



THE FEDERATION OF SPCAs AND HUMANE SOCIETIES  
FÉDÉRATION DES SOCIÉTÉS D'ASSISTANCE AUX ANIMAUX



## **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget**

**July 30, 2025**

**Humane Canada**

### LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide a stable, ongoing funding package for animal shelters to address capacity issues caused by abandonment and overpopulation and explicitly include animal shelters in the definition of community-oriented structures with eligibility for federal infrastructure funding grants.
2. Open applications for the Humanitarian Workforce grant, with eligibility expanded to include professional animal welfare agencies in order to provide an adequate funding structure that supports a cohesive emergency response for animals during natural disasters and other emergencies.
3. Include pet-friendly criteria in federally funded housing programs and grants and encourage housing stakeholders to find collaborative solutions to increase the availability and affordability of pet friendly housing for all Canadians.
4. Create a federal funding model that would expand the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* to include grant support for humane societies, SPCAs and shelters that offer pet shelter services to support persons leaving a violent partner.
5. Funding for mandatory training of justice stakeholders to improve knowledge of the connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence in the criminal justice system.
6. Establish a new federal grant program to help animal agriculture producers phase out intensive housing systems, such as the elimination of conventional and enrichment cages for laying hens, gestation stalls for pigs and tie stalls for dairy cattle; and increase funding and resources to ensure robust inspection and consistent enforcement of animal health and welfare regulations by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.
7. Provide sustainable funding for alternative methods of animal testing in science to maintain the Canadian Centre for Alternatives to Animal Methods (CCAAM).

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Humane Canada is the national federation of SPCAs and humane societies, representing one of the oldest social institutions in the country and serving Canadian communities for more than 150 years. As Canada's voice for animal welfare, we drive positive, progressive change to end animal cruelty, improve animal protection and promote the humane treatment of all animals.

The way Canadians perceive companion animals has changed dramatically over the past few decades. In 2024, Canada was home to an estimated 7.2 million dogs and 8.2 million cats, making pets a fundamental part of more than half of Canadian households,<sup>1</sup> with many Canadians identifying their pet as a member of the family.<sup>2</sup> Keeping their animals safe is their top priority, but affordability and accessibility are becoming problematic as the cost of living continues to increase, which has sometimes led to heartbreaking choices.

Humane societies and SPCAs provide more than temporary shelter and care for companion animals who find themselves homeless or in need of protection, with approximately 30% of Humane Canada members are responsible for enforcing provincial and federal animal welfare laws. In addition, they also provide their communities with essential, often life-saving services such as pet food bank access, low- or no-cost veterinary care options, spay and neuter programs, and temporary fostering for pets of individuals fleeing violence in the home or other crises. Yet most humane societies and SPCAs do not receive the governmental support necessary to fulfil their critical social services mandate and are chronically underfunded, relying solely on public donations, while only occasionally being eligible to apply for periodic government grants.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1: SHELTER SUPPORT**

Consistent and stable federal funding for animal shelters would assist them in addressing capacity issues fueled by animal abandonment and overpopulation in Canada. The explicit inclusion of animal shelters as eligible for federal infrastructure funding applications and in the definition of community-oriented structures would also be useful and reflect their evolving role in offering critical support for both animals and people in the communities they serve.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: ANIMAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Lessons learned from past responses point to the critical need for planning and coordination to respond to the needs of companion and farmed animals, including evacuating, extracting and sheltering during natural disasters, mandatory evacuation orders and other emergency situations. However, emergency response for animals is often considered days, if not weeks, into the response, creating unnecessary challenges for professional animal welfare providers,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cahi-icsa.ca/canadian-pet-population-survey-highlights-the-importance-of-access-to-veterinary-care>

<sup>2</sup> <https://angusreid.org/canada-pandemic-pets-veterinarians-insurance/>

animal suffering and anxiety, difficulties for first responders trying to manage a dangerous situation, as well as stress and grief for animal owners.

Due to a lack of pet-friendly housing, rising costs and a shortage of veterinary care (in addition to the impacts of COVID-19 including post-pandemic pet surrenders and an increase in “backyard breeding”), the animal sheltering system in Canada is at capacity. Competing priorities and needs for resources, funding, veterinarian care, volunteers and shelter space means less ability to respond quickly in an emergency without funding support.

Funding professional animal welfare providers directly, coordinated at the outset of a response, would create more capacity to respond in an organized way that saves time, costs and lives. In light of the increased need for emergency response measures, indicated by the early and ongoing wildfire season, we call on the government to re-open applications for the Humanitarian Workforce grant and expand eligibility to professional animal welfare providers.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY

Despite the shift in Canadian perspectives of companion animals as family members as opposed to property, people looking for pet friendly rental accommodation are finding it increasingly difficult to find and secure in the current landscape of high demand and increased costs.

In the previous government’s Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada’s *Blueprint for a Renters’ Bill of Rights*,<sup>3</sup> released September 16, 2024, the third principle of addressing inequity and discrimination includes calls for relevant rental system stakeholders “to take measures to advance accessible rental housing by identifying and addressing discriminatory practices based on factors such as **pet ownership**, among others, by leveraging data/engaging in outreach to better understand the experiences of these groups. By including pet-inclusive criteria in federally funded housing projects, it would encourage housing stakeholders to find collaborative solutions to address the issue of available and affordable housing for all Canadians.

### RECOMMENDATIONS 4 & 5: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & ANIMAL ABUSE COSTS THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Decades of academic evidence and law enforcement studies have made it clear that animal abuse is intrinsically linked to other forms of violent crime; it is why we refer to it as the Violence Link. Most often, where this link manifests most frequently is in cases involving intimate partner and family violence, where animals are a tool used by the abuser to control and manipulate.

Federal funding that would expand the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence program* to include grant support for humane societies, SPCAs and shelters offering pet sheltering services that support those leaving a violent relationship would ensure that the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/housing-logement/bill-rights-charte-droits/renters-locataires-eng.html>

sector is equipped to provide options to keep families and animals together. This was suggested in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women 2022 report, *Towards a Violence-Free Canada: Addressing and Eliminating Intimate Partner and Family Violence*,<sup>4</sup> under Recommendation 11. This funding would save costs to the justice and family court systems by allowing women with pets to leave their abuse early, before it escalates in severity.

The failure to recognize animal abuse as a key factor in other violent crimes is not only justice denied, it also duplicates costs for investigations and court time. When investigators and other justice stakeholders have education on how animal abuse crimes connect with other crimes, they can prosecute and convict offenders more efficiently.

Canadians expect to feel safe in their communities, secure in the knowledge that there are laws in force that not only protect themselves but the vulnerable animals they care about. However, legislation is only as good as its enforcement, making it critical for law enforcement and all justice stakeholders, from law enforcement to courtroom employees and the judiciary, to have access to data and training that keeps them informed. A federal funding model would ensure that this information is standardized and consistently available so that crimes of violence against animals are treated and responded to with the urgency they deserve.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: CANADIAN AGRICULTURE IS BUILT ON FARMED ANIMALS**

Each year, more than 800 million animals are raised on farms in Canada for food. Over the past several years, there has been increasing public awareness and scrutiny regarding the treatment and welfare of farmed animals over all phases of their life: while on the farm, during transportation and at slaughter. The public expects that farmed animals will be treated humanely, leading to pressure on the agriculture and retail sectors to modify certain farming practices. In response, these sectors have been making commitments toward the phasing out of confinement housing and other conventional practices in favour of more humane options. However, many Canadian farming practices still do not meet higher animal welfare standards seen in other regions, which some attribute to high initial costs.

Introducing a federal grant program to encourage animal agriculture producers to explore and invest in more humane options would provide incentives for producers who prioritize their animals' wellbeing and are committed to transitioning away from those practices that negatively affect farmed animal welfare. Increased funding and resources for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency would help alleviate public concerns that animal health and welfare regulations are being properly enforced and restore confidence in our food production systems. It would also increase alignment with animal welfare standards and regulations of future trade partners, such as the European Union and the United Kingdom.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP11878723/feworp04/feworp04-e.pdf>

## RECOMMENDATION 7: CANADIANS SUPPORT HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING THOSE USED IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

In 2023, the previous government passed legislation to end testing of toxic chemicals and cosmetic testing on animals and prioritize methods that replace, reduce, or refine the use of animals in scientific testing. This includes financial support for research into non-animal methods, the establishment of new protocols that avoid animal testing, and the integration of existing alternative methods into regulatory practices. This would align with the recently released *Strategy to replace, reduce or refine vertebrate animal testing under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA)*, particularly the element involving advancement of research and data generation.<sup>5</sup>

The opening sentence of section 2.2 Advance NAMs research and data generation of the Strategy states “To advance the interpretation and incorporation of new approach methods (NAMs) into an evolving paradigm of chemical toxicity testing, assessment and decision-making under CEPA, **continued research efforts are needed to develop, standardize and establish scientific relevance and confidence to demonstrate the suitability of NAMs for supporting fit-for-purpose uses across regulatory contexts**”.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, Canada already has an academic facility dedicated this researching alternative methods to animal testing, the Canadian Centre for Alternatives to Animal Methods (CCAAM) at the University of Windsor, which was forced to close in 2024 due to budget constraints.<sup>7</sup>

As with any new technology, sustainable funding in the infancy stage is critical to its success. Federal funding to re-open and maintain the Centre would be a cost-effective way to advance NAMs from the development stage to regulatory use, because the work had already begun. In addition, these alternatives will lead to better research outcomes and less costs due to repetitive testing, as well as protect animal welfare through significant reduction in unnecessary pain and suffering inflicted on animals used in science.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act-registry/implementing-modernized-cepa/strategy-replace-reduce-refine-vertebrate-animal-testing.html#toc5>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act-registry/implementing-modernized-cepa/strategy-replace-reduce-refine-vertebrate-animal-testing.html#toc5>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/windsor-canadian-centre-alternatives-animal-testing-1.7370152>