

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

By: Humane Canada
(formerly Canadian Federation of Humane Societies)

List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the government build a more resilient economy by optimizing the One Health/One Welfare framework in all crisis management and recovery planning.

Recommendation 2: That the government designate a Minister who can work with the Humane Society and SPCA sector to ensure that this component of our civil society is considered in federal decision making, especially in areas of funding and resource allocation.

Recommendation 3: That the government provides access to sufficient resources for animal sheltering and protection organizations deemed essential services, to deal with economic pressures arising from the pandemic including altering infrastructure, accessing PPE and safety equipment and preparing personnel and supplies to ensure readiness for increased demands from vulnerable Canadians during the recovery and restarting of the economy.

Recommendation 4: That the government establish a \$20 million funding program for Humane Societies and SPCAs to provide family assistance programs to marginalized and vulnerable communities including access to pet food, pet supplies, medical assistance for their animals and access to compassionate boarding for those who are ill or those with pets who need to flee increasing domestic violence.

About Us

Humane Canada (formerly Canadian Federation of Humane Societies) is the federation of Humane Societies and SPCAs. For more than 150 years, our members have provided critical social services to Canadians, including keeping communities safe by managing companion animal populations, providing animal protection, enforcing the law, ensuring health and safety of animals and people and assisting vulnerable pet owners in times of crisis.

There are **115 Humane Societies and SPCAs across Canada** – in rural and urban communities in every province and territory. There are close to **20 million companion animals in 7.5 million homes** across the country. Each year, collectively our sector **shelters, protects and rehomes more than 250,000 companion animals in need**.

The current crisis threatens this part of the Canadian social safety net with 78% of sector agencies reporting revenue declines and 60% reporting staff and capacity reductions, while only 11% were able to access the \$350 million dollars set aside by the government for charities.

The consequences of a weakened animal sheltering and protection system are public health hazards and community safety issues, including decreased services for vulnerable Canadians relying on the system for pet food, subsidized vet care and emergency services, increased populations of unwanted and abandoned animals, increased roaming and stray dogs, increased disease transfer and increased vulnerability and abuse aimed at animals and humans.

Recommendation 1: Build a more resilient economy by optimizing the One Health/One Welfare framework in all crisis management and recovery planning.

The internationally recognized *One Health* framework is especially relevant today as the relationships between animal and human health are considered in disease transmission and the origins of Covid 19. Canada is a member country to the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) who has partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to promote greater collaboration under the One Health framework. However, **the Covid 19 pandemic has shown the gaps in applying this framework to health policy and sharpened the focus on expanding to a One Health/One Welfare approach.**

As prominent University of British Columbia's Dr. David Fraser, a world-renowned expert in animal health and welfare, has framed it:

“The term “one welfare”, inspired by “one health”, is used to emphasize the many links between animal welfare and human welfare, and to acknowledge that both depend on a well functioning ecological environment. As examples: (1) the welfare of food-producing animals is often crucial for the owners’ livelihood and productivity; (2) the prosperity and mental well-being of animal keepers are important to permit good animal care and to prevent abuse and neglect of animals; (3) the welfare of working and assistance animals is important for their ability to provide services to their owners; and (4) as acknowledged by “one health”, the physical health of people and animals are inter-connected in many ways.....“One welfare” is thus a unifying concept for different areas of research and action, and a call to consider human welfare, animal welfare and the environment together.”

As the government focuses on restarting the economy, it should institute coordination and collaboration between animal health/welfare sectors and human health/welfare sectors to strategically organize areas for joint action and introduce a synergistic approach to planning and programs in order to lessen the probability of new pandemics and increase the health and welfare of Canadians while contributing to global sustainable development.

Recommendation 2: Designation of a Minister to work with the Humane Society and SPCA sector.

The Humane Society and SPCA sector provides services that span a range of interests and jurisdictions, including public safety, health, gender-based violence, and secure and healthy families. Because of this range, the sector lacks a focal point or interlocutor in the federal government, even though the services provided are important to the 62% of Canadian households with companion animals¹, the municipal, provincial and federal law enforcement entities that enforce animal cruelty legislation through the Criminal Code of Canada, and to pet owning vulnerable communities that may require support or assistance including the close to 50% of women who delay leaving violent situations as they are unable to find safe keeping for their pets². Therefore, we request the designation of a Minister who can work with the sector to ensure that this component of our civil society is considered in federal decision-making, including funding and allocation of resources.

¹ Cats in Canada 2017, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, 2017.

² Gray, A., Fitzgerald, A., Barrett, B. Fear for pets can put abused women at further risk, The Conversation. 2017

Recommendation 3: Access to sufficient resources for animal sheltering and protection organizations.

While governments recognized Humane Societies and SPCAs as essential services during the pandemic, most operate without access to government support. **A survey of Humane Canada members found only 11% of responding organizations were able to access the \$350 million government support package for the charitable sector.** The organizations responsible for delivering funds notified our members that animal shelters did not qualify as the grants were by invitation only and focussed on organizations with immediate response to COVID 19, which did not include support for animals and Canadians who own animals, even though Humane Societies and SPCAs were providing immediate pandemic response.

The essential community service that our sector provides needs to be formally recognized by the federal government. As the economy restarts, more Canadians are likely to struggle with new economic realities. Therefore, the government should eliminate the barriers to accessing sufficient resources required for animal sheltering organizations to deal with pressures arising from COVID19 including but not limited to; altering and adapting infrastructure, training personnel, acquiring appropriate supplies to ensure readiness for increase demands and new emergency services. This includes the hard costs required to meet demands of being an essential service and open in a pandemic - PPE, transitioning in-person systems and programs online and retrofitting costs for sheltering in a social distancing environment.

Recommendation 4: Establishment of a \$20 million fund for Humane Societies and SPCAs to provide family assistance programs to marginalized and vulnerable communities.

42% of respondents to Humane Canada's member survey report an increasing demand for community services, while 60% report reductions in staff and capacity. This demand will continue rising as more Canadians find themselves in financial distress due to the pandemic and face the challenges of feeding and caring for their companion animals, or still worse, making the difficult decision to surrender or abandon their pets. It is crucial that the system of community services that Humane Societies and SPCAs provide remain in place and strong through the present crisis period and into the recovery so that it can continue to respond to these increasing demands.

These services include:

Pet Food Banks: A much need support system for Canadians struggling with reduced resources and unable to source support for their animals from regular food banks, Pet Food Banks provide much

needed access to pet food, litter and other necessary supplies that can eliminate the need to surrender a pet due to economic pressures.

Emergency and Subsidized Veterinarian Services: Humane Societies and SPCAs provide access to veterinarian services that have become crucial to overall public health as regular veterinary clinics struggle with reduced services during Covid 19. As well, the sector expects to provide health care to animals due to financial hardship as the job loss impacts people and animals need veterinary or other care that people can no longer afford.

Compassionate Boarding: Without a place to safely house and protect the family pet, nearly 50% of Canadian women report delaying leaving a violent situation. Of those forced to flee without their animal, 1/3 report going back to check on the animal or move back in with the abuser to protect the animal.³ Humane Societies and SPCAs provide compassionate boarding for the pets of women fleeing violence – without this service, more women and children will be directly in harms way in order to protect their companion animals. In April 2020, the Minister For Women and Gender Equality reported the COVID 19 crisis had empowered perpetrators of domestic violence as consultations revealed abuse rates rising. Unfortunately, as noted by the Ontario Association for Interval and Transition Houses “there are serious and important connections between woman abuse, pets/companion animals, child abuse, and the impact on women looking to leave abusive situations”.⁴ **It is essential in this time of economic challenge and increased interpersonal violence, that our sector have the resources to provide services that enable people to leave violent situations faster.**

Conclusion

Humane Societies and SPCAs, deemed essential services during the pandemic, provide critical support to millions of Canadians with companion animals. The current crisis threatens this part of the Canadian social safety net. The consequences of a weakened animal sheltering and protection system are public health hazards and community safety issues. Plans for economic recovery using the One Health/One Welfare framework, designating a responsible Minister and supporting Humane Societies and SPCAs to keep Canadian families together are integral to thriving communities and a sustainable economy.

³ Gray, A., Fitzgerald, A., Barrett, B. Fear for pets can put abused women at further risk, The Conversation. 2017

⁴ Pet Safety and Women: options for women with pets leaving abusive situations. Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. 2018.

Humane Canada Members (alphabetically)

Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society	Miramichi SPCA
Alberta SPCA	Montreal SPCA
Alliston and District Humane Society	New Brunswick SPCA
Animatch	Northwest Territories SPCA
Association of Animal Shelter Administrators of Ontario	Nova Scotia SPCA
British Columbia SPCA	Oakville & Milton Humane Society
Burin Peninsula SPCA	Oromocto & Area SPCA
Burlington Humane Society	Ottawa Humane Society
Calgary Humane Society	Prince Edward Island Humane Society
Canadian Association for Humane Trapping	Regina Cat Rescue
Central Alberta Humane Society	Regina Humane Society
Charlotte County SPCA Inc.	Royal City Humane Society
Cochrane & Area Humane Society	Saskatchewan SPCA
Edmonton Humane Society	Saskatoon SPCA
Exploits Valley SPCA	Sault Ste. Marie & District SPCA
Fredericton SPCA	Société protectrice des animaux de Québec
Gander & Area SPCA	SPA de l'Estrie
Greater Moncton SPCA	SPCA de L'Outaouais
Guelph Humane Society	St. Johns SPCA
Hamilton Burlington SPCA	Humane Society Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth
Happy Valley Goose Bay SPCA	Thunder Bay and District Humane Society
Humane Society Dawson	Toronto Humane Society
Humane Society London & Middlesex	Victoria Humane Society
Lincoln County Humane Society	Windsor Essex County Humane Society
Medicine Hat SPCA	Winnipeg Humane Society
	Wood Buffalo SPCA