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International Fund for Animal Welfare



Canadian Federation of Humane Societies

The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies
La Fédération des sociétés canadiennes d'assistance aux animaux

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CFHS and IFAW/Senate Bill on Cruelty to Animals a "Decoy"

Poll shows Senate Bill on cruelty to animals fails to provide the protection that Canadians demand

OTTAWA, ONTARIO--(CCNMatthews - Dec. 12, 2006) - The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies (CFHS) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) today released the results of a public opinion poll that shows an overwhelming 85% of Canadians support legislation that will make it easier for law enforcement agencies to prosecute those who commit criminal acts of cruelty to animals. This support was found to be as high in rural areas as in cities, and just as high in the Western provinces as in the rest of Canada. But, the Senate of Canada has shown that it is not in tune with Canadians by passing a Private Senate Bill (Bill S-213) last Thursday, focused only on increased penalties making it just as difficult to prosecute those who commit criminal acts of animal cruelty as the current law - a law passed in the days of Queen Victoria.

The trouble with the current law is that it is difficult to enforce because it contains outdated language and concepts resulting in only 1/4 of 1% of animal cruelty complaints leading to successful convictions. The Senate Bill does nothing to change this.

"In fact, raising penalties on a law that is so difficult to enforce is like fixing the brakes on a car whose engine won't start," explained Kim Elmslie from IFAW Canada. "Under this Bill those who commit crimes against animals will continue to go unpunished."

The survey, conducted by SES Research also found that three quarters of Canadians support removing animal cruelty crimes from the property section of the Criminal Code of Canada. People living in rural areas, people who fish and hunt regularly and people who traditionally vote Conservative are even more likely to support this change than the national average.

"Animals are valued by Canadians as more than just property and the law needs to reflect that," says Steve Carroll, Chief Executive Officer of the CFHS. "The Senate Bill is nothing more than a decoy," explained Steve Carroll. "It may look like a real Bill on the surface but it's just another hollow attempt to distract Parliament from real animal cruelty legislation".

The national survey of 1,002 Canadians was conducted from November 5th to 9th, 2006. It is considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.1%, 19 times out 20.

CFHS and IFAW call on Parliament to listen to the will of Canadians by rejecting the Senate Bill (S-213) and instead expand on the success of a legislative process that was built on seven years of consultation, wide consensus and truly progressive thinking. Prime Minister Harper needs to introduce legislation that will protect animals from cruelty and will be consistent with his own love of animals.

About CFHS and IFAW

The CFHS and IFAW are both non-profit organizations that work to improve animal welfare by advocating science-based positions that reflect the views of a majority of Canadians. Both organizations work closely with industry groups and governments to provide constructive input into policies and standard practices. Together, the two organizations represent more than 450,000 Canadian donors and supporters in all regions of the country.

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