



Office of Mark Holland, M.P.
Official Opposition Critic for Public Safety

For immediate release:

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Holland to BC Tory MPs – Senseless dog slaughter case cries out for tougher laws

OTTAWA – Liberal MP and Public Safety Critic Mark Holland reached out to British Columbia Conservative MPs today, asking for their help to reform weak animal cruelty laws in light of news about a criminal investigation underway into the slaughter of one hundred dogs near Whistler, BC – a case that has shocked and outraged people across the country. Canada’s animal cruelty laws, as currently written, have loopholes that permit known abusers to evade justice after committing egregious acts of cruelty.

“These loopholes in our laws need to be closed at last,” wrote Holland in a letter to all twenty-one BC Conservative MPs.

Holland has had a private member’s bill to amend and strengthen the Criminal Code section dealing with animal cruelty crimes since 2004. Once a Liberal government justice bill, it is presently numbered C-229.

BC Conservative MPs were contacted because the dog slaughter, the nation’s latest high-profile animal cruelty case, had occurred in their home province.

“As government MPs representing British Columbia constituencies, I am hopeful that this tragic case that occurred in your home province will inspire you to work within your own party for real reforms now.”

Holland, as the Liberal Party’s Public Safety Critic, also raised public safety concerns in a bid to appeal to the Conservatives who claim a *law and order* agenda.

“A clear relationship exists between animal cruelty and other serious types of crimes, including spousal and child abuse, among other horrific violent crimes. By toughening our animal cruelty laws, we have a better chance of apprehending, convicting and rehabilitating abusers, making our communities safer and healthier.”

Holland has tried on several occasions to get the Harper government to take his bill and expedite it through all legislative stages. In 2009, following a horrific animal cruelty case in New Brunswick, he

reached out to NB Tory MP Keith Ashfield, after hearing reports that the MP, who currently serves Minister of National Revenue, expressed an interest in Holland's bill. Ashfield never responded to several calls made by Holland.

Assuaging concerns of partisanship, Holland stated in his letter that this "issue doesn't fall into an ideological category. The cause for reforming our animal cruelty laws unites voters of both our parties, indeed all Canadians. It's a real *motherhood and apple pie issue*."

Holland closed off his letter appeal by inviting the BC Tory MPs to call him to discuss this issue further.

Full text of letter follows.

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Letter from Mark Holland to BC Conservative MPs:

Dear **[BC Colleagues]**,

Recent reports concerning the gruesome and senseless slaughter of one hundred husky dogs near Whistler, BC, remind us all that glaring loopholes persist in Canada's Criminal Code that hinder the work of law enforcement and the courts to successfully prosecute and convict known perpetrators of serious acts of animal cruelty. In fact, only a tiny fraction – less than 1% – of serious animal abuse cases ever see a conviction; a problem that bill S-203 (2008) did nothing to remedy.

These loopholes in our laws need to be closed at last.

I am writing to you today to respectfully ask you to join me in advancing reasonable and responsible reforms to Canada's outdated animal cruelty laws. The fastest way to do this would be for the government to draft and expedite its own bill, based on the amendments proposed in my private member's bill C-229. Let's not wait for more horrific cruelty cases to surface before we do the right thing and get such a bill through Parliament.

Canadians want action to reform animal cruelty laws.

No other issue generates as much letters, phone calls and emails as animal cruelty does. I note that I have received thousands of communications from your constituents alone living in British Columbia, and I suspect you have too. This issue doesn't fall into an ideological category. The cause for reforming our animal cruelty laws unites voters of both our parties, indeed all Canadians. It's a real *motherhood and apple pie issue*.

It's also a public safety issue. The facts bear this out.

A clear relationship exists between animal cruelty and other serious types of crimes, including spousal and child abuse, among other horrific violent crimes. By toughening our animal cruelty laws, we have a better chance of apprehending, convicting and rehabilitating abusers, making our communities safer and healthier.

Please consider the calls of countless Canadians, including your own constituents, who are sickened by senseless acts of cruelty, like the dog slaughter in B.C., and who are outraged by the state of our weak laws in Canada. As government MPs representing British Columbia constituencies, I am hopeful that this tragic case that occurred in your home province will inspire you to work within your own party for real reforms now.

I invite you to call me to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Mark Holland, MP for Ajax-Pickering,
Public Safety Critic for the Official Opposition