



Media Release

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Ontario Legislature should support OSPCA resolution Lack of accountability, dual role and self-investigation must be addressed

On November 18, 2010, the Ontario Legislature will debate and vote on a resolution by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees, which urges the government to amend the OSPCA Act and reverse changes to that Act under Bill 50, which gave the OSPCA virtually unfettered powers of search, seizure and self-investigation.

“The OSPCA Act is a public statute, which a private agency has been given carte blanche to enforce. During the Committee hearings on Bill 50, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H.) and several major agricultural organizations recommended against the virtually limitless powers being handed to the OSPCA, with no oversight by the government,” said Greg Farrant, O.F.A.H. Manager of Government Affairs & Policy. “Unfortunately, the Committee ignored the recommendation. Further compounding the problem is the fact that the OSPCA raises funds as a recognized charity, while at the same time exercising unprecedented powers as an enforcement agency that is engaged in warrantless searches, seizures and the laying of charges. At a bare minimum, the government should have ensured that the two functions were separated out, and that a stringent series of controls over the powers accorded to the OSPCA were put in place.”

At various times since the passage of Bill 50, both the Minister of Community Safety and the Acting Premier have been asked why this oversight is lacking. Each has repeatedly suggested that because the OSPCA is an ‘arms length’ agency, which is ‘independent’ of the Legislature, they are prevented from acting. When questioned in the House in May, the Minister of Community Safety stated that, “Our government has developed a system that is consistent with so many other jurisdictions in North America. . . .” In fact, this is not the case. The O.F.A.H. pointed out during the Committee hearings that government oversight is included in several other jurisdictions, including Saskatchewan, where the Saskatchewan Animal Protection Act gives the Minister considerable powers to set requirements, qualifications and standards.

“It’s unconscionable that the government is claiming that its hands are tied. Bill 50 could have been amended during the Committee stage to provide the oversight that is clearly needed, particularly in light of recent events in Toronto and Newmarket. The fact that the OSPCA is not accountable to the public; that the public has no ability to access information about them through the Freedom of Information process; that they investigate themselves; that the training provided to inspectors is minimal at best; and that they act as both charity and enforcement agency is profoundly disturbing,” added Farrant. “The O.F.A.H. urges all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support the resolution which would correct this situation.”

With over 100,000 members, subscribers and supporters, and 670 member clubs, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is the province’s largest nonprofit fish and wildlife conservation organization, and the voice of anglers and hunters. For more information, visit www.ofah.org.

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