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NEWS RELEASE

NDP Push Yields New Protection for Service Animals in Saskatchewan

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NDP Social Services critic and MLA for Saskatoon Centre David Forbes today heralded the passing of amendments to the *Animal Protection Act*, key components of which Forbes authored.

During the Fall session of the Legislature, Forbes introduced a private members bill aimed at protecting service animals such as police dogs and guide dogs for those living with disabilities. Virtually all aspects of Forbes's bill were ultimately rolled into amendments already being considered to the *Animal Protection Act* which would see those convicted of animal abuse offenses face maximum penalties of two years in jail, a \$25,000 fine, or both.

"I'm extremely gratified that this work has resulted in some very positive change on behalf of all animals in our province," Forbes said. "Providing special recognition and protection for the work that service animals do in our province was long overdue."

Forbes said police canine units, the Guide Dog Users of Canada and other disability organizations told him that animal protection laws as they previously existed simply didn't meet the unique circumstances involved in caring for or working with a service animal. He cited the high costs to individuals and organizations whose retraining and care of service animals that have been the victim of violence or harassment was too expensive and time-consuming prior to this change.

"We hope that this law will go a long way in protecting the interests of service animals and will allow them to continue the effective job they do in assisting and protecting our citizens," Forbes concluded.

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