



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION No.: **421-02812**

BY: **MR. ERSKINE-SMITH (BEACHES-EAST YORK)**

DATE: **OCTOBER 23, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **HONOURABLE JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD**

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Response by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Cruelty to animals**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

Our Government is committed to protecting children and animals from abuse. Canadians deserve and expect a society where our laws fully protect children and other vulnerable individuals from all forms of sexual abuse. Likewise, our animal cruelty laws must be broadened to appropriately address all aspects of animal fighting.

Bill C-84, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (bestiality and animal fighting)* will help achieve that goal by sending a clear signal that engaging in any sexual activity with an animal, especially in front of a child, or compelling someone else, including a child, to engage in such activities is a serious criminal offence. Bill C-84 will also expand animal fighting provisions to help protect animals from being injured or killed as a result of being baited or forced to fight.

This Bill represents a common-ground approach to ensuring the protection of children and animals from abuse while ensuring the law does not interfere with legitimate and traditional farming, hunting, and trapping practices, including Indigenous harvesting rights.

Research has found strong correlations between animal cruelty offences and other crimes. For example, childhood sexual assault is also closely linked with exploiting animals for a sexual purpose. Animal fighting has often been linked to organized crime.

These changes will improve the ability to prosecute criminals, track animal fighting cases and protect public safety, in particular children and other vulnerable individuals.

The *Criminal Code* also currently requires that sentencing courts take into account all aggravating and mitigating factors relating to the offender and the offence in order to impose a sentence that is proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. Currently, although sentencing courts are not required to conduct a risk assessment in cases of animal cruelty, they do have the authority to delay the passing of sentence to enable the offender to attend a treatment program approved by the province or territory or direct that the offender attend a treatment program approved by the province or territory as part of a probation order or a conditional sentence order. The administration of any such treatment program is the responsibility of the provinces and territories.