

ANIMAL CRUELTY

BILL C-50 NEEDS TO BE SCRAPPED

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The firearms registry is a hot topic again now that our politicians have returned to work in Ottawa. But for now, though, I will pass on further comment on this \$1-billion waste of time, since the mainstream media finally is exposing it for the farce it is.

Even more critical for anglers and hunters to stay on top of are two bills, one government and another senate initiated, that would revamp our animal-cruelty laws.

The government bill dates back a decade and, ironically, considering its purpose, has died on the order table or in the Senate and been reborn over and over again in different forms.

The latest, Bill C-50, was reintroduced last May 16 for a first reading and has yet to be debated.

However, a statement in the House by Liberal MPP Mark Holland (Ajax-Pickering) last Thursday is a sign this might happen sooner than later.

Holland claimed many of his constituents have spoken up about the issue. He wants Bill C-50 passed quickly, as is.

"It is essentially the same bill that was passed previously," he said.

Yet the Senate carefully examined that version and found it full of problems, ones that could affect anyone who uses animals, from researchers to ranchers to hunters and anglers and refused to rubberstamp it.

A Senate committee even concluded the bill would not exclude anglers and hunters from charges, even if they held a provincial licence to hunt or fish.

Apparently, some politicians did not agree or had not fully studied the issue.

Holland said, "... a lot of people in the hunting community ... have received false information. They have nothing to be worried about ... ," before being cut off by the House Speaker.

Holland is wrong.

Bill C-50, without changes, will be an open invitation for animal-rights groups to launch charges against hunters and anglers. Many Senators concluded last year that catch-and-release anglers would be especially open to attack.

The Senate was successful in partially amending the previous government bill, but the new one still contains no clear protection for traditional users of animals, except for aboriginals, by referring to their constitutional rights to hunt and fish, which, it appears, the rest of society does not have at the federal level.

As well, the bill takes domestic animals out of the property section of the Criminal Code and, for

the first time, includes wild animals.

Bill C-50 would make killing an animal brutally or viciously, regardless of whether the animal dies immediately, illegal.

Let's face it, animal-rights groups behind this bill consider angling and hunting brutal and vicious, thus the expected court challenges if it passes.

Bill C-50 does, however, increase fines and penalties for animal cruelty, something everyone agrees on.

Bill S-24, introduced last March by Senator John Bryden, also accomplishes this without making currently accepted uses of animals criminal activities. It has wide support even within hunting and farming groups.

Most people, including hunters and anglers, consider neglecting or abusing animals as blatant animal cruelty and want stronger laws against them.

Most of society sits in the middle ground on hunting and fishing, ranching and using animals for medical research, though, since they also eat meat and benefit from new medical breakthroughs.

Bryden's concern about the government bill is that, under the guise of simply increasing penalties for animal abuse, it actually is making broad reforms, seemingly with an animal-rights bent.

As such, Bill C-50 would be extremely cruel to a large segment of human society.

It needs to be put out of its misery, or be debated honestly and amended.