



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



## **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of Federal Budget 2026**

**May 22, 2026**

**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. Include pet-friendly criteria in federally funded housing programs and grants under *Build Canada Homes* to encourage housing stakeholders to find collaborative solutions to increase the availability and affordability of pet friendly housing for all Canadians.
3. 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.
4. Funding for mandatory training of justice stakeholders to improve knowledge of the connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence in the criminal justice system.
5. Expand eligibility for the Humanitarian Workforce or similar grants to include professional animal welfare agencies, in which would provide an adequate funding structure that supports a cohesive emergency response for animals during natural disasters and other emergencies.
6. Establish a 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 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 in alignment with 2023 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

## 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 relationship between Canadians and their 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 other factors such as affordable, pet-friendly housing and accessible veterinary care are becoming out of reach as the cost of living continues to increase, which has sometimes forced heartbreaking choices.

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

## RECOMMENDATION 1: SUSTAINABLE SHELTER SUPPORT

Consistent and stable federal funding for animal shelters would assist them in addressing capacity issues fueled by animal abandonment and overpopulation, as well as the additional strain this causes in communities 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: IMPROVED HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY

By including pet-inclusive criteria in federally funded affordable housing projects under *Build Canada Homes*, it would encourage housing stakeholders to find collaborative solutions to address the issue of available and affordable housing for all Canadians. Despite the shift in

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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/>

Canadian perspectives to companion animals as family members, not property, people looking for pet friendly rental accommodation are finding it increasingly difficult in the current landscape of ever-increasing 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. Our research indicates that many Canadians favour standardized rules nationwide for rental housing agreements<sup>4</sup> that include companion animal provisions to increase clarity and transparency for both prospective tenants and property owners.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: ANIMAL ABUSE COSTS VICTIMS

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, this link manifests in cases involving intimate partner and family violence, where animals are a tool used by the abuser to control and manipulate.

It is currently recognized in proposed amendments to Canada's *Criminal Code*: Bill C-16, the *Protecting Victims Act* that is currently making its way through the parliamentary system, includes animal abuse and threats under two of three patterns of conduct that underpin the proposed coercive control offence.

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 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>5</sup> under Recommendation 11, and again in their 2025 report on coercive control, under Recommendation 13.<sup>6</sup> This funding would save costs to the justice and family court systems by allowing women with pets to leave abusive situations earlier.

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

<sup>4</sup> <https://aka-humane-canada-prod.s3.ca-central-1.amazonaws.com/attachments/kcopx7sp68ifb6cy1kj96mpe-humane-canada-report-experiences-of-ontario-tenants-with-pets.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/441/FEWO/Reports/RP11878723/feworp04/feworp04-e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/451/FEWO/Reports/RP13740927/feworp01/feworp01-e.pdf>

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: ANIMAL ABUSE COSTS THE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

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 been educated on the connection between animal abuse crimes and other violent crimes, then the prosecution and conviction of offenders is more efficient.

A federal funding model combined with mandated training 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. The recommendation to train justice personnel and law enforcement to assess animal maltreatment during intimate partner violence investigations was also made in the Status of Women Committee's *Coercive Control in Canada* report under Recommendation 10.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: EARLY ANIMAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE IS NECESSARY**

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

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 expand eligibility to professional animal welfare providers in the for the Humanitarian Workforce or similar emergency response grants.

Due to a lack of pet-friendly housing, rising cost of living and a shortage of veterinary care, 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.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6: CANADIAN AGRICULTURE RELIES ON HEALTHY 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 in all phases of their life: on the farm, in transportation and at the slaughterhouse. The public expects that farmed animals will be treated humanely. In response, the agriculture sector has made commitments toward the phasing out of

confinement housing and other practices in favour of more humane options. However, many Canadian farming practices fail to meet higher animal welfare standards seen in other regions, which some attribute to high initial costs.

Introducing a federal grant program that encourages investment in more humane options would provide incentives for animal agriculture producers who prioritize their animals' wellbeing and are committed to transitioning away from practices that negatively affect animal welfare.

Increased funding and resources for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency would help alleviate public concerns around animal health and welfare regulations receiving proper, consistent enforcement and restore confidence in our food production systems. It would also increase alignment with animal welfare standards and regulations of our trade partners, such as the European Union and the United Kingdom.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 7: CANADIANS SUPPORT HUMANE TREATMENT FOR ALL ANIMALS, INCLUDING THOSE USED IN RESEARCH**

To support the *Strategy to replace, reduce or refine vertebrate animal testing under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) to end toxicity testing in animals released in 2025*,<sup>7</sup> funding is necessary for further research into non-animal methods, the establishment of new protocols that avoid animal testing, and the integration of existing alternative methods into regulatory practices.

While initial investment into alternative testing methods may appear costly, the global non-animal alternative testing market is projected to reach \$29.4 billion by 2030 as more governments move to limit or prohibit testing methods that use animals.<sup>8</sup>

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) reported that 3,824,712 animals were used in science at CCAC-certified institutions in 2024, with just over 2 million of them subjected to experiments that caused minor stress or pain to moderate or severe discomfort or distress and severe pain near, at or above the threshold of tolerance for an unanesthetized animal.<sup>9</sup>

Costs associated with animal testing such as the care and keeping of these animals is difficult to quantify. Estimates indicate that the United States government had spent more than \$12 billion on animal experimentation in 2009, not including the duplication of studies as a result of high failure rates of animal experimentation in predicting human outcomes; the failure rate in

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<sup>7</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>8</sup> <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/non-animal-alternative-testing-market-A25675>

<sup>9</sup> [https://ccac.ca/Documents/AUD/CCAC\\_Animal\\_Data\\_Report\\_2024.pdf](https://ccac.ca/Documents/AUD/CCAC_Animal_Data_Report_2024.pdf) pp. 4 and 5



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drug production alone is 92 percent.<sup>10</sup>

With any new technology, sustainable funding in the infancy stage is critical to its success. Unfortunately, Canada's only national centre that was developing non-animal research methods, the Canadian Centre for Alternatives to Animal Methods (CCAAM) at the University of Windsor, was forced to close in 2024 due to lack of public funding. Dr. Charu Chandrasekera, the founder and Executive Director of CCAAM, is working to re-open the Centre at Carleton University to ensure Canada plays a leading role in global innovation in developing and validating animal-free methods.

Federal funding of \$3 to 5 million per year would support the Centre, advance new approach methods and help position Canada as a global leader in animal-free science, creating new jobs and a skilled workforce that supports our economy.

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<sup>10</sup> Akhtar (2012). The Costs of Animal Experiments. In: Animals and Public Health. *The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series*: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230358522\\_6#](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230358522_6#) pp. 156, 166