

Canada's 45th Parliament

2025 GOVERNMENT RELATIONS TOOLKIT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 Post-Election Goals

03 Key Messages

04 Background

05 Challenges

06 Government Priorities

07 Member Priorities

08 Strategic Collaboration

09 Pulling it all together

10 Toolkit Resources and
Templates

14 Conclusion

Humane Canada's Post-Election Goals

In the wake of the election, our focus now is to raise awareness in our new government that animal welfare and protection issues are directly related to Canadian's cost-of-living and safety concerns.

We hope to build relationships with each new or returning Parliamentarian and advocate on your behalf using the strength of our collective voice. By combining our aligned priorities and amplifying key messages in strategic and integrated communication, we can make our voices heard. Our letters to the ministers and MPs will point them to the closest member organization; in turn, we ask that members mention their Humane Canada relationship and ask MPs to meet with us when they are in Ottawa.

Lobbying and political advocacy are not about short-term wins but more of a long haul.



Key Messages

- More than 60% of Canadian homes have a companion animal and more than 70% of those people identify their pet as family. In 2024, Canada was home to a total pet population consisting of 8.9 million cats, 8.3 million dogs, 2.5 million birds, 8.6 million fish, 1.2 million small mammals, and 274.3 thousand reptiles. An estimated 12.2 million households in Canada included a dog and/or a cat and of those households, 80% of dog parents and 68% of cat parents consider their animals to be members of the family.
- Animals have always been at the heart of our national identity and values; our wildlife is even showcased on our coins. They also play an important role in the Canadian economy. Every year, more than 800 million animals are raised on farms in Canada for food. In 2023, there were 3,128,943 animals used in institutional research, teaching, and testing.
- According to data from Agriculture Canada, pet food retail sales alone in the Canadian market totaled \$6.7 billion CDN in 2024, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 10.0% for sales of dog & cat food (\$6.6 billion) and 8.1% for other pet food sales (\$122.0 million) between 2019 and 2024. These figures demonstrate just how many Canadians brought animals into their lives to help alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation during COVID lockdowns.
- As one of the oldest social institutions in the country, humane societies and SPCAs are integral to Canada's identity and relied on by Canadians to care not just for animals in need, but also their communities. They too are struggling with post-pandemic issues relating to increased cost-of-living, housing insecurities, rising veterinary costs and lack of access, and pet food insecurity which has resulted in them being overwhelmed with surrendered or abandoned animals, many of whom were adopted at the height of the pandemic.
- Most Canadians are surprised to learn that humane societies and SPCAs rely almost entirely on donations, and do not receive the consistent government support necessary to fill critical social service gaps that include pet food banks and supplies, low-or-no cost veterinary services, temporary in-house options or foster families that care for the animals of people fleeing abuse or experiencing crisis and more.

Background



While the new government is facing unprecedented challenges to our nation's sovereignty and economic viability, it states that it remains committed to also safeguarding us against climate change and growing threats of crime.

In these uncertain economic times, it is important to remind our government that Canadians care very deeply about animals and how they are treated is at the core of our national values.

Animal welfare and protection is at the heart of many of these issues.

The single mandate letter and the Speech from the Throne were both tightly focused on our nation's economy and trade. However, they also included opportunities to inject animal welfare into the conversation in some areas, like:

- Strengthening collaboration with reliable trading partners and allies around the world
- Bringing down costs for Canadians and helping them to get ahead:
- Building one Canadian economy by removing barriers to interprovincial trade and identifying and expediting nation-building projects that will connect and transform our country
- Making housing more affordable
- Keeping Canadians safe by reinforcing law enforcement
- Attracting the best talent in the world to help build our economy, while returning our overall immigration rates to sustainable levels

Challenges



With a more streamlined Cabinet and such laser focus on economic growth and reigning in of government spending, it will be more difficult to get Parliamentarians to care about animal welfare, let alone allocate funding for it.

The *Humane Canada 2025 Election Policy Platform* emerged from our Government Relations Committee meetings. The three top priorities that arose in ranked responses to a recent survey asking members what three advocacy issues were most important to their organization and its donors aligned with concerns of Canadians and some of our platform issues, including:

- Affordable access to veterinary care;
- Pet inclusive housing;
- Poor breeding practices that contribute to shelter crowding;
- Legislation/legal action that addresses animal abuse and protections.

If we are able to tie our messaging around these key issues and government priorities from the mandate letter, then show how it will benefit Canadians either by reducing costs or improving health and safety, we have a chance at success.

PRIORITIES

Government Priorities

Here are some of the issues the government seeks to address in their mandate letter, and ideas where animal welfare and protection can be included:

1

Strengthening collaboration with reliable trading partners and allies around the world: In order to attract and engage in agricultural trade with international partners such as the European Union, Supporting Canadian farmers to improve animal welfare conditions by phasing out intensive housing systems like conventional and enriched cages for laying hens, stalls for pigs and tie stalls for dairy cattle and strengthening oversight and accountability is necessary.

2

Bringing down costs for Canadians and helping them to get ahead: Providing stable, ongoing funding for animal shelters to address cost-of-living issues, their explicit inclusion in the definition of community-oriented structures and eligibility for federal infrastructure funding applications so that these organizations can continue to provide vital services to their communities would help alleviate financial strain and help all Canadians to get ahead, more secure in the knowledge that their animals will receive support should it be needed.

3

Building one Canadian economy by identifying and expediting nation-building projects that will connect and transform our country: Diversifying Canada's agricultural economy to assist farmers in providing Canadians with more whole-food, plant-based options, while building more domestic processing capacity including food production could help reduce the long, stressful transportation times animals endure when moved from farm to slaughter and finally ban the live export of horses by air for slaughter, as promised by the previous government and supported by the majority of Canadians.

4

Making housing more affordable: Despite the prevalence of pet ownership nationwide, most provincial tenancy legislation has failed to keep pace and continues to allow property owners and landlords to deny prospective tenants housing if they have pets. This significant barrier for many looking for affordable, attainable housing was recognized in the previous government's *Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights* as a form of discrimination.

5

Keeping Canadians safe by reinforcing law enforcement: Recognizing that animal abuse can be a predictor of violent crime, particularly in relation to gender-based violence and child sexual abuse and exploitation, is imperative to keeping Canadian communities safe.

6

Attracting the best talent in the world to help build our economy: A national preventive and affordable veterinary care strategy that supports international veterinary recruitment alongside other medical professionals and consults with vulnerable communities such as Indigenous and those in remote regions would help alleviate the access to care crisis for people and their animals.

KEY ISSUES



Member Priorities

01

ACCESS TO VETERINARIAN CARE

- Rising health costs
- Helping low income with vet costs
- Accessible veterinary care
- Access to affordable veterinary care
- Access to care

02

PET INCLUSIVE HOUSING

- Access to pet friendly housing
- Pet Friendly Housing
- Pet inclusive housing

03

POOR BREEDING PRACTICES/LEGAL AND LEGISLATION ISSUES

- Surrendering of adolescent dogs
- Puppy mills/poor breeding practices
- Dog & cat breeding
- Back yard breeders
- Overpopulation
- Domestic animal abuse
- Animal Protection legislation
- Lack of Legal action
- Promoting animal friendly legislation
- Government relations

Strategic Collaboration

Working through our collective voice is the best way to get our message across to the most people.

Here are just some of the ways we can work together:

Engaging MPs

- Build relationships in your MP's constituency office
- Invite MP and staff to events
- Discuss your membership with Humane Canada, its importance on national issues and **then ask MPs to meet with Humane Canada when in Ottawa**

Integrated Strategic Communications

Goals: Introduce Humane Canada and our Members to their MPs, establish HS/SPCAs as critical components of the social safety net in their communities, introduce our collective challenges and priorities for government and invite them to connect with their local organization



Pulling it all together

In 6 easy steps...

1

Identify your organization's priorities:

- Determine your areas of focus based on what is of most concern
- Choose 2 or 3 main issues

2

Align with government priorities (where applicable)

- Find the closest fit for your issues among the listed priorities set out here or in the Prime Minister's Mandate Letter
- Example: Surrenders due to lack of pet inclusive housing in your area fit under making housing more affordable and bringing down costs for Canadians

3

Communicate:

- Narrow down your key messages
- Draft social media posts; or
- Follow Humane Canada's lead and repost social media messages that align with your key messages

4

Integrate:

- Harness the power of collective voice by using language and key messages provided for maximum impact
- Example: *As one of the oldest social institutions in the country, humane societies and SPCAs are relied on by Canadians to care not just for animals in need, but also the communities we serve. Our remote community is in need of more access to affordable veterinary care*

5

Engage:

- Draft and send letters to your local MP/Minister/Secretary of State congratulating them on their election and inviting them for a tour
- Be sure to tie some of your organization's issues to the Member's party platform promises or the Mandate Letter

6

Persist:

- Keep track of who responds ie. parliamentary assistant, staff from constituency office
- Continue to inform and invite MP/Minister/Secretary of State to local events, particularly if they intersect with key issues
- Do not be discouraged by lack of response

TOOLKIT

After an election, it is critical to get out there and make sure that your message is received.

Here are just some of the many things that can be done to engage with MPs after the election:

- **Congratulatory Letters**
- **One-on-One Meetings**
- **Collaboration Opportunities**

Sending a letter of congratulations, especially to a brand-new MP, is a great way to introduce yourself and your organization, and to begin to build what will hopefully be a lasting connection. The next few pages have templates that you can copy and customize to send to your own MPs.

Continue reading for more handy tips and templates to help you along on your Government Relations journey...

POST ELECTION CONGRATULATORY LETTER

<Date>

<First Name>, <Last Name>

Member of Parliament (RIDING NAME)

<Address 1>

<Address 2>

<Postal Code>

Your Logo Here

Dear <NAME>:

I am writing to extend our congratulations on your recent election as a Member of Parliament and introduce you to our organization.

<Your Organization> is your local animal welfare organization. Humane societies and SPCAs are integral to Canada's identity and relied on by Canadian communities to care not just for animals in need, but also the communities they serve. Yet, Canadians are consistently surprised to learn that these organizations do not receive the governmental support they need to fill critical social service gaps such as pet food banks and temporary shelter and fostering. Much like your constituents, humane societies and SPCAs are also struggling with post-pandemic issues relating to increased cost-of-living, housing insecurities, rising veterinary costs, and pet food security which has resulted in shelters across the country being at capacity to care for animals being surrendered or abandoned due to economic challenges.

<Add any specific challenges in your community as a second paragraph or by amending above>

<Your Organization> is a proud member of Humane Canada, the national voice for humane societies and SPCAs from coast to coast to coast. When you are in Ottawa, we encourage you to contact Chief Executive Officer Barbara Cartwright to meet and discuss why we believe it is the federal government's responsibility to continue to lead in policy initiatives that work to improve animal welfare and protections in Canada.

Once again, congratulations on your election to Parliament. We look forward to working together to create a more humane Canada not only for all animals, but also the people who care for them.

Yours truly,

<Your Name>

One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings can be very effective. It can be as simple as inviting your local MP for a tour.

This gives MPs the opportunity to see the power the animal welfare sector has and gives you a platform to highlight animal welfare issues that also resonate with their constituents.

Why?

- Easy to set up
- Profiles your organization
- Highlights key issues
- Part of bigger strategy
- Lets you know where your MP stands on animal welfare

REMEMBER:

- Make sure your key messages are clear and concise.
- Ask them for their position on animal welfare, as well as where their party stands.
- Don't be afraid to bring in some supporting documents, like this one, to help keep the conversation going and on track.
- **Be prepared** to answer their questions confidently and accurately.

How?

1. Identify your local MP
2. Call or email to set up a meeting - be persistent! You may have to call more than once
3. Prepare ahead of time with your team - what will you focus on and who will do what?
4. Make sure to take a photo of your team with the MP to share on social media
5. Follow up with a thank you and any additional information you agreed to send
6. Share your experience with Humane Canada!

REQUEST FOR 1 ON 1 MEETING LETTER SAMPLE

<Date>

<First Name>, <Last Name>

<Address 1>

<Address 2>

<Postal Code>



Your Logo Here

Dear <NAME>:

I am reaching out today to ask for a meeting to discuss existing animal welfare issues that are impacting our community. As the [YOUR ORGANIZATION] in your riding, we believe strongly that the federal government must continue to lead in developing policy initiatives to improve animal welfare in Canada.

[ADD MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION]

(CHOOSE YOUR ISSUE - THIS IS A PET INCLUSIVE HOUSING EXAMPLE) As you may know, the rising cost of living has forced many Canadians to surrender their beloved animals. And although rental prices may be decreasing, available and affordable rental housing is out of reach for many due to disparate laws and landlord discrimination against tenants with pets, as acknowledged in Housing and Infrastructure Canada's *Blueprint for a Renters' Bill of Rights*. It adds another layer to the affordable housing crisis that many fail to take into account. Does your party have a plan to tackle this issue and protect people and their pets?

I look forward to scheduling a suitable time for us to meet and discuss concrete plans your party has to address protection for both animals and people in vulnerable situations like precarious housing in your constituency, and nationwide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

<Your name and signature>

CONCLUSION

Despite the government's focus on the Canadian economy, sovereignty and trade in both the Prime Minister's Mandate Letter and the Speech from the Throne, there are some opportunities to be had.

The Throne Speech mentioned the creation of one Canadian economy, with the reminder that an economy is only truly strong if it works for everyone. It spoke of protecting more Canada's nature than ever before through the creation of new parks and green areas, and other conservation efforts. It reminded us that Canada has set an example as a force for good in this world.

Based on these principles and others outlined throughout this toolkit, we can demonstrate to Parliamentarians that Canada has an opportunity to continue to lead as a force for good in this time of fundamental change, through groundbreaking animal welfare policy.