



Hon. Judy A. Sgro

Member of Parliament for
Humber River-Black Creek



March 29th, 2016

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
4601 Guthrie Drive, Box 2800
Peterborough, ON K9J 8L5
Attention: Angelo Lombardo, Executive Director

Dear Mr. Lombardo,

I am writing in response to your letter, received by this office on March 11th, 2016, in which you express your trepidation with respect to potential impact of the legislative proposals contained within Bill C-246. Thank you for taking the time to contact me on this matter, and for giving me the opportunity to provide feedback.

Let me begin by confirming that the OFAH and I align on two foundational items. Firstly, like you and your members, I believe that the abuse of animals is abhorrent. Penalties, including those enacted in Bill S-203 (39th Parliament) and Bill C-35 (41st Parliament) must be appropriate when gauged against the heinousness of animal abuse and the manner in which Canadian society views these crimes generally. Put another way, animals in our care and control must be treated appropriately and that includes a freedom from unnecessary pain and suffering. Secondly, like the OFAH, and the many other organizations comprising the responsible animal use community, I firmly believe that angling, hunting, trapping, and farming are heritage activities that provided the foundations on which our nation was originally established. These activities remain deeply rooted in Canadian culture, while also providing significant ecological, social, trade and economic benefits for Canadians. Eight-million Canadians trap, hunt or fish and the sector contributes nearly \$15-billion to the economy annually. Similarly, agriculture alone is the second largest employer in Canada and accounts for 7% of Canada's GDP. These sectors are important and, when undertaken and managed in accordance with appropriate industry standards, sound science and ethical conservation, these sectors provide thousands of sustainable jobs in every region of the country. I am proud to be a supporter of the responsible animal use community.

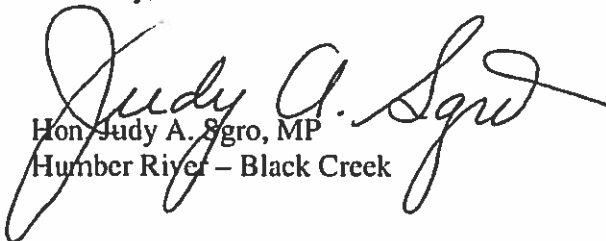
With respect to Bill C-246 in particular, I share many of your concerns. While I oppose shark finning and the harvesting of cat and dog fur, my unease with Bill C-246 stems from the potential for harm to the industries and sectors noted above. Unfortunately, much of this legislation has come forward in the past and, during those past legislative attempts, serious drafting, legal and philosophical problems were identified. This is not just my opinion. In fact, following a comprehensive 2003 study by the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, the Committee Chair (now the Speaker of the Senate) identified what he called

“major drafting errors” in legislation similar to Bill C-246. For this and, many of the other reasons identified in your letter to me, that legislation was widely opposed by anglers, hunters, trappers and farmers... and also by the medical research community, by traditional hunters such as First Nations, and by certain religious organization who feared the legislation threatened ancient practices such as Halal and Kosher killing. These concerns were underscored by warnings from the now Superior Court Judge Michael Code (formerly a University of Toronto law professor), concerning the potential for major legal complications. Unfortunately, the possibility of a new reverse-onus demand, ill-conceived legal definitions and terminology, and the loss of vital industry-specific precedent law protections combined in ways that prompted many legislators to fear a threat to legitimate, legal and humane animal use communities. I share these concerns and view the risks created by Bill C-246 as substantial.

In closing, I am not prepared to vote in favour of Bill C-246 and I will use every opportunity to share my thoughts with my colleagues in the House of Commons and Senate.

I trust the above will meet with your approval but, should you have questions or concerns regarding my position, I invite you to contact my office.

Sincerely,


Hon. Judy A. Sgro, MP
Humber River – Black Creek