

ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH - ONTARIO **“ONE STRONG VOICE FOR ANIMALS”**

Hagersville, December 17, 2018 - **ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH - ONTARIO** (AWW), is a new Ontario-wide advocacy group, launched today at a public meeting in Hagersville, Ontario.

ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH will monitor Ontario’s current animal welfare system as well as push for a new system that makes animal protection more effective and accountable. The group came together after numerous concerns were raised about the performance and accountability of the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA), the charity authorized to enforce animal welfare laws across the province.

“The current animal welfare system in our province is in crisis,” explained Mike Zimmerman, one of the new group’s co-ordinators. “Only about half the province now has locally provided animal protection. Toronto and Ottawa, for example, no longer have this vital service. Animals are going unprotected and animal abusers are going unpunished. It’s time for animal protection to be delivered by the public sector, not an unaccountable charity. The OSPCA now has a self-appointed, permanent board of directors. That’s just not right and it’s time for a change.”

“**ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH** is going to be Ontario’s *one strong voice* for animals,” says Brenda Thompson, AWW’s other co-ordinator. “The OSPCA’s service delivery has continually deteriorated and a good example of that is their recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals and horses. It’s not acceptable that the OSPCA continues to receive provincial funding when they are not meeting the contract’s basic requirement to provide province-wide coverage. Our animals deserve better and I think most people agree.”

ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH’s coordinators are:

Brenda Thompson - Brenda is the Chief Executive Officer of Whispering Hearts Horse Rescue in Hagersville, Ontario. Brenda has been operating Whispering Hearts since 2007 and is a respected and accomplished member of the equine community. She is also a former municipal employee and OSPCA agent. And,

Mike Zimmerman – Mike retired in 2016 from the Ontario Public Service after more than 25 years. From 2003-2016 he managed the province’s Animal Welfare department. In 2008, he was the coordinator of the team that comprehensively revised and modernized the OSPCA Act for the first time since it was enacted in 1919.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit **ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH – ONTARIO** on Facebook or Contact **ANIMAL WELFARE WATCH – ONTARIO** at: awwont@gmail.com

JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS: PLEASE CONTACT AWW ANYTIME FOR UP-TO-DATE, ACCURATE INFORMATION ON ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION, ISSUES AND INCIDENTS.