's not going to stay, but I'm only one of the five members of the committee and I chair the committee. There are four voting members and I would, of course, break a tie if that happens. But if it does get to the floor of the House and if that clause is still in there, my belief is it will be taken out. I'd move a motion...

---Applause

...to take that out as soon as it hit the floor of the House and I think we'd have enough support on the Regular Members' side and even on the government side, for that matter, to take that out. So I don't think it's going to last. Thank you.

MS. DAWSON: David, may I point out too...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): We'll get you the mike, Ms. Dawson.

MS. DAWSON: I'd like to point out too that there is some very heavy...(inaudible)...done and publications, the research has been published. There is a direct link between animal cruelty and human violence. Animals in the home are often used by the bullying member to control their spouse, to control their children. In some parts of Canada a lot of women have stayed within an abusive environment, which also subjects their kids to that abuse because they don't want to leave their family pet behind to face the brunt and there are now women shelters set up in areas across Canada, Ontario has them, I believe Alberta and some other provinces, the East Coast, that recognized that in order to get these women out of these situations with their children, they are not accepting the pets involved. There was a case -- now this was truly horrific and I don't know how many of you are aware of it -- there was a chap further north, Joseph Pudlat, who was estranged from his family and while his family was out, he broke into his estranged family's home and I hate to say it and describe it as this, their small dog had given birth to one puppy and this man took it upon himself to I guess get back at his estranged family by raping this dog, this mother, not only with himself but a caribou horn and a screwdriver. The family came home seeing him run naked from the house to find this poor dog, recent mother, screaming in pain. As a result, she died and her puppy died. So this here is one example of how a very ill individual can use an animal, a family pet to manipulate and strike the fear of God into family members. It's well documented. It's recognized by policing authorities around the world, by military around the world, and unfortunately recent reports on the NWT, we have one of the highest rapes of domestic and violent crime as anywhere. Compared, we have the highest rate to anywhere in Canada right now. So the animal abuse should have triggered alarm bells a long, long time ago. If you've got no regard for life or respect for life that you can just take an animal, take a puppy in your hand and slash its throat, that boggles the mind. Or wrap its muzzle with duct tape and shoot it in the face, that's not going to kill the animal, it's going to suffocate and drown on its own blood. If you can do that, what can you do to your child or your wife or your niece or your nephew? Those alarm bells should have gone out a long, long time ago.

There are programs in place. We definitely need education. I think as far as the dog population explosion, one of my suggestions has always been before an animal is ever handed to a new adoptive parent, that animal be spayed or neutered, altered before it's adopted out and that will curb population. To just depend on somebody signing a piece of paper saying oh yeah, I'll do it, and then they don't do it, so then you have more puppies, more problems. And it's not the animal, it's the human problem. It's not the animal problem, it's the human problem.

The other thing CHIRP is a report that was put out. You can Google it. It reports on the number of children that have been attacked, severely injured and in some cases killed by neglected sled dogs. I'm using sled dogs specifically because these were sled dogs that broke free of their chains and attacked small children. The reason they attacked is they did not have the interaction, the human interaction for one thing and they weren't properly fed. In Tuktoyaktuk, one woman watched her little puppy being eaten alive in front of her when some sled dogs broke free of the chains that Pokiak had his dogs on. We tried to get the two surviving dogs seized and him charged, RCMP wouldn't have anything to do with it, although they were there and witnessed. Constable Diplock (sic), yeah, there's a few frozen dead to the ground here and these other two don't look too well, but there was no seizure of the surviving animals. Pokiak didn't face any charges. God knows what happened to those other two dogs.

So there's got to be awareness, there's got to be education and there are programs that can be put in place. WHSPA (sic) did a very successful spay/neuter clinic in Manitoba, Alberta. Why can't we get a program like we have locums coming in for humans? I was just talking to my mom last night, I've got a contact at Guelph University which is the Ontario veterinary medical college. We managed to convince them to quit using live animals for experimental surgeries by students. Maybe I can use my contact there to see if a program can be put in place to get students to come up, service more remote areas, like they do I think it's in the Sahtu. Why can't we get like a locum program, but as veterinarians? You know, it's hands-on learning for the students. We could look at that and then we could get a free spay/neuter clinic. Providence had a successful spay/neuter clinic last year. We could do that here in Hay River. We could spread it around, you know? Anyway, I'm talking too much.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Bonnie. Yes, that's something we heard at the other public hearing too, was the spay and neuter program and how the government gets involved in setting that up I think is something that certainly this committee could look at recommending to the government. We also heard how successful the program was in the Sahtu. It's with the University of Calgary School of Veterinary Medicine. You know, it's programs like that, I think you're right, Bonnie, especially in the more remote locations if we could get a spay/neuter program in there and some fourth year vet students in there to work, you know? One of the, I think it was Nicole Spencer, she's the president of the SPCA, she was speaking about the cost. In some of these communities, in the Sahtu, they put the students up and feed them, which is the biggest part of the expense. I think if everybody is working towards the same goal, you know a lot of good can be accomplished in the small communities when it comes to spay and neuter.

We have Mrs. Groenewegen who wanted to make a comment.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: Just going back to this recommendation of the inclusion of this clause in here, I just want to say that I don't know if I was clear before, but I would not support the inclusion of that in the legislation. I think that clause is offensive to people who have respectfully used dogs for traditional purposes over the years in the Northwest Territories, and I also think it's offensive if it's meant to be the loophole that it's being described as for the mistreatment of animals and to be able to do so without any consequence. So as I said when I spoke before, I wasn't sure if I was clear about that, but certainly I won't support it. It will come down to a vote if it makes to the floor of the House with the clause in there. The way it works is this committee will then take this back to a clause-by-clause hearing. The Minister and any Member could make a motion to remove that clause and the Minister has to say whether or not he and the drafters and the department agree with that amendment. So it may never even make it to the floor of the House with that clause in there. But if it did show up on the floor of the House, as Mr. Ramsay said, I doubt it if would go un-amended on the floor of the House, but I don't even see it even getting that far. I'm not supposed to say this, but I'm not a member of the EDI. I'm not a member of this committee, but I can pretty well assure you there will be a motion to amend if it ever gets to the floor of the House. If it did go that far, as a Regular Member I would vote against it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, Mrs. Groenewegen. Mr. Bromley.

MR. BROMLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would certainly be three votes, but hopefully we won't get there. I just wanted to mention that a lot of people have been asking for more or raising the need for more veterinary care in the NWT. I wanted to take this opportunity to put in a bit of a plug here. The Government of the Northwest Territories used to maintain a seat at a veterinary clinic for a student at a veterinary university, I think the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. It's expensive to maintain those seats. The most recent price to maintain a seat for a student is \$65,000 per year. So you can imagine that a student can't do this on their own. It sort of takes a sugar daddy like a government to help that out.

I know for a fact that we do have interest amongst our young people and I have a constituent who is trying hard to get support to attend, but we gave up that program. The university recognizes the need and they have reduced the rate and maintained a seat for a student from one of the three territories every year and it's now open, still open. The rate is now \$25,000, which is a steal. So if you are at all moved and concerned about this, I urge you to consider writing the Minister of Education, Mr. Lafferty, and letting him know that you would like to see that seat taken up by a student who has the interest and commitment, born in the North to return and work here. I agree with this need and that's why I'm sort of coming out a bit here.

We have a wildlife vet on staff and he's nearing retirement. We've just lost one of the two vets in Yellowknife, so we're down to a vet. We do have that Sahtu program and

that's again through the goodness of a wildlife vet who used to practice with Bill Carpenter in Yellowknife off and on as she went through her studies to become a wildlife vet and is now a professor at the University of Saskatchewan. So we have some resources out there, if we can bring those supports to bear and the call for that. Just a note.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks very much for that, Bob. I think Ms. Dawson was talking about some examples of animal abuse and dog abuse here in the Northwest Territories. I think the onus for this legislation moving forward is that currently the Northwest Territories is regarded as one of the best places in North America to abuse animals and I think that's a name that we don't want to have here in the Northwest Territories. We have to change that and again moving this legislation forward minus the clause that's there on traditionally accepted practices is a step in the right direction, but we're not all the way there as I mentioned earlier. We do need comprehensive animal rights legislation here in the Northwest Territories. Well documented cases, the one in Behchoko, the one in Tuktoyaktuk and more recently in Whati where the pregnant dog was thrown outside to give birth to the puppies and they all died except for one, including the mother. Incidents like that give us a black eye. They really do. People are paying attention, not just here at home but across the country and across North American and even internationally for that matter. Certainly we don't want to be known as one of the best places to abuse animals. So we are setting a course to try to correct that and make it so that not just dogs but all animals are protected in the Northwest Territories well into the future.

So this legislation, just to let you know, we're hoping, as I mentioned earlier as well, to get down to Fort Smith. There are some folks who want to talk to us in Fort Smith. Then we'll come back to the House and hopefully the amendments will be passed during the upcoming budget session, which runs for about five weeks starting on February 2nd into the first week of March. So if all goes according to plan, we should be able to get the amendments passed by the first week in March. Again, a step in the right direction but we're not all the way there. This government only has eight months left in its current mandate. There will be an election in October and hopefully the animal rights legislation is on the radar of the next government. Some of us will be back to make sure that it's there and hopefully that happens sooner rather than later. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank everybody for coming out tonight and maybe just ask one more time if anybody has any questions. Beatrice.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: ...(inaudible)...

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Oh, Sharla.

MS. LEPINE: I would just like a clarification. You keep saying animal rights, animal rights. You're not talking about animal welfare legislation?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Same thing. Protection is the same thing.

MS. LEPINE: I'd be careful with the use of that term, because don't forget in the Northwest Territories with the fur industry we've had long ongoing battles with animal rights groups. And so I know they have their place but in terms of our domestic animal protection, we're looking at their welfare. I just wanted to make that point. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Protection, welfare, yes. We'll go to... Can you just state your name, for the record?

MS. CARROLL: Sharla Carroll. ...(inaudible)...both subsections 3(2) and 4(3) would be possibly removed? People have been referring to one subsection and I think both of them are probably problematic.

The other thing I just wanted to touch is implementation issues. I think this is a wonderful start, but I think there isn't the capacity currently to enforce a lot of this. Certainly I can't speak on behalf of the RCMP, having worked with them in the past when I was a social worker, I'm not trying to diminish how important it is but they have capacity issues as well. I don't know that they have the capacity to fulfil the requirements that people are expecting, some of the concern I've heard tonight.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks very much, Sharla. That certainly is a concern. The implementation in this and the other concern related to that is the impact on municipalities, taking dogs under control and whether they are going to need more infrastructure or staff to do that. These are all things that will have to be worked through. Of course, the discussions will have to take place with the RCMP on capacity issues. Certainly I know they're busy as it is and this will be something else, because in the amendments they are the enforcement officer in most cases if not all cases in small communities. I'm not sure, did you want to say a few words? We'll get you the microphone. It's Constable O'Keefe?

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: No, Jack Keefe.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Jack Keefe, Constable Keefe. Are you a sergeant or constable, sir?

CONSTABLE KEEFE: First of all, I'll apologize for my voice. I've had a cold for a week now. I hope none of you get it. Each day is a different kind of misery and the last couple of days I've lost my voice and I'm starting to get it back. I'll also thank Jane for the promotion to Corporal there when she introduced me.

---Laughter

I'm a lowly constable here, posted in Hay River and I've been here for the last couple of years. Just because the RCMP was mentioned a couple of times this evening and before I start, before I make comments, I'll just warn you that I'll sound like a government bureaucrat here for a couple of minutes and just say when people do make complaints to the RCMP, we have to follow up. It's our duty to follow up on all complaints and that we do follow up on complaints that are made to us and that we do conduct investigations on animal cruelty under the Criminal Code. I can only speak for

myself, I can't comment on other concerns that people have on other investigations simply because I haven't been part of them, but personally I have been part of a couple of investigations under the Criminal Code on animal cruelty and there is one ongoing investigation in Hay River right now which is a fairly complex investigation or was a complex investigation. It's now in the court system. And really that's all I'd like to say is we do follow up. We are aware of our enforcement duties.

As far as our resources go, I don't know if that's relevant to drafting new legislation. You draft the legislation and, like I said, we will do our part of the enforcement and put it before the Crown and put it before the courts. That's the way our judicial legal system functions. That's basically all I needed to say. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thank you very much, Constable Keefe. We appreciate all the RCMP does for our residents in the Northwest Territories. We appreciate your efforts. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I just wanted to follow up on something Ms. Dawson made reference to, and that's the correlation between violent offences and cruelty to animals. I don't know the science of that. I don't understand it altogether, but I do know that people who have been abused, particularly children, are more likely to be abusive towards things that are smaller than them, whether it be smaller children or animals. And, um, I'm not a follower of a lot of serial killer-type cases, but I have heard like in cases of Jeffrey Dalmer and people like that, their pursuit of that type of activity actually began on animals, and for some reason they had engrained in them some huge disrespect for animals and for life of animals and for life in general, which graduated to more violence and violence against people and turning out to murder as well. I don't really know the science of it but I do know that it's important that we have a culture of respect for living things and when we don't, there's kind of no end to the despair and destruction that can occur as a result of that and it's some that is interesting. Just when you mentioned, it had kind of reminded me of a few incidents I'd heard of and something kind of worth thinking about too, you know? We need to have respect for all living things and I love critters in general, but I wouldn't say I'm a dog person like you. I remember now walking with my little dog and you noticing her.

---Laughter

I don't put myself in that noticing every pet kind of category but that's something we need to teach our children too, is respect for... There's a huge role for parents to play in reaching respect for animals too, because that stays with them throughout their life. This legislation is a good first step as somebody said, but it's so far from solving the problems that are out there.

MS. DAWSON: One letter I received from MACA Minister Robert McLeod did say that this interim *Dog Act* "is an interim measure until a more comprehensive animal protection act can be put in place here." I've got that letter on my hard drive somewhere in that mess of files. So I just wanted to let everybody know it's being considered as an interim measure.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks for that, Bonnie. So we'll ask once again, does anybody have any questions or comments that they'd like to share with us this evening? Diana Yeager. We'll get you a microphone.

MS. YEAGER: At the risk of opening a whole other can of worms here and also at the risk of sounding really naive, I'm just curious why people would want this clause, this loophole in that act. What is the opposing side here from your knowledge?

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): I wish I could tell you. I'm not sure why they wanted this clause in there, but it certainly came up at committee when we were first discussing the proposed amendments. It's something that moved forward because members of the committee wanted it to. Those members represent smaller communities. I struggle with that too. I just personally don't understand why they would want that there. In a way, it makes it look like aboriginal people have abused animals or dogs since they've had them and they want to continue to do that. But that's not the case. The aboriginal people that I know and the aboriginal way that I know is they respect everything, all living things, animals, and they treat them with dignity and respect. That's why, again, I struggle to understand why that clause is necessary in this legislation as we move it forward, because it really has no place there at all. I wish we had a couple of the other committee members here tonight so you could ask them directly why you think it's important to have that clause in here. We've got some Members here that are going to comment. I'll go to Mr. Bromley and then Mrs. Groenewegen.

MR. BROMLEY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think the sorts of things we heard was sort of the reverse concern, but both of these are concerns about interpretation. I mentioned earlier that the people that were looking to have this in would agree with you, I think, pretty much on what is cruel and what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. But they are concerned that the traditional use which includes such things as perhaps putting your dogs on an island on Great Slave Lake and letting them roam free on a small island and having access to water and so on during the summer, throwing them a fish three times a week, that that would not be considered acceptable treatment. Whereas they and most of us would consider that a non-working dog, that would be acceptable treatment. They are out of the flies, out on the lake on an island and so on. So it's this business about interpretation. Every law must be interpreted. This is somewhat difficult because we can't define every situation. Obviously traditional treatment with a traditional dog is one thing, traditional treatment with a dog that doesn't have those same rugged capabilities of a husky or a Canadian Eskimo dog would be not appropriate. So then you start trying to define every situation, but that was their concern. That probably derives a little bit from things like the things that have happened in the past to aboriginal people, trapping industry and so on. So there's some basis for that concern, but I think we are beyond that in this case. I'm just trying to be fair to them and speak up a little bit on what their concerns are. That's all, for what it's worth.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, Mr. Bromley. Mrs. Groenewegen.

MRS. GROENEWEGEN: I totally agree with what Mr. Bromley is saying. I don't think that anyone who proposed this, as we're defining it, this loophole in the legislation, did

so with the intent that it would allow people to treat animals with cruelty, dogs with cruelty and not be held responsible for it. I was there when they were speaking and I don't think that was their intention. It was more of an attitude of don't tell us, we know better. And that control was perceived as some kind of invasion of a traditional activity and endeavour, and that part of that control they found offensive.

I was at one of the public hearings in the lead-up to the meeting and there is a vast difference between a working dog, a sled dog, and we see them all in communities... I don't know, the last time I was in Lutselk'e it was like howling all night. There were dog teams all over the place. Fort Res, I don't know if it's still like that, but you used to go there years ago and every yard had a dog team tied up in it somewhere. I mean, there's a vast difference between a working dog that's tied with a house and straw in the house on a chain and he's fed, you know, than the little poodle that jumps up and sleeps on the end of your bed at night. As one of the Members said, we dress them up in human clothes. There's a vast difference. Some dogs are viewed as working dogs. That does not create licence to treat them inappropriately, but they're also not going to be coddled and treated like the household pet either. In your wildest dreams, you're not going to bring them into the house. So we're talking about quite a variety of people's interaction with dogs.

I think I might say in defence of my colleague who had a concern, I think it does stem from other areas. I bet you as a matter of fact, the same Member that brought this up would also have issues with even some of the child protection legislation that we've brought up, because again it's seen as a form of invading what they think should be a foregone conclusion, that there would be a respectable treatment of the dogs.

So that was my understanding of it. I don't know if that helps at all about how this came about, but I think we can take it to an extreme but I don't believe the intentions were ill motivated.

CHAIRMAN (Mr. Ramsay): Thanks, Mrs. Groenewegen. And they weren't. I guess Mr. Bromley summed it up as well. The clause is there, the committee wanted it there and we're having the debate. It's going to be a discussion and a debate that's going to take place and that's all I can say to it. It's to be decided, but there's a number of us that don't agree with it being there. I think there are more of us than there is of them, so at the end of the day it will be out, but we'll have to wait and see. I can't promise anything, obviously, but it's my belief that it will be gone.

Do we have anybody else who wanted to share with us? If not, in closing I just wanted to thank you all very much for your attendance here tonight. One of the best parts of being a Member of the Legislative Assembly is getting out on the road to the different communities of the Northwest Territories and it's always good to see old friends when you get to communities and meet new friends and get to talk to people about the issues that are important to them. It's one of the best things about being a Member, is the public hearings and taking the legislation on the road. We enjoy it immensely. It's the best part of the job, really. I've been at it for awhile and it never gets old.

In this piece of legislation, the amendments to the *Dog Act*, it's just overwhelming, the e-mails, the phone calls, the interviews. It's creating quite a buzz and rightfully so. I think that the main contentious issue is that clause. You know, we're in tune with the public's demand that that be removed. We'll listen to anybody that wants to tell us anything on this.

So the process is far from over, but we're again very happy to be here in Hay River. Thank you for your attendance tonight and we wish you a great evening. Stay tuned as this moves forward. Once again, thank you very much. I'd like to thank the staff too, and Mrs. Groenewegen and Mr. Delorey for hosting us here in Hay River. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT