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Animal Protection Legislation

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to speak today about the issue of animal neglect, cruelty and abuse. I last spoke about this issue back in March, when people across the country were floored by charges being stayed against a Behchoko man who was charged in September of 2008 after the local government in Behchoko called in a veterinarian to put down 34 of his dogs who were found to be badly malnourished.

Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, animal cruelty was back in the news when just last week three puppies were found at the dump in Behchoko, their throats having been cut; a reprehensible act committed on innocent animals. Even if the authorities find those responsible, here, in the Northwest Territories people can, and do, get away with abusing animals.

The Crown stays charges in these types of cases because it is highly unlikely that, given the current legislation, they would be successful at getting a conviction. That, Mr. Speaker, is a very unfortunate reality here in the Northwest Territories.

Last summer a Hay River man was charged while in Edmonton for leaving his dog unattended in a vehicle during a hot day. Had this same offence been committed in the Northwest Territories, the offence would likely go unpunished. This, again, is a very sad commentary, Mr. Speaker, on the effectiveness and the usefulness of our current legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know exactly where animal protection legislation is at with this government. How many more times are we going to allow ourselves to be embarrassed both nationally and internationally with our archaic laws? We need to advance this legislation as soon as possible so those who commit these heinous crimes against animals are faced with some serious consequences.

Last spring the Minister of Justice, in response to some questions that I had about animal rights legislation, on page 2718 of Hansard states, "...it could be in the fall of this year. We will do what we can if we need to fast track it. We are in the process of doing that."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the fall is here, the snow is falling and Christmas is coming. Where exactly is this legislation? How come it has not even gone to committee yet? Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions for the Government House Leader at the appropriate time. Thank you.