

Good morning Council. My name is Dr. Dawn Rault, spelled RAULT. I am an Instructor at the University of Calgary in the Law and Society program, and resident in Ward 8. My research focusses on animal laws and the occupational health risks and safety concerns faced by officers who enforce municipal bylaws and provincial statutes. The death of Peace Officer Rodney Lazenby in the line of duty in Priddas, and the subsequent fatality inquiry has been central to my work. Today I would like to specifically comment on 3 proposed changes to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

First, Administration is proposing a change that would grant authority to the Chief Bylaw Officer to designate animals vicious, rather than the Provincial Court. Although seeking this designation through provincial court is a lengthy process, I am concerned that this authority may violate the principles of procedural fairness and due process. Put another way, the Chief Bylaw Officer cannot be a neutral and impartial decision maker because they are not at arms-length from those investigating the case and seeking the vicious designation.

Second, I would like to comment on the proposed limit of 6 dogs and 6 cats per household. Although this proposal would indirectly allow peace officers to address animal hoarding, it may result in some unanticipated consequences including dissuading pet owners from licensing their pets and seeking veterinary care. To my knowledge, there is no data to indicate that limiting pet ownership is effective, it is difficult to enforce, and may penalize responsible pet owners.

Third, regarding the composition of the "Licence and Community Standards Appeal Board Membership" in addition to seeking members who have animal behavior expertise, I would further encourage membership of social scientists and socio-legal scholars who could provide expertise on public safety, the law and up-to-date research from the social sciences.

Finally, any decisions that are made must consider the fact that bylaw and peace officers face significant risks when enforcing animal laws, and as we learned from the Officer Lazenby Fatality Inquiry, these harms are exacerbated by a lack of access to intelligence, reliable forms of communication and information sharing between agencies. If our officers are not safe, equipped and informed, they cannot protect our communities. Thank-you for this opportunity to address council.

