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Fri Aug 14, 2009

MPP says Bill 50 needs changes

AUTHOR: NICOLE MILLION, THE MIRROR

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A press conference held last week at the Toronto Humane Society is bringing attention to **Bill 50** - a relatively unknown legislation that is currently in its second reading in the house.

If passed, the bill would see improved penalties for animal abusers and inspection rights for the Ontario SPCA, as well as provisions for existing legislation in terms of addressing exceptions for agriculture and veterinarians.

"It addresses numerous challenges and problems with the existing legislation including increasing penalties and introducing new provincial offenses, plus it will allow us to have inspection rights to permit us to address roadside zoos and puppy mills in Ontario," OSPCA spokesperson Kristin Williams tells *The Mirror*.

Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop was one of the many politicians at the May 14 press conference and admits, while the bill was originally hailed as one to regulate roadside zoos in the province, it is controversial, as certain parts of it remain unclear.

"The bill needs work. It's going to have to go to committee ... it's certainly going to need a number of amendments," Dunlop, who will be will be a representative on that committee, admits. One of the major concerns at the moment, he says, is the bill calls for the elimination of the name The Toronto Humane Society.

"They will no longer be able to use that name, and it's the largest humane society in the province. That's one of the things we are going to work on to get improvement to get this section removed or amended so that groups like that can continue to use their names."

Another concern, he says, is how *Bill 50* will affect other groups such as agriculture, anglers and hunters.

"When people draft these legislations, they impact all sorts of organizations. We have to know that someone is looking out for everyone in the drafting of the regulations so that there is no impact on them that they're not



NICOLE MILLION PHOTO
 Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop gets a little bit of play in with his "granddog" Happy, an 11-month-old golden retriever. Dunlop plans to support Bill 50, which will see improved penalties for animal abusers and inspection rights for the Ontario SPCA, including the Midland branch.

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aware of," he says.

"As far as I am concerned, the minister who brought the bill forward really wasn't up front with it because even the organizations that lobbied for the regulations, I think they were led astray. Certainly, this bill is much more comprehensive than that, and when we get to committee, we will see what the impacts are."

Despite those concerns, Dunlop says he will likely support *Bill 50*, if it is amended.

Williams says the OSPCA sees *Bill 50* as a positive step forward for animal welfare.

"It is the first top to bottom modernization that's been proposed in 90 years," she says, adding they feel it addresses all of the shortcomings with respect to the old budget and legislation.

While Williams acknowledges having heard some negativity surrounding *Bill 50*, she believes it is isolated and relates only to a small section of the bill, adding if the bill passes, no OSPCA branch or affiliate would be affected by that specific section.

"If it were to be quashed, I think it would be a tremendous shame. There's been a lot of input from numerous animal welfare organizations, not just our own, that went into this bill. It is a significant step forward for animal welfare and it's a very smart bill."

As for how *Bill 50* would impact the Midland OSPCA, Williams says the organization will be able to be tougher on offenders.

"As it relates to each community, it means that our inspectors can be much more effective as it relates to investigations and bringing

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