

Press Release



MAPAQ continues to stab in the dark in matters of animal welfare

For immediate broadcast

Montreal, February 8th, 2013. Since 2008 SPA Canada has been campaigning tirelessly to outlaw puppy mills in Quebec. The province currently harbours some 2,000 establishments engaged in unregulated animal production, which makes it the unofficial “Canadian champion” of animal cruelty. Last year, in response to the demands of the population, MAPAQ (the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) passed a law on the sanitary protection of animals (p- 42), without, however, specifying any concrete means of enforcing it. The portion of this law which is certainly of most interest to advocates of animal rights is the **Regulation for the security and welfare of cats and dogs**. The ministry is now holding public conferences on the distribution of permits for dog and cat owners, in order to modify the law currently in effect. Owners of more than 15 animals (breeders, shelters, pounds, puppy mills, etc.) will be obligated by law to acquire a permit.

While we recognize the good intentions of MAPAQ in making permits mandatory, the ministry continues, as it always has, to avoid the real issue. The proposed regulation is inadequate in that it imposes no limit on the number of animals that an owner may possess, which will allow puppy mills to continue to proliferate. Also, the ministry does not intend to revoke the permits of breeders who violate the well-being of their animals, and the distribution of permits is not preceded by any kind of inspection. A permit system may seem like a step in the right direction, but it is utterly ineffectual when it comes to the issue at the root of the debate: animal overproduction.

According to Gabriel Villeneuve, campaign director for SPA Canada, it is imperative that the government deal with the problem of animal overproduction: ‘Imposing quotas on exploiters would solve part of the problem, but MAPAQ must absolutely prohibit the sale and possession of non-sterilized animals’. SPA Canada believes that it should be illegal for distributors to seek their supply outside of animal shelters; this would help counter overpopulation and would allow pounds to cease their habit of uselessly and excessively putting down perfectly healthy animals on the pretext of saving space.

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Furthermore, SPA Canada believes that a moratorium is necessary in order to prevent the opening of new points of sale in the province, as well as the exportation of animals that come from unregulated establishments. In a similar vein, the ministry should pay more attention to online commerce. Mr. Villeneuve would add that restrictions on the production end has the inevitable, pernicious effect of boosting animal distribution via the internet, which cannot be tolerated by a ministry that claims to care about the welfare of animals.

According to SPA Canada, it is high time that MAPAQ cease to amend regulations that have no real impact, and finally put some concrete, prohibitive measures in place in order to stop the scourging of animals. The biggest challenge that MAPAQ faces is to find ways of enforcing law p-42, and thereby put public funds to effective use. Ontario, for instance, has more than 200 inspectors at its disposal, whereas Quebec has around forty individuals to cover the whole province. Quebec may boast some brand-new legislation, but it remains the least effective and most permissive one in the country -- a disheartening reflection of the ministry's desire for change.

We are available for interviews.

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