



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you this morning, Councillors.

The Ottawa Humane Society's concerns about selling commercially-sourced cats and dogs in our city are well-known. I wrote to you several weeks ago on this issue, in anticipation of this committee's and council's deliberation.

Rather then, I want to focus my comments on the staff recommendations in my limited time this morning.

Let me first say, that I know staff are interested in the welfare of animals. The report reflects this concern. And I know that the report was written in good faith, and with the interest of animals at heart.

I believe, though, that the recommendations are fundamentally flawed.

First, the OHS does not support grandfathering as a solution. I know that grandfathering is introduced in an effort to compromise, but I would argue that it makes for poor public policy. Just because a practice has been in place for a time, it does not mean that it's right or that it achieves our city's goals.

Second, as to the recommendation that commercial sources for animals be limited to inspected operators in Ontario and Quebec: this does not achieve what it may appear to on the surface.

It may sound like this would limit animal sourcing to reputable breeders, but it would achieve no such thing. There is no requirement that the puppy or kitten be born in an inspected facility, or even live there for any length of time - it just means that they must be purchased from that facility. Under the proposal, the inspected facility could, in fact, be a warehouse or distribution centre. As long as there is adequate food, water, shelter and general care in this warehouse, it would pass inspection, even though the animals may have arrived the day before from Arkansas or Chicoutimi.

There are simply not the resources or authority at the OHS or any humane society or— indeed the city—to ascertain the ultimate source of an animal for sale in Ottawa at a grandfathered pet store.

Third, I want to highlight what is missing from the report: a discussion about the city's goal of reducing animal overpopulation in our community, most especially cats. The OHS, as you are likely aware, works closely with the municipal spay neuter clinic, providing an educational component to the community spay/neuter outreach. The program, in tandem with the regular work of the clinic, and the OHS's own efforts promise to make inroads in cat overpopulation. It is counter-productive to support local pet shops in causing more cats to be born for a profit while investing scarce resources to reduce their numbers.

Progressive communities have come to the conclusion that good social policy is to favour adoption over the sale of animals, to favour rehoming homeless animals over breeding for profit and unwittingly participating in the exploitation and abuse of animals in sub-standard breeding operations. I hope that you will lead Ottawa in coming to the same conclusion.

I have argued many times that strong animal welfare is achieved only through a caring and educated community, a strong and active humane society and robust and progressive legislation. Today you have an opportunity to continue to build that legislation.

Thank you.