

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Chairperson
Mr. Jeff Wharton
Constituency of Gimli

Vol. LXX No. 1 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, April 12, 2017

ISSN 0713-9489

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BILLS

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Fielding, Hon. Mrs. Stefanson

*Ms. Fontaine, Mrs. Guillemard, Mr. Isleifson,
Ms. Lamoureux, Mr. Marcelino, Ms. Morley-Lecomte, Messrs. Smith, Swan, Wharton*

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 201–The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act

Ms. Tara Reimer, private citizen

Ms. Jody Kuik, private citizen

Mr. Wally Antoniuk, Winnipeg Police Service

Ms. Katie Powell, Save A Dog Network Canada

Mr. Jonas Watson, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 201–The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act

Bill 214–The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)

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Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. We will–pardon me–good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Private Bills please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Yes–sorry–Mr. Fielding.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I'd like to nominate the member from Seine River as the Vice-Chair–had to kind of get that straight.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, good. Are there–Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Morley-Lecomte is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 201, The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act; and Bill 214, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert).

We have a small number of presenters registered to speak tonight, as noted on the list of presenters before you. On the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will note that we have one out-of-town presenter in attendance, marked with an asterisk on the list.

With this consideration in mind, in what order does the committee wish to hear the presentations?

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I see that there's three individuals with an asterisk on the sheet I've got, but whatever the case, I think it'd be reasonable we let those folks present first.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

With–sorry–how long does the committee wish to sit this evening?

Mr. Swan: 'Til the work of the committee is completed.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Before we proceed with presentations, we have a number of other items and–agreed–and other items and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there are any–anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with the staff at the entrance of the room. Also, for the information of all the presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written material, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak with one of our staff at the back.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from the committee members.

If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will drop to the bottom of the list. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

Prior to the proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process of speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone speak—wishes to speak, whether it's an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn on the mics—turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience, and we will proceed with public presentations.

Bill 201—The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act

Mr. Chairperson: I call Tara Reimer.

Good evening, Ms. Reimer. Do you have any written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Tara Reimer (Private Citizen): I do, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: —for distribution to the committee?

Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Reimer: Good evening, members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me here tonight to show my support of the service and therapy animal day bill, 201.

This bill is important for bringing awareness to the benefits that animals have to offer people. I, Tara Reimer, strongly support this bill and wish to tell you more about the equine therapy that we offer at our Cloud 9 Ranch in Steinbach.

Any time spent with a horse is therapeutic, as just the act of grooming a horse releases oxytocin, which is the bonding hormone.

At Cloud 9 Ranch, we offer equine-assisted psychotherapy, equine-assisted learning, therapeutic riding and therapeutic horsemanship. Service providers like Child and Family Services, victims of crime, schools, veteran affairs, families, corporate

and management teams and many others have seen positive results using equine therapy.

We asked our clients to share with us how horses have benefitted them.

Tracey, an adult riding student, shared: After my four-year-old son and my father passed away, my weekly evening with these horses was something I treasured greatly. The sense of peace, joy and acceptance that came with grooming and communicating with these magnificent animals was a therapy I have yet to find elsewhere.

A mother of a youth riding student says: My daughter started out as a shy little eight-year-old girl, and over the three years of riding lessons, she has developed into a confident, I-can-do-anything kind of girl. It's almost as though there's a transfer of power from the horse to her. I see her relax into the horse, and I see her almost grow an inch or two on the confidence scale as she feels how the horse respects her commands and how she, in turn, respects the horse's power. It's kind of like a dance between horse and rider; one leads and one follows. Horseback riding has allowed her to lead.

Kokobe, a youth student, says: Working with horses has grown my confidence to do other challenging stuff in life and it has helped me to better communicate with people.

Another parent says: Horses have given my daughter a sense of purpose. They have calmed her and helped her focus, given her empathy, allowed her to care for them, given her confidence, love and they don't judge.

Shelley shares: I'm a survivor of domestic abuse. My abuser was charged with 21 charges of assault. I went to therapists but until I was around horses, the pain remained unknown, even to me. But when I started touching horses, the enormous calmness of them and beauty brought out the pain I hide so well and the healing finally began.

Another admits that: Being with horses has taught me to control strong and sometimes untimely feelings such as rage, yet still address the problem.

Karen shares: This winter I found myself falling into a depression. The days I went to see my horse, I didn't need a nap. I was happier and I had more energy. It became so apparent that my husband knew when I had been to the barn to see my horse, even when I hadn't told him.

Laura says: A horse, while walking, has 110 movements per minute, which is in part why therapeutic horseback riding has significantly reduced my stress and anxiety. Plus, there are the physical benefits, like being able to work on core muscles, giving me better balance and three days of pain-free, loose muscles, which makes living with cerebral palsy more manageable.

Another of our youth, Shelby, says: Horses have given me confidence in my life. I feel I can do things I never thought I could. When I feel anxious, I go and see my horse to make everything better.

Elma, a foster parent, says: Being with the horses has greatly improved my foster daughter's self-confidence.

Tanja reminds us that it has been clinically documented that just being around horses changes human brainwave patterns; we calm down and become more centred and focused when we are with horses.

Jade, a med student, shares: Working with horses is very rewarding and immensely therapeutic. Three important benefits which I have found are helping people to learn how to relax in what can seem like an intimidating situation, learning to be present and aware of their surroundings and allowing people to hone their communication skills.

One mom shares: My child experiences anxiety that often prevents her from attending school and depression that includes being suicidal. One day as we were leaving the ranch, she said to me, Pete just gets it; he gets me. This horse was able to reach her where no other family member or therapist has.

* (18:10)

Another mom shares: I consider horses to be very therapeutic for my daughter who has had mental and emotional struggles in her teen years. It's good for her to get out of the house and away from the iPod, et cetera, and be out working and enjoying time with horses. I think that the whole idea of that interaction where the horse responds to the emotions that she is experiencing, where she has to engage in a positive way and manage things like her anger and frustration is valuable.

And Karen says: Horses are instrumental in assisting me to connect with nature. They have immensely helped reduce stress, tension, chronic pain and depression.

In these short testimonies from our clients, many times you heard the words confidence, patience, communication skills. These are worthwhile life skills for anyone. Did you also hear how horses helped reduce anxiety and depression? What is it about horses that makes them this effective? Horses are prey animals, unlike dogs and cats, which are predators. A horse's primary goal is to stay safe, and that would be true of people as well. I have found that in both humans and horses, that when they exhibit negative behaviour, it is actually rooted in fear, which is due to a lack of control of their environment.

Naturally intimidating to many, horses are large and powerful. This creates a natural opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence. Working alongside a horse, in spite of those fears, creates confidence and provides wonderful insight when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

Like humans, horses are social animals with defined roles within their herds. They would rather be with their peers. They have distinct personalities, attitudes and moods. An approach that works with one horse won't necessarily work with another. At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun. In other words, horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning, an effective technique when working with even the most challenging groups and individuals.

Horses require us to work, whether in caring for them or working with them. In an era—in an era when immediate gratification and the easy way are the norm, horses require people to be engaged in physical and mental work to be successful, a valuable lesson in all aspects of life.

Most importantly, horses mirror human body language. Many complain: the horse is stubborn; that horse doesn't like me, et cetera. The lesson is that if they change themselves, the horses respond differently.

Horses are honest, which makes them especially powerful messengers.

Allowing horses to be themselves and respond to the client's nonverbal messages enhances the opportunity for growth and learning as fears surface and are addressed in the context of other fears that clients may face in their lives.

Equine therapy provides clients the opportunities to do more than talk. They learn from their

experience, which tends to have longer lasting impact.

Equine-assisted psychotherapy incorporates horses experientially for emotional growth and learning. A qualified mental health professional and an equine specialist, like myself, work with clients and horses to address treatment goals. Activities with horses are designed to reflect life issues. Clients quickly recognize unhealthy patterns and enact new behaviours.

Horses don't accept talk. Clients have to make authentic changes to affect horses' responses.

Equine-assisted learning involves a similar process but focuses on educational and human/organizational development goals in this highly interactive and impactful learning approach, often used in team building.

Equine therapy treats trauma, abuse, depression, anxiety, addictions, eating disorders and other mental health and behavioural needs, and works on educational objectives, like working with business groups and leaders, schools and other growth and learning needs.

The EAGALA Model, in which I am trained, has effectively been employed in the treatment of numerous behavioural and emotional disorders that are traditionally resistant to intervention and change, including conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, personality disorders and eating disorders.

What makes horses good team members is that horses are honest and express themselves nonverbally in response to our nonverbal messages, which we may not even be aware we are sending.

Thanks to the horses, the work is powerful, making the experience rewarding for the treatment team and clients alike.

For all the reasons I have mentioned, horses are key in providing therapy to humans, and it would be wise for us as a province to bring more awareness to the multitude of benefits that are available to all of us. This bill will help bring that awareness and help those of us working with horses for the purpose of therapy to reach more Manitobans and make a positive difference in more people's lives. Changes like those mentioned by our client don't stop at the client but rather create a ripple effect, and the benefits are long lasting.

I, Tara Reimer, of Cloud 9 Ranch strongly support the service and therapy animal day, Bill 201.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Reimer, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have any questions for the presenter?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So miigwech for coming to present to us tonight. I appreciate your presentation. And I think it's interesting that right away, when I go to service animals, I go to dogs almost immediately. So I really do appreciate the narrative that there are all kinds of animals that provide that very special gift to humans. So I appreciate what you shared with us tonight.

And I'm just curious, in respect of Cloud 9 Ranch, how do individuals find you? Are there—is it a referral process? And then, again, how many horses do you have? And how can I go?—I'm just joking.

Ms. Reimer: Thank you for your comments, if I can remember all of them. And I did—I really appreciate being able to come here tonight and let people know about the work that horses do, because you're right. We think it is all about the dogs, really.

Cloud 9 Ranch has many different—like I said, we do a therapeutic horsemanship, which is often riders with disabilities, so we work a lot with enVision, but it can be anybody that can come. enVision is the adult living in Steinbach area, which is where we're located, so we work a lot with them.

Anybody can come for the therapy—anybody can come for anything. Therapeutic riding is half an hour. Riding lessons are for anybody. Everybody loves the smell of horses. It's therapeutic. And then the equine-assisted psychotherapy where we work with a mental health professional, anybody can come. But it is a little bit more expensive because there is a mental health professional available, and so that, right now, has been victims of crime, Child and Family Services, Blue Cross—those are service providers for those services that we offer. So you can google or put in the website cloud9ranch.ca. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Any further questions?

Thank you, Ms. Reimer, for your presentation.

I will now call Wally Antoniuk—I'd like to call Jody Kuik up, please.

Thank you, Ms. Kuik. Do you have any written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Jody Kuik (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Kuik: Good evening. My name is Jody Kuik. I am an equine-assisted learning facilitator. My horses and I have the pleasure of working with a number of individuals who live with autism spectrum disorder and other life challenges.

I do not enjoy public speaking, so this won't be a long speech. I am thankful for the opportunity to be involved, albeit minutely, with the process of Bill 201, service and therapy animal day. I feel that a day to acknowledge the importance of service and therapy animals would be wonderful. I hope that it will increase awareness and knowledge of the various types of therapy animals available and how they can improve the quality of life for many people on many different levels.

I also feel that it will positively impact both the people who work in the field and the various animals who provide 'therapure' service. Service and therapy animals have important and, in some instances, life-saving abilities. And yet, because they are animals and unable to speak for themselves, I think, it is truly commendable that Sarah Guillemard and her supporters initiated this bill and have brought it to this point. And I hope that it becomes a reality.

Horses have an uncanny ability to know what a person is feeling and thinking, regardless of what the individual is actually saying. They can understand a person's intention without words and they try hard to find—sorry, the right answer to each and every question or task that is asked of them, and I am sure that the same can be said for every service and therapy animal. They give us their all and many spend their entire lives in service. One special day to acknowledge their service is actually a very small and yet also a very great thing and well deserved.

Thank you for your time.

* (18:20)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Kuik.

Are there—do the members of the committee have any questions for the presenter?

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank you for coming out today and presenting to us.

I do have a question. Are therapy animals that are used for people with autism trained differently than therapy animals in general? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Kuik.

Ms. Kuik: Sorry.

It's a new field, and my animals are—I spend a lot of time training them to—say, rapid hand movements or jerky movements or jumping, or various things that I know they're going to have to deal with with the individuals who are coming to meet with them, just to negate that kind of pressure so that it's not an issue for them.

But mostly I find, so long as the facilitator is perfectly calm and okay with the situation, they don't see it as an issue. Like, no. I don't—there isn't a rulebook for how to train a horse to work with someone with autism, but—

Mr. Chairperson: Do members have any further questions?

Well, thank you, Ms. Kuik, for your presentation.

I'd now like to call Wally Antoniuk from Winnipeg Police.

Mr. Antoniuk, do you have any written material for distribution?

Mr. Wally Antoniuk (Winnipeg Police Service): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you. Please go ahead with your presentation.

Mr. Antoniuk: Mr. Chairperson, members of the committee, fellow presenters, my name is Wally Antoniuk. I'm a patrol sergeant and trainer with the Winnipeg Police K9 Unit. Accompanying me today is Sergeant Dave Bessason and police service dog, Dante, who is an explosive-detector dog.

On behalf of all members of the Winnipeg Police Service K9 Unit, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 201, the service and therapy animal service day act.

The introduction of this act will go a long way to highlight important initiatives and programs occurring in our province. In May, every year, attention will be given to the worthy and unique contributions service and therapy animals make on a daily basis to enrich the lives of Manitobans. These contributions occur across a broad spectrum of society in the areas of personal well-being, therapy and public safety.

Anyone whom has had the pleasure of having a pet or companion animal knows the special bond that

can develop over time and that animals offer love, friendship and affection unconditionally.

As a police service dog handler and trainer, I know first-hand and want to applaud the time, effort, patience and dedication the trainers of therapy horses and dogs invest in animals under their care in an effort to provide a better life for someone else. Many of these are volunteer roles, which is a testament to the giving spirit of Manitobans.

Speaking from a police-service-dog perspective, the contribution of a properly trained K9 team provides immeasurable assistance. We use our dogs to effectively and efficiently track suspects from serious crime scenes such as homicides, shootings, stabbings and robberies. The dogs are invaluable tools for locating discarded or hidden evidence, illegal drugs and explosives.

They are a true force multiplier. A police dog can locate a valuable piece of evidence like a spent shell casing in the area the size of a football field in a matter of minutes. This task would take ten officers walking shoulder to shoulder hours to achieve the same result.

Police service dogs are always out front clearing the way for officers to enter yards, compounds and buildings safely.

Two thousand sixteen was the most successful year in the 45-year history of the Winnipeg Police K9 Unit. Our officers attended over 6,000 calls for service. We successfully tracked 174 suspects fleeing crime scenes. Our handlers assisted other officers in helping arrest 200 other suspects. We located valuable evidence over 100 times while searching a crime scene. We safely searched 126 buildings, and we conducted 49 explosive searches.

The majority of these tasks could not have been accomplished without service dogs. In our opinion, Bill 201, The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act, will draw much-deserved attention to the valuable contributions service animals make and their role in society. Attention creates interest; interest leads to involvement. This cycle will continue, and Manitobans as a whole will be the benefactors.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Antoniuk, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have any questions?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for your presentation.

So I—several questions, so I'll just ask two at a time, maybe.

So how many service dogs do the WPS have in total? And how many puppies are you guys currently training? Because I've seen—I get the tweets of the puppies, so.

Mr. Antoniuk: Thank you for the question.

We currently have 13 working dogs. We have several breeding females, who are not working dogs but are a valuable asset. We currently have no active puppies at the moment. Those—the dogs that we had in our last litter have been put into service; we're currently training them. They were trained last year, and some are just being refresher trained for explosives or narcotics right now.

Ms. Fontaine: What kind of training do WPS members get themselves to be able to actually be part of the K9 Unit?

Mr. Antoniuk: The Winnipeg Police Service is lucky and unique in the sense that we have what's called a Quarry Program. It's something that we've developed over the years, and we are the envy of police services across Canada, actually in North America.

We have officers who have expressed an interest to become canine handlers. So, when we raise puppies, we have a littler of 11 dogs. We need places—officers to look after these dogs on a day-to-day basis, so it allows us to examine them and see how they're going to work prior to being able to train them. So these officers who are called our quarries, we set them up with kennels and dog houses, and they take it upon themselves to set up their backyard with the kennel and the dogs. They raise the dogs; they exercise them; and socialize them, which is the key of why we have such a successful program.

The whole job of this quarry is to put that dog in any type of situation that occurs in society. Take it to the side of the road—watch trucks go by; take it to the airport; put it on an escalator; have it in a place where there's loud noise; take it by a lawnmower—things like that. So the dog is accustomed to all these things. And, when it's time to actually train it, we don't have to work with any quirks or issues that the dog has.

A quarry may raise five or six puppies before he's eligible to apply for the role as a handler. It

gives us a chance to gauge their abilities, and it also gives them the opportunity to see if working in the K9 Unit is something they actually want to pursue. So it's a many-faceted approach. They care for the dogs, and everybody gets to learn from the experience.

Ms. Fontaine: Do—I'm not sure if you have this information, but do you happen to know the cost of the total program per year?

Mr. Antoniuk: I'm sorry, I don't have that information available right now.

Ms. Fontaine: So I just want—no more questions. I know you—but I just want to say miigwech for the work that you do. I think that every—I mean, you saw how—I mean, the work that you guys do and your partners, your K9 Unit partners, are, I think, quite extraordinary to citizens, and they do induce a lot of joy. And so I actually think that it's actually, you know, a good way to also bridge, you know, the community with the WPS. So I just lift up the work that you and your colleagues are doing.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, I just wanted to thank you very much for everything that you do in the police K9 Unit and your colleagues. And thank you for coming down here to spend an evening of your time and speak about what's obviously a very important cause.

So thank you for doing what you do.

Just a quick question just on the training itself.

At what age do you start the training? And how long is the training period?

Mr. Antoniuk: The training actually starts from day one. From our perspective, we have our own breeding program. We're one of only—we're the only municipal department in Canada to have a full-time breeding program and one of two in North America.

So, when we breed our dogs, the—we have the puppies in our kennels, in a special whelping room, that has an observation area. So we're gauging them and doing little tests on them right from the minute that they're born and they're mobile. And we're slowly 'developing' them and exposing them, as I mentioned earlier, to all different types of things, and doing stability tests and sort of broadening their experience on the world. And, as we play with them, we insert little tests on biting and whether they're into hiding things to see if they'll find them, which dogs show the most interest, stuff like that. So it—

almost from day one, we're training them and selecting them, and then once we've selected dogs that we want to train for our program, probably we're saying at about six months we start more intense training.

* (18:30)

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions from the committee?

Well, thank you for your presentation, Mr. Antoniuk.

I will now call Katie Powell.

Ms. Powell, do you have any written material to—for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Katie Powell (Save A Dog Network Canada): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Powell: Hi, everyone.

My name is Katie Powell. I am president and founder of Save A Dog Network. I'm here because I wanted to thank you guys for passing this bill. As a service dog, you guys have recognized that these companion animals are needed. Not only are they needed for therapy like different diseases—the biggest is that we are forgetting about the thousands and thousands of dogs that roam our Manitoba First Nations that have nobody.

Think about this for a second. You step outside your house and you are bombarded with 20 to 30 unaltered male dogs that have no socialization and no training. You have young children that cannot play safely outside their homes. They're not able to walk to the store with their families or to school without packs of dogs grabbing their lunch bags, mauling children. We have had children die in bushes because dogs have dragged these children away from their families.

The biggest problem that we have here today is that we don't recognize these animals as anything but animals that have no love. There are so many animals in Manitoba, specifically, that are in need. We are here today because not only are we recognizing that these Manitoba dogs are of a good service but many are being left behind.

Save A Dog Network is a volunteer-run, non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Founded in 2013, we provide support and resources, while educating First Nation communities. The focus

of Save A Dog Network is on the front lines, providing a solution to the overpopulation of roaming and unwanted dogs in Manitoba by bringing affordable veterinary resources and support to remote First Nation communities.

Save A Dog Network is a group of dedicated dog lovers that help provide transportation into Winnipeg for sick and injured and unwanted puppies and dogs. These dogs are then provided with deworming and vaccinations, fixed and sent into temporary foster homes in Winnipeg before moving on to adopting rescues outside Canada where there isn't a huge problem like we have here in Manitoba. This is where they will find their forever homes.

Save A Dog Network plays an integral part of making Manitoba First Nation communities a safer living area with less puppies being born and a major decrease in aggressive and roaming dogs.

Did you know, statistically, children living in these First Nation communities are 180 times more likely to be bitten by a dog than children living in an urban setting? Unconfirmed reports place on-reserve dog bite incidents 20 to 100 times above those the rest of Canada. Many children and adults living in these remote areas are scared, bitten, seriously injured or even killed by these roaming dogs. Hundreds and hundreds of dogs roam our Manitoba First Nations. Many are owned but many are unwanted, and the majority of them are unvaccinated and unaltered. They lack training and socialization and cause serious problems within these communities. When these areas are at risk, unfortunately, dog shoots are the way that this is handled today and in the past. Save A Dog Network is here to change this.

Save A Dog Network has an amazing volunteer team who consists of people who are dedicated to making changes in these isolated Manitoba First Nations. These volunteers consist of veterinarians, technicians, assistants, transporters, pet stores, the Winnipeg Humane Society's fosters and, most importantly, our First Nation band members living in these remote areas. These efforts of Save A Dog Network would not be effective without the dedicated indigenous people willing to bring awareness to their communities, their families and their chief and councils.

Save A Dog Network cannot accomplish what it does without the support of the local businesses, private donators, and people like yourself living in Manitoba.

There is a long list of zoonotic diseases that may be expected to transport from dogs to our citizens in Canada. The most notable is rabies. Rabies is a virus disease spread predominantly through the saliva of biting. Rabies started as a northern disease in the arctic fox, then spread through the Americas, adapting to other species. The incubation can—the incubation period can vary from three weeks to five months. Rabies is fatal, with no cure. Anyone could be exposed to rabies through saliva and bites, but trappers, hunters, and Aboriginal citizens can also be exposed through the process of eating this wildlife.

Dogs are still the primary source of rabies infections to our nation's communities. Each community's dog population forms a barrier between its citizens and the rabies-affected wildlife. If 70 per cent more of the community's dogs were vaccinated against rabies and others, like parvo and distemper, these communities would be more protected from other outbreaks. Our First Nation communities currently do not meet the 70 per cent dog vaccination target for community 'protectious', but non-indigenous communities do, all across Canada.

First Nation communities are left exposed to re-occurrent rabies outbreaks simply because the Manitoba and the Canadian government do not want to provide funds for remote First Nation communities to veterinary care. When will we have consistent vaccination programs to 'prevrent' rabies-related public health crisis? Rabies is preventable, and it can be easily prevented with education and providing resources to these people.

There are many reasons why it's important to control the overpopulation of roaming dogs. Did you know one unfixed female roaming around these Manitoba First Nations can produce 67,000 offspring in just five years with a death rate of 50 per cent? It is incomprehensible the amount of dogs that are being born in Manitoba. Many will die from diseases, from wildlife, and from other humans degrading these animals.

The cruelty to animals has a devastating psychological impact on young children witnessing these acts. The willful act of causing or ignoring animal suffering is also linked to subsequent violent offences against people. This is especially true with domestic violence. Questionnaires administered to battered women in Canadian shelters indicate 75 per cent of these battered women who had pets reported their aggressor had also injured or killed

one or more of their pets. The act of children throwing stones or hitting unwanted dogs, even in self-defence, can lead to an escalating violent behaviour in these children. Children that see dogs, they are played with—plagued with being shot, trapped, or poisoned, will also be psychologically impacted.

These are our children, our Manitoba First Nation children, that are our future. Children need this chance. They are our next generation, and we need to do all we can to set them up for success. They all live—always—are already living in poverty with no running water, they have no access to anything but a nursing station, and they deserve more.

A dog can be a powerful source of unconditional love through a bond with a human. Abuse of this human-animal bond is part of the cycle seen in this domestic abuse. Our judges, health professionals, and law enforcement officers have linked animal abuse to the bigger problem of violence in society. The evidence for this link is that virtually every serial killer and almost every habitual violent offender began torturing and killing animals.

Out-of-control dog populations in First Nation communities will result in unnecessarily—unnecessary dog suffering, and increased willing and neglects of animal cruelty. Simple fact: Given the opportunity, they're going to do it. The willful act of causing or ignoring animal cruelty has a negative impact on a community's mental, social, and physical health. It's also a part of escalating level of that domestic violence.

* (18:40)

Current statistics indicate that on-reserve communities have an eight times higher violent crime rate than all of Canada—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Powell.

Ms. Powell: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: You have one minute left.

Ms. Powell: Thank you.

Preventing animal cruelty is part of breaking the cycle of violence plaguing our communities. We see the love when we visit these communities. They bring their animals. They're even willing to pay a portion just 'subsided' right. Our nation does not have the veterinary infrastructure to either replace or harmonize with provincial and federal veterinary

infrastructure services. Services supplied by veterinarians are considered fundamental community infrastructures in the developing world. First Nation communities are a part of this developing world and should be included and be able to provide these veterinary services.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Powell.

Do the members of the committee have any questions for the presenter?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, miigwech, Katie, for your presentation to the committee tonight. It's quite obvious that, you know, your front-line work in respect of saving dogs comes from a place of absolute love and passion and loyalty to our four-legged relatives.

So the bill is about, you know, The Service and Therapy Animal Day Act. So, you know, why did you feel it was important for you to come here tonight to actually share with the committee about some of the work that you're doing in the North and what you're seeing in the North in respect of dog-over-dog population?

Ms. Powell: The biggest news is that the Manitoba government is recognizing that these dogs and these horses are super important to building a positive future, whether it be domestic violence, different diseases. We're finding that not only are these people living in First Nation communities deprived of simple things like the running water, like access to social workers, different things like that, they shouldn't be deprived of animal companionship.

We're in the right direction for recognizing that we need to make a step in animal welfare in Manitoba, and I applaud all of you for recognizing that May 20th is about these service animals. And I hope this just makes you think a little bit about everyone else is—that is being left behind.

Ms. Fontaine: So, you know, in respect of some of the work that you do on the front lines and, of course, I, you know, follow save the dog network. I know that you do fly into the community and you do set up mobile spay and neuter clinics and do phenomenal work. And a lot of, like you said, everything is volunteer and, again, everybody is wholly dedicated to preventing more births and just giving a sense of safety and security to communities.

What would you like to see, if you could have, like, your wish list, like, what would you like to see happen in Manitoba to really address the overpopulation of dogs, particularly in First Nation communities?

Ms. Powell: The goal is to get the government support for more funding for these remote areas, bringing awareness to the general Manitoba public of the problems that are facing in these area is also really huge. Supporting these community members, whether it would be providing some resources and funding to get these veterinarians into these remote areas. And these veterinarians do—don't take a dime, so, if we could just focus on providing these low-cost clinics and then the education for the children would be great. We have tons of teachers that are already in these communities and that are ready to hop on board if we could have some more local 'sumort'—support from our MLAs.

Ms. Fontaine: So can you advise me—I know that you were up in St. Theresa Point a little while ago—like, what are the costs to be able to execute what you do in that, you know, couple of days—three days that you were there? What's the total cost to do something like that?

Ms. Powell: For about \$7,000, I can bring a team of 10 volunteers, including one veterinarian, one technician, a groomer, and some basic volunteers that know the ins and outs of a community. But we can do it as little as \$5,000. The only costs associated are the flights into the community as well as the basic cost of the medicine. All of us don't take a cut, and we get lots of stuff donated from wonderful people, like all our cleaning supplies, blankets, towels, kennels, things like that.

Ms. Fontaine: And what's the range of spay and neuters that you do on individual animals?

Ms. Powell: Logistically, we could get about 60 dogs done in two and a half days with our veterinarians working basically around the clock.

Ms. Fontaine: And I know that, you know, I often see you talk about the community members themselves. What have you learned and what have you heard from community members? Like, what are First Nation community members wanting in respect of dealing with the overpopulation of dogs in their communities?

Ms. Powell: Change.

They are tired of their children seeing dogs dragged by Ski-Doos down their roads. They're tired of dogs being mauled to death in their front yards and dogs being dumped, or puppies being left to die, in ditches. So many dogs are hit by cars, and they don't know what to do because they don't have the resources and the access to be able to do that. When we go there, we have lineups. We've never had a clinic versus a spay-and-neuter clinic or a vaccine clinic where we didn't have to turn people away.

These people want change; they just live in poverty, and they don't have an opportunity, and nobody has ever given them love on a non-judgmental basis. It's really easy to criticize somebody and ask why you haven't taken your animal to the vet or why you let your animal reproduce over and over again, but the simple fact is they can barely feed their children.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Powell. That ends the question-and-answer. Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you.

I'd like to call Dr. Jonas Watson.

Do you have any material for distribution, Mr. Watson?

Mr. Jonas Watson (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. Please go ahead with your presentation.

Mr. Watson: Thanks for having me here. I'm a companion animal veterinarian in Winnipeg, and I work with Katie, and because I knew Katie was going to be here, I tagged along.

The passage of this act, I think is a—there's got to be consensus in this room that this passage of this act is a good thing. Many of my—I've seen many therapy dogs and service dogs as patients, and I mean, the good that they do, the contribution they make to the lives of the humans that they live alongside is, you know, immeasurable.

But I, you know—the work that I do, and the foundation of this act really has to do with the human-animal bond, which is a great thing. My job depends on the human-animal bond. But the human-animal bond exists all over the world. I provide veterinary services to the most remote communities in Canada's north all the way to the jungles of Madagascar and beyond. And I can tell you, people love their pets and the animals they live with no matter where they live, but the provision of the necessary resources to share a life with them is often

lacking, and it's certainly lacking all across Canada and in this province.

The details of—that Katie outlined, population control, the dangers of rabies, the heartbreak of parvovirus and distemper—I mean, we can talk about those things. I wasn't even sure what I was going to talk about when I came up here. But I think what I want to talk about is the toll that doing this work, which is really just kicking at the tip of the iceberg, that I and the five or six people behind me and others are doing—I mean, we're barely scraping at the surface, and the toll that that takes.

In my profession and in other professions, we have this term, compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue leads to medical professionals and veterinary professionals committing suicide because it just—they—you know—doing this kind of work endlessly, and it never ends. It's heartbreaking.

I spent the month of January—Katie brought me some puppies from two different First Nations communities in the start of January. Just by coincidence, two separate batches, four and six puppies, they all had parvovirus. I spent four straight weeks with my staff trying to save puppies with parvovirus, which is a disease that eats you from the inside out. And they slowly would die day by day, and, you know—and you have one patient that dies; that's kind of like par for the course in my job. But when it's day after day that I have to send her text messages—yes, this totally, completely preventable, vaccinatable disease just claimed another one of these puppies, and it died in our arms? That, you know—that's hard to spend a month working like that.

I'm on the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association council. I've been on there for about four years. That's our provincial veterinary medical association. I'm on the board of directors of the Winnipeg Humane Society too. Every free moment I have, I spend trying to advocate for animals that are—they're living in underserved communities.

* (18:50)

I've been a veterinarian for 11 years, and this problem is not going away. Despite all these connections—people call me a well-connected guy in this veterinary field that I'm in, but despite all these connections I have, this problem never ends. We fly in to these remote communities and we provide services to people that are so grateful. Some even are able to pay modest amounts for this—the services we provide, which is, like, amazing. I mean, we would

do it for free anyway but some people will actually even pay. They are very appreciative. This isn't a function of major cultural issues. I think some of that stuff gets really overstated. This is about the provision of services to communities where it is not available.

And a grassroots approach is great; that's what's happening here. There's dozens of these rescue groups and a handful of veterinary professionals and, you know, wonderful people, like these individuals behind me, that are helping to solve this problem, but it's not enough.

So we citizens have to decide whether we care about this because if we don't care about it, then, fine; we can just let this go on, let puppies get shot, let dogs die, let children get attacked. But this is more than just an animal welfare crisis, though it is that. Speaking as someone who has had his hands in the mouth of a rabid dog and found—finding out after the fact and frantically getting post-exposure treatment for that in a northern community in Churchill, I can tell you there are ramifications for public health and safety, too.

And what is it going to take for us to wake up? Like, will it take a child dying? Will it take a human being getting rabies? These dogs live alongside foxes. You know, what is it going to take for us to take this issue seriously? And we have to start taking it seriously.

In the meantime, until some resources start getting directed towards solving the population—the animal population problem, zoonotic disease problem, safety of the public problem, until we start directing resources towards that, those of us who are inclined will continue to just sort of fight the good fight and hope—be glad for the difference that we make, albeit modest. But I hope—I mean, everybody loves animals. I hope that you consider these thoughts and maybe we do something about it in the not-too-distant future.

That's all I got.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, thank you, Mr. Watson.

Ms. Fontaine: So thank you for your presentation and, really, thank you for the good work that you do. And I know that often it goes unnoticed or unappreciated but I just want you to know that, you know, I lift up the work that you do, and it's really, really important work.

So I'm going to ask a question that I—similar question to—that I asked your sister Katie. You know, what would you like to see happen in Manitoba in respect of the overpopulation? Like, what are some strategic steps that we need to be taking?

Mr. Watson: We need a collaborative effort between government, between the MVMA, the Manitoba Veterinary Medical Association, the Winnipeg Humane Society and other groups that are invested in this to implement things like lay vaccinator programs, like the one we have in Churchill, where an emergency medical person vaccinates dogs for the community. That makes a big difference, you know, not just veterinarians doing it. We need to spread that all over the province.

We need funds directed towards spay-and-neuter task forces. I mean this isn't—we don't need to be doing chemotherapy in these remote communities; we need to deworm, vaccinate, spay and neuter. The difference that that could make from a public safety and an animal welfare perspective is enormous.

The answer is not for well-intentioned people to keep dragging in these wild reserve dogs and trying to home them and have troubles finding homes for these dogs that are not really always well suited—some—many of them are, but lots are not—to living in the city. What we need to do is go to these communities and spay and neuter everybody. That kind of thing is the answer. But, of course, this is resource intensive. We have to direct—believe me, I can do this pretty cheap. Like, this can be done in a very, very cost-effective way, but we do need, you know, we do need resources. It can't be done for free. And fundraising our way out of it is not the answer.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): Thank you, Dr. Watson, for your presentation and the information you brought forward, including your colleague, Katie.

I just am curious how long your organization has been functioning, how many years and if you've ever received any public funding from any level of government.

Mr. Watson: Yes, I should say, it's really Katie's organization. It's built by volunteers; I am one of them. I am no more important or less important than anybody else that's here or the countless others that support us.

It was started in 2013, and every cent that we have received and spent has been as a result of the blood, sweat, and tears of fundraising efforts from

selling chocolate bars to, you know, paint nights, any number of kinds of—that's the hardest part. I mean, it's very simple to spay a dog. For me, anyway. For you people it would be very challenging, but for me, it's very simple.

But it's the getting the resources, it's getting the funds, and because we're competing with a lot of other—some very high profile organizations—there's a lot of animal welfare organizations here and outside the province. And, you know, there's only so much money to go around.

So it's amazing what we have been able to do, with very little.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions from the committee?

Well, thank you so much, Mr. Watson, for your presentation. Thank you.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation? Seeing none, that concludes the public presentations.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with the clause-by-clause consideration of these bills?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Chair, numerical order seems reasonable.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? *[Agreed]*

During the consideration of a bill, the preamble, the enacting clause, and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order. Also, if there is an agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clause in blocks to conform—confirm the pages with the understanding that we'll stop at any particular clause, or clauses, where members may have comments, questions, or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 201—The Service and
Therapy Animal Day Act
(Continued)**

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with Bill 201.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member from Fort Richmond, have an opening statement?

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I have a very brief statement to make.

So I just want to first of all, thank all of the stakeholders who I did meet with in developing this bill. I have learned much more than I have given in my presentations or even during the debate. I had an appreciation for the time, the effort, the love, the care that the trainers have put into the animals before bringing this forward, but my eyes have been opened and, certainly, my heart, to just how much time, effort, and absolute dedication the trainers and the dogs and the horses have put into bettering our society, whether through safety, through therapy, companionship, all of the above.

So I do want to thank all of our stakeholders and especially Sergeant Antoniuk, and Sergeant Bessason who is here as well, as well as Tara Reimer and Jody Kuik. You've been a great help throughout this process, and I look forward to celebrating my twentieth every year and, hopefully, we can arrange some really exciting events moving forward. So, thank you again for your information, for the feedback I've received tonight, and I look forward to future interactions with all of you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 201?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech. So, first off, I just want to congratulate my colleague on bringing forward your first bill?

An Honourable Member: First bill.

Ms. Fontaine: Yay. So congratulations on that. I think that we can all agree any bill honouring and recognizing animals is a good day, and, more importantly, I do want to just recognize everybody that came and presented today, and including Dante, he didn't get to speak, but maybe soon. *[interjection]* May 20th, yes.

And I do want to just acknowledge everybody and again—once again, just really lift up everybody that's doing really, really important work in the range of capacities that we're talking tonight. And I really do—I think that it's important that we recognize why the voices of Katie and Jonas are also so important here tonight, because you can't talk about honouring and recognizing service animals without recognizing, really, the plight of animals in Manitoba, in particular, in the North.

* (19:00)

They're not separate from one another, right? You know, animal welfare or ensuring that animals are taken care of, they're one in the same thing. So I do think that your voices were really, really important here tonight and I really do want to recognize that.

And so just very, very briefly, I will keep my comments.

Everybody knows I got my first dog only about three and a half years ago. His name is Chilly Dog. He's the love of my life. I know I talk about him every time we're in session, I know, but—it's true. It's absolutely true. But you know why I love my Chilly Dog so much, is because I—actually my son had been asking me for a dog for three years. And I travel so much I kept saying no, and no, no, no. Finally, actually after going through a hard time personally, I thought okay, you know, I'm going to give my son a dog, and every—the stars aligned—blah, blah, blah. I'll spare everybody all the details about how we got Chilly Dog.

But he is such a gift in my life, where I was not getting out of my pyjamas, then I got my dog, and I got Chilly Dog. And he is a gift, and so he's not a bona fide service dog, but that is the gift and the power. And one of the things that I've learned is that really—and, you know, it may sound corny—is that, you know, the gift of a dog, I feel like it actually really unlocks a part of your spirit that we don't really have access to until you love an animal and you see their unconditional love. And so I have two sons, I barely get a hello when I come in, but Chilly Dog, sometimes you get the full body wiggle, and it just makes you so happy.

So it is such an important thing to recognize all of our animals, but it's equally just as important to recognize what goes on in this province.

So I say congratulations and miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Clause 1—pass; clauses 2 and 3—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 214—The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed to Bill 214.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member from Brandon East have an opening statement?

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): So again, I want to just take the opportunity to thank everybody that was involved in the research that—the folks in the community that I met with to put together Bill 214, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert).

I want to touch on the base that the silver alert simply provides an opportunity for all Manitobans to be alerted to a particular situation of urgency when an adult with a cognitive impairment is missing and is considered at risk.

When I look at this bill, it's about providing more powers and abilities to the police forces across Manitoba to obtain access to records about missing people that may assist them in locating that missing person. This bill will further strengthen and enhance the existing act by increasing the awareness with broadcasters and others when adults with cognitive impairments go missing. The enhancements will provide for the police agencies involved to collaborate with media and other agencies as required to alert the public of the missing person.

There have been, and continue to be, a number of missing persons alerts that will flash across our scenes on social media. Whether it's Facebook, whether it's Twitter, it all comes together as people being out there and while their plight is no more—or no pardon me—no least important, a silver alert will just add that much more urgency to help the police when locating an adult who has gone missing who has a cognitive impairment and who is considered to be at risk.

I do want to mention that we certainly have the opportunity to be Canadian leaders in the area of population where vulnerable, at-risk for—adults are at risk. And it's notable, too, that even some of the wording that I received from the Alzheimer's Society of Manitoba, that the number of people dealing with dementia issues and cognitive impairments are increasing and will increase at an alarming rate.

I look forward to tonight's discussion and the passing of this bill at the committee stage. And, again, I do believe that this legislation is needed to provide one more tool in the kits of the police officers across Manitoba that will allow them to increasingly do the job effectively when loved ones go missing.

And I will end it there, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement on Bill 214?

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I thank the member for Brandon East for bringing this bill forward. And I think that it is important to have a discussion about what we can do to make sure, when someone goes missing, that we use all available means to try and get them back safely.

Sort of—in looking at this bill, as with any other bill, I mean, the question is, is it necessary, or even if it's not truly necessary, does it have a positive effect? And, of course, we also have to consider, does it have any unintended consequences?

And I know we spent a bit of time going through this in the question-and-answer period that is now part of the way that bills proceed, which, I think, in this case, was a positive experience. I hope the member feels that way.

You know, I've had a look at what police services are doing now. And I know the member is very lucky to be in a community that has a very progressive and very strong police service, the Brandon Police Service. As well, the Winnipeg Police Service and the RCMP, as well as some of the smaller municipal services are already doing this.

And I'm just taking a quick look at some of the releases over the past month. There has been at least three in the city of Winnipeg. Luckily, because of the publicity and because of the work of the police, all three of these individuals have been located. But, in each of these cases, I would point out that the police found it appropriate, and, I think we'd all agree, to provide the missing person's name, a physical description, a photograph, information about any medical conditions, pertinent vehicle information, the location where they were last seen and any other circumstances.

So police are doing this. And I think they're going to continue to do this. So is the bill necessary? Well, maybe, maybe not. I do agree there can be a positive impact of this bill going forward. And I'll support this member, if he needs to sit down with the Minister for Families, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), the Minister for Seniors, if there is any additional work that needs to be done that the member that, as a private member, can't insist be done in this bill.

And, when we went ahead with the AMBER Alert program, it actually took a fair amount of work to set the table to make sure that if there is going to

be something called the silver alert, that there is the proper infrastructure in place, so that when a silver alert is made, there's confidence that everybody in the system is going to know what they have to do. So I'll certainly assist the member in doing that.

The other point I mentioned is whether there's any unintended consequences. I hope that isn't the case in this situation. I do know that the AMBER Alert system, which started in the United States and is now in, as far as I know, in every jurisdiction in the United States and Canada, have been very, perhaps the word is guarded, about what is an AMBER Alert. I think every member knows when there is an AMBER Alert struck it has a tremendous impact on people. When there's an AMBER Alert, which signifies there's a child who has been abducted, who may be in danger, people tend to drop what they're doing and send out that message and be very alert.

I asked the member the question—I'm not sure if he's been able to get an answer—I just want to make sure that if we do have a new thing in Manitoba called the silver alert, that it doesn't, in any way, make the individuals who operate the AMBER Alert system feel that it's somehow weakening the strength or the power of the AMBER Alert. That would be the only unintended consequence I could see from legislation. Rather than make that a question during the line-by-line, I just want to put that out there and maybe the member and I can have a talk before we

come back and send the bill through to a third reading.

So, in conclusion, I want to thank the police services for what they do to try to make sure that people return home safely. I expect, although Dante has some different responsibilities, it is some of Dante's cousins—there's kind of a royal family of police service dogs in Manitoba—I'm sure some of Dante's relatives perform exemplary service trying to help locate people and bring them back home safely.

So, with that—with those comments and that one outstanding concern, we are quite prepared to move to line-by-line consideration.

* (19:10)

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the member.

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 and 4—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 7:10, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: We rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:10 p.m.

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