



**Alberta Association for Animal Owner's Rights**

*Dedicated to Promoting Optimum Animal Welfare and Supporting Responsible Choice*

May 17, 2016

Honourable Christina Gray  
Minister of Labour  
107 Legislature Building  
10800-97 Ave  
Edmonton, AB  
T5K 2B6

Dear Honourable Christina Gray,

Cc: Premier Notley

My name is Sonja Christopher. I volunteer my time to represent everyday Albertans who all have one thing in common - we love our animals. I am President of the Alberta Association of Animal Owner's Rights (AAAOR), a non-profit society started in 2006.

One of the things AAAOR has recently lobbied the government for is for truthful information to be given to the public regarding the *Veterinary Profession Act*. We have sent several requests with no response. Maybe this time Alberta animal owners will get a response...

The issue all started when the governing body of Alberta veterinarians, the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (ABVMA), began overruling court cases and providing their own members, other professions, and the public with misinformation about the law.

The misinformation the ABVMA is spreading - that complimentary animal health like chiropractic, equine dentistry, acupuncture and physiotherapy is exclusive to veterinarians -- may seem like a little "white lie". But this little white lie is slowly poisoning the rights of Alberta animal owners; similar to small, daily doses of arsenic. (Refer to our previous letters to the Ministry of Labour that provides more information of how Albertans are being negatively affected.)

Very likely the ABVMA's unprofessional misconduct of overriding court rulings comes from a fear of being over-run by the growing field of complimentary health. However, their fears are unfounded. Veterinarians will always be a vital part of animal health. With the complex health issues affecting animals and our planet today, the animal health industry needs cooperation between veterinarians and non-veterinarians, one of the goals of our association.

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Because our communication with the Ministry of Labour has been numerous and compounded, the following is an outline and summarization of our attempt to get answers. Copies of any of the communication mentioned below will happily be sent upon request.

August 1 and August 4, 2015 – AAAOR President and AAAOR member **requests the professional misconduct of the ABVMA to be addressed** and that the government follows through with the decade old government promise of completely (instead of partially) clarifying the rights of animal owners in the *Veterinary Profession Act*.

October 23, 2015 – Minister Sigurdson (previous Minister of Labour) **initially responds positively to our request** to address the ABVMA's professional misconduct. Minister Sigurdson does not address fully protecting the rights of animal owners in the *Veterinary Profession Act*.

November 12, 2015 – Astonishingly, a civil servant, **Director of Professional Governance, Mr. Adrian Pritchard, overturns the Minister's original decision, and defers the ABVMA's professional misconduct by providing AAAOR with misinformation about the law.**

February 10, 2016 – AAAOR asks for an explanation for the two incongruent responses given to Alberta animal owners. The court cases of *AVMA v. Pequin* and *R. v. MacKinnon*, both ruled in favor of the non-veterinarian complimentary health providers. The courts ruled that complimentary services are not exclusive to Alberta veterinarians. The only services exclusive to Alberta veterinarians in the *Veterinary Profession Act* are surgery, drugs and obstetrics. But that is not what Ministry of Labour told us in November 2015. **We asked the Ministry of Labour to reference exactly where in the *Veterinary Profession Act* is the claim made by Mr. Pritchard, Director of Professional Governance, that complimentary animal health care has "... already been conferred to the ABVMA through the *Veterinary Profession Act* ..."? Our inquiry into Mr. Pritchard's competence was not responded to.**

March 31, 2016 – **AAAOR sends a follow-up letter to Ministry of Labour. Once again, we questioned the competence of Mr. Pritchard and requested that Albertans be given information that is backed by law. We also asked when will the professional misconduct of the ABVMA be addressed, and when will the rights of Alberta animal owners be clearly and completely protected in Alberta law.** Additional documentation of the ABVMA's professional misconduct was also supplied.

April 13, 2016 – Deputy Minister of Labour requests a telephone meeting with AAAOR President!

Unfortunately, the telephone meeting had nothing to do with the questions AAAOR had asked. Instead, the telephone meeting was regarding stakeholder input about a proposed amendment to the *Veterinary Profession Act*. Interestingly, **this amendment was created by Mr. Pritchard, the Director of Professional Governance - the same person who recently provided AAAOR with misinformation about the law to defer the professional misconduct of the ABVMA.**

AAAOR's recommendation to the Deputy Minister of Labour was that **before any amendments are made to the *Veterinary Profession Act*, priority should be given to investigate the competence of Mr. Pritchard and address the professional**

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**misconduct of the ABVMA.** The Deputy Minister claimed to have no knowledge of either problem and requested evidence to be sent to him. Ample evidence was sent to the Deputy Minister of Labour by email on April 14. Two weeks went by and AAAOR received no response to the email and no response to confirmation requests. AAAOR President made a phone call to the Ministry of Labour on April 28 at 9:30 am where Karen Ramkhelawan, Scheduling Assistant to Honourable Christina Gray, checked her computer and confirmed the April 14<sup>th</sup> email was received.

**May 10, 2016 - The Veterinary Profession Act amendment proceeds with no apparent action taken to address the incompetence of Mr. Pritchard or the professional misconduct of the ABVMA.** The Government of Alberta issued a press release on May 10, 2016, and the proposed amendment (Bill 13) was tabled that same day, receiving its first reading in the Alberta Legislature.

**It is obvious what is going on here. Alberta animal owners aren't wealthy. We don't have funding available to hire the professional lobbyists that wealthy associations can afford to hire.**

We depend on a democratic government to represent everyday people. Please represent us.

#1 Alberta animal owners would like to receive truthful information about the law.

#2 We want assurance that professional misconduct, like professions overriding court rulings, will be addressed and corrected.

#3 Lastly, we want our rights to be completely protected (not partially protected) by Alberta law. We want amendments to the law to be created by competent civil servants that look out for the best interests of Albertans, not just for the best interests of wealthy associations.

Thanks for listening.



Sincerely,

Sonja Christopher

President, Alberta Association of Animal Owner's Rights

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