

April 3, 2008

**To:** Hon. Arthur Mitchell, Leader of Yukon Opposition (Liberal Party); Hon. Todd Hardy, Leader of Third Party (Yukon NDP)

**From:** Terry Cumming, advocate for Yukon sled dogs, Whitehorse, Yukon  
Email: [admin@sleddogwatchdog.com](mailto:admin@sleddogwatchdog.com)

**RE: Concerns about Yukon Government support for Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race and other related animal welfare issues**

Sirs:

On April 20, 2006, the leader of the Yukon Liberal Party asked a question on my behalf (and on behalf of sled dogs) in the Yukon Legislature:

*[Yukon Legislature Committee of the Whole - Tourism Budget discussion excerpt]*

***Arthur Mitchell (Leader of Yukon Liberal Party):*** *I'm wondering if the minister could answer a question regarding the \$150,000 item that was in the budget speech supporting Yukon Quest media coverage and winter tourism marketing. I'm wondering if the minister could explain exactly what this money is going to be used for in terms of specific media coverage.*

***Hon. Elaine Taylor (Minister of Tourism and Culture):*** *With respect to the Yukon Quest and the marketing agreement we've had in place for probably about four or five years - it has been in place for a number of years - I don't think the contribution agreement has changed all that much, if at all. Money is forwarded to the Yukon Quest, and we're really proud of our ongoing support. The international sled dog race is a great event and does raise awareness about Yukon and, in particular, winter tourism in the Yukon, not to mention other winter-related activities. Dollars are flowed through to the Yukon Quest, and those dollars are to be targeted primarily toward marketing-related expenditures. With respect to the plan for 2006-07, I really don't have an actual analysis or a list of all the marketing projects that they're targeting for the 2006-07 year, but it is to go toward marketing activities.*

This response can be properly categorized as a 'non-answer' and there was no follow-up question by Liberal Leader Mitchell, to delve further into the matter.

Since that date, much more information has arisen which sheds further light on the inappropriateness of the Government of Yukon supporting the Yukon Quest.

## **Issue of dog culling by Yukon Quest mushers:**

*CBC NORTH STORY (FEB. 9, 2007) - 'VETERAN MUSER CALLS ON QUEST TO CONFRONT POSSIBLE DOG CULLING':*

*Mushers running the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race should have to sign a declaration that they do not cull unwanted dogs and puppies, long-time competitor Frank Turner says. Although there have been huge improvements in sled-dog care over the past several decades, Turner says the issue of culling still needs to come out of the shadows. "Competitive kennels, or even kennels that may not be competitive but aspire to be, often breed more dogs than they're actually going to be able to keep, afford to keep and pay for the vet bills, the food and all the other associated costs," Turner told CBC News in a recent pre-race interview.*

*"If you added up the numbers, there's no way all those other puppies or young dogs are going to be sold or given away to homes. We're just breeding too many dogs." The Yukon Quest should admit that culling is part of the competitive racing world and take measures to discourage it, he said. "I mean one of the things that the Quest could do on the entry form is do a declaration - to participate in the Quest you declare that you do not practice culling of dogs," he said.*

*The race does not have a policy on culling. Quest race marshal Mike McCowan would not say whether culling is a common practice when asked about it Thursday. "It's not our business," McCowan said. "I mean it's like going up to somebody and saying, 'How do you make your bed in your own house?' That's not our business."*

*[Ref. <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/north/story/2007/02/09/culling-dogs.html?ref=rss> ]*

It is also important to note that, in a 2006 CBC Radio interview with a spokesperson for the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies regarding the 74 hoarded dogs who were murdered near Dawson (large contribution to these deaths attributable to the abysmal Yukon Animal Protection Act), the CBC interviewer made the following statement:

*Now this raises the question, one last question here, and that is the Yukon is a large dog mushing community and kennels usually entail several scores of dogs. It's a fact that it [dog culling/killing] does occur within a community. I don't think it's something that's discussed a lot, but mushers DO cull animals, and is that provided for with any legislation that you're aware of?*

*[Transcribed interview excerpt, CBC 'Lunch Break' show, June 27, 2006]*

## **Issue of three dogs being killed during 2007 Yukon Quest race:**

*Sled dog 'Jewel' killed by being dragged to death in harness: choked to death on its own vomit) by runaway dog team.*

*Cause of death of sled dog 'Hope' inconclusive: "The specific cause of death is not apparent upon preliminary examination," said Pasevento from Fairbanks [continued]*

*this morning. "There are two possible factors that may have contributed to Hope's death. She had stomach ulcers and had aspirated some of her stomach contents."  
[Yukon Quest news release]*

*Sled dog 'Melville' killed: "Melville, a five-year-old male member of Brent Sass' team, had at some point, either prior to or during the race, ingested a piece of fabric or harness," said [head Quest veterinarian Vern] Starks. Any dog can ingest a foreign body, like a ball or a sock. In Melville's case, the object failed to pass through his digestive system and his death was caused by perforation of the intestine."  
[Yukon Quest news release]*

**Issue of Yukon Quest organization's questionable competence (breaking its own rules) regarding inadequate trail preparation in 2008 race:**

*[Yukon News editorial 'Quest must follow its own rules,' Monday, March 24, 2008]*

*It's wrong to make a promise and not fulfill it. Mike McCowan knows this. And he's right.*

*McCowan used to be the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race marshal until he was unceremoniously sacked last winter. (The organization didn't even have the guts to tell him.) The race marshal is responsible for the race from the pre-race mushers' meeting until the finish banquet — he's the guy on the hot seat.*

*So McCowan knows the rules. And, according to him, the Quest organization is breaking them. The race is dependent on two things: race competitors who honestly believe their dogs are better than the other drivers. And a trail.*

*The competitors are policed to ensure they keep up their end, looking after their dogs. The Quest has to ensure there is a trail. And it hasn't, said McCowan. It knew the Yukon River stretch on the Alaskan side was "sucking eggs," he said. Instead, it cried poverty and did nothing.*

*The result was a treacherous trail that increased injuries to mushers and dogs. And that's unacceptable. There's no excuse. McCowan even offered to waive his \$1,500 marshal stipend so the organization would have more money for the trail. Instead, they nixed the idea. And fired him.*

*"They said they didn't have the money (for the trail)," he said. "But anything becomes a priority if you make it a priority."*

*He's right. Mushers must agree to the rules and sign them. The Quest must do the same. Race rule No. 3 states, "The trail will be broken and marked prior to the race." This year, it wasn't. Quest officials knew it. And it sent the teams off anyway. That's irresponsible. Race officials can't hold competitors to the rules and then willingly ignore them when it's convenient. A rule is a rule. And the Quest ignores them at its peril.*

**Issue of lack of disclosure by Yukon Quest head veterinarian regarding specific reason for disqualification of musher ('poor dog care') during 2008 Quest race:**

*Rookie musher Donald Smidt was withdrawn from the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race on Sunday for "failing to provide the dog care expected." Race marshal Doug Grilliot made the brief announcement at the Steese Roadhouse but was unable to speak with Smidt in person.*

*"Everything that I need to know was communicated to me very clearly by the two veterinarians on site (at Chena Hot Springs) and by my official on site," Grilliot said. "The overall condition of the dog team was not acceptable to the Yukon Quest standards of dog care."*

*Smidt, of Van Dyne, Wisconsin., had driven to Alaska with his team of pure-bred Siberian huskies but required approximately 22 hours to complete the 99-mile opening leg from Fairbanks to Chena Hot Springs.*

*[Ref: Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, February 11, 2008 - <http://www.newsminer.com/news/2008/feb/11/quest-legend-turner-scratches-leaving-22-mushers-c/> ]*

2008 Yukon Quest head veterinarian Vern Starks refused to give specifics about Quest rookie musher Donald Smidt being disqualified near start of 2008 Quest race.

*[Interview with CBC 'A New Day' radio morning show near end of 2008 Quest]*

Exactly what disturbing information was Veterinarian Starks withholding from the public?

**Issue of reported alcohol consumption at race checkpoints by Quest race officials:**

*"Mistakes were made. At some points, lives were believed to be at risk. Which leads one to a more difficult issue - that of alcohol consumption on the trail. Several, though not all, officials were less than discreet in consuming booze at checkpoints. Should officials managing a 10-day, 24-hour a day race with 22 teams crossing some of North America's roughest terrain be drinking at all?"*

*"I think the officials, more than looking at us, need to look at themselves," said Hugh Neff, after being forced to scratch in Dawson. "Last year, there was a lot of drinking problems. And, as a race, they have to realize how much we put into this."*

*[Genesee Keevil, Yukon News article 'Quest on the rocks,' March 3, 2006 – the 2006 Quest featured the near-tragedy involving stranded dog teams on Eagle Summit which necessitated the rescue of six mushers and 88 dogs by U.S. military aircraft]*

## **Issue of allegations of marijuana use by Yukon Quest mushers during race:**

[Need for mandatory drug testing of Yukon Quest mushers, dog handlers and race officials]

*“The Quest, as now becomes obvious, is a mix of celebration and ordeal. At the finish line in Fairbanks, dogs from winning teams will get blood tests for drugs; a microchip injected under the skin of their necks is used for identification. There are no drug tests for the mushers, though. Whether one approves or not, marijuana is very much a part of life in the Far North. And, for some, it's an integral part of the Quest. Nothing like a few hours gliding along under the northern lights and having the brain charged with cannabis, they say.”*

*“...And by writing about this ticklish question, I do not mean to imply that all Quest mushers are dopers. I know half a dozen who are and I'd guess there are others. They're not all also-rans either. Getting stoned is part of their lives and, oddly, does not seem to leave them in a stupor, as it does the urban pot smokers I know. The only explanation I can offer for this, purely suppositional, is that I understand marijuana to be a mood enhancer. So perhaps these hyperactive mushers only intensify their gusto for living by puffing their pipes. Either that or their drive is so strong it overpowers the tranquilizing effect of the drug. The question these mushers ask each other is not "Do you have any pot?" but "What kind do you have?" And, it so happens along the trail, the question is answered in the form of a competition.*

*I had been hearing references to some famous "best butt" contest. Then I was told I had misunderstood; it's the annual "best bud" competition. There is a single judge, and apparently the judge is an individual whose experience and opinion is beyond question. The winner is never disclosed. Or maybe the judge is too stoned to remember who won anyway. But surely the best weed will come from the Matanuska Valley north of Anchorage, one of the few places in all the North where agriculture is viable outside of hothouses. In the summer, farmers grow fifty pound cabbages and pumpkins the size of easy chairs under the perpetual sun. They also produce a sweet, sticky resinous marijuana that goes by the name of Matanuska Thunder F#@k. The bud of champions.*

*This year's Quest poses a special challenge for potheads. The twenty-fifth starter in the race is [name omitted], of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police - the officer in charge of undercover operations in the Yukon. Mounties patrolled the Far North by dog team until the 1960s, and a few traditionalists like [name omitted] honour the memory. With a neatly trimmed black beard and an easy manner, [name omitted], forty-three, is both tough and popular. No one expects him to have time for plainclothes work this February, but just to be on the safe side several mushers casually inspect [him] and his outfit before the race. They want to remember the colour of his parka and his sled bag and be able to recognize his dogs, thus reducing the chances of an awkward encounter on the trail.” [From the book ‘Yukon Alone: The World’s Toughest Adventure Race,’ by John Balzar, Copyright 1999 Henry Holt and Company/Fitzhenry and Whiteside]*

**Issue of Yukon school children being indoctrinated (supported by Yukon Department of Education) into becoming supporters of Yukon Quest race:**

Based on the previous issues highlighted in this letter, it is unconscionable and inexcusable that Yukon school teachers are allowed to promote a race that kills and injures sled dogs during the race, and for which many dogs suffer and die as pawns or cannon fodder in the process of developing Yukon Quest racing teams. It is important to note that the Alaskan Iditarod has a similar program driven by school teachers to win favourable attention for the race, from school children (and their parents).

***'Teacher! What was the name of the dead sled dog?'***

*[Open letter to Yukon education authorities, Yukon politicians and parents of Yukon school children - letter to editor published in Yukon News on Feb. 29, 2008]*

*On February 5th, I was informed by a colleague about an incident that took place in a grade six classroom in Whitehorse the previous day. My colleague, who moved to Whitehorse from the South within the last year, told me that his or her child was upset by the child's teacher, during a lesson about the Yukon Quest, telling the class about an encounter involving a dead sled dog the previous weekend.*

*Apparently, the teacher and his or her partner (dog mushers themselves) were looking after another musher's dog yard, and the teacher's partner came across the dead dog when he or she went out to feed the dogs in the morning. The teacher described the scene to the children, about the dog being found half out of his or her dog house, the dog's body partly covered by snow.*

*Why would a teacher fill his or her young students' heads with this disturbing picture? One of the questions asked by children was "what was the name of the dog?" The teacher reportedly did not know the dog's name.*

*Other questions that come up are:*

*How did the dog die? Did the dog succumb to the bitter cold spell that had descended on the Yukon? Did the dog become strangled at the end of a chain? How old was this dog and what was his or her story? What was done with the dog's body? Was the dog treated respectfully in death, if not in life? Did any other parents complain to the teacher as my colleague did?*

*The teacher was not happy to be at the receiving end of the complaint by this parent I know who spoke up with concern about his or her child. The teacher used the old "these are working dogs, not pets" line which absolutely 'did not wash.'*

*Since moving here, my colleague took the time and effort to learn about Yukon sled dog exploitation and cruelty, and made it perfectly clear to the offending teacher, that his or her family was against the Yukon Quest, and its promotion in the classroom. [continued]*

*The parents of this child did not appreciate their offspring being indoctrinated into 'adopting a Yukon Quest musher,' writing fan emails to mushers along the trail, or hearing Yukon Quest race announcements over the P.A. system during school days. A few years ago, I called the [then] president of the Yukon Teachers' Association to complain about the Quest being promoted to school children. I was told that I had to complain to the individual offending teacher, then (if not satisfied) to complain to the school principal, then to the Yukon Department of Education, THEN to the YTA. A year or so after this, I saw that the YTA was mentioned in a 'thank you ad' to Quest supporters, published in the Whitehorse Star newspaper.*

*The Quest is widely taught to Yukon students and exported over the internet, to students 'Outside' [the teacher who coordinates the YesNet Student Quest school program is a long-time Quest volunteer and ex-board member].*

*Since then, I looked at the bio's of the governing party [on the Yukon Legislative Assembly web site] in the Yukon and saw that:*

*One member is a past president of the Quest; one is a local veterinarian who has been involved in the Quest, Iditarod and other races; the Speaker of the Yukon Legislature is an ex-chairman of the Quest; the Minister of Education has been a Quest volunteer; one government minister had been, until recently, part owner of a family sled dog tour operation near Whitehorse. The current Minister of Tourism and Culture Elaine Taylor, whose department is a big promoter of the Quest and dog mushing industry, is [ironically] listed as having volunteered at Humane Society Yukon.*

*Local animal advocate, Mike Grieco, had had a letter 'Quest kills' published in the Yukon News on March 9, 2007 in which he took the aforementioned politicians to task, asking them to justify their support for a race that kills and injures sled dogs. No reply was ever received, which is apparently standard operating procedure by these politicians and by Quest officials themselves.*

*If Yukon society deems it acceptable that promotion of the Quest and the Yukon dog mushing industry belongs in Yukon classrooms, our children should be taught the whole story, not just part of it.*

*They should learn about the culling of unwanted dogs and puppies who are 'collateral damage' from this race and from the mushing industry. They should learn that very few of their mushing heroes have a lifelong commitment to their dogs.*

*They should learn about the suffering and deaths of the dogs on the Quest trail and the real lives the dogs endure in their dog yards.*

*They should learn that their political leaders use sled dogs as a symbol to promote the Yukon without providing any legislated protection for the dogs. They should know about the use of dogs for financial gain and ego satisfaction, whether the dogs belong to Quest mushers or sled dog tour operators. [continued]*

*Some of the politicians (Territorial, municipal, and First Nations) should sit in at the back of the class and do some learning themselves. The children in this class should know more of the story of this dog, be shown a picture (if one is available) of the dog when it was alive, and be told its name.*

*This incident took place in Whitehorse Elementary School. Permission from my colleague and his or her brave and intelligent child was obtained before writing this letter.*

*Terry Cumming  
SledDogWatchdog.com  
Whitehorse, Yukon*

*Letter 'Quest kills' – Published in March 9, 2007 Yukon News:*

*Elaine Taylor, minister of tourism and culture, how can your department support an organization that killed three dogs this year and injured many others? How can your department support an organization whose response to the issue of culling unwanted dogs was that it was not the Quest's concern what Quest mushers did to their dogs?*

*And Marian Horne, minister of justice, I understand work is being done on a new Yukon Animal Protection Act. Will this legislation include protection and define guidelines for high standards of care for sled dogs used in the Quest, by sled-dog tour operators and recreational mushers? Who is being consulted to develop this legislation?*

*Would a race like the Quest not be considered inhumane in other North American states and provinces?*

*Patrick Rouble, minister of education, you do not have my permission as a Yukon taxpayer to sanction the teaching of Yukon Quest propaganda to schoolchildren. If you must teach about the Quest, you should teach about the suffering and deaths of the dogs, their lives in the dogyards, and the fact that dogs are culled to develop the perfect racing team.*

*Jim Kenyon, minister responsible for Yukon Lotteries Commission, I realize the Quest gambles with the lives of sled dogs. Therefore, lotteries should not be assisting in this gambling addiction.*

*To all Yukon politicians: I expect some hard questions to be asked during the spring sitting of the Yukon Legislature, instead of the mindless tributes offered to the Quest every year, especially in a year in which three dogs were killed for the sake of Yukoners' entertainment. Yukon Quest officials do not answer to any criticisms unless they have a microphone shoved in their face and they have no choice. I expect a higher level of accountability from Yukon politicians. The Yukon will be judged by reality, not by slogans or a million banners.*

*Mike Grieco, Whitehorse*

***‘What about the dogs’ welfare?’*** – Letter to Editor, Whitehorse Star, June 1, 2007:  
*On Monday, Elaine Taylor, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, announced in the legislature a gift of another \$50,000 US toward the Yukon Quest prize money for 2008! Does she not know that three dogs were killed in the 2007 Quest? Unless I missed it, I did not hear any mention of that important fact.*

*Does she not know that a Yukon Quest spokesman stated during the race that the Quest organization doesn’t care (not their concern) what Quest mushers did to ‘their’ dogs?*

*I have already publicly asked Minister Taylor and her fellow Yukon Party government members these (and other) questions concerning the ‘rights’ of the Quest dogs. Nobody from the government responded to me in any other way. Hello! More money will further add to more use and abuse of dogs! (Does this not concern anyone?)*

*We are also aware that a draft version of a new Animal Protection Act will be announced soon (we hope). We also expect to see meaningful laws to protect Yukon sled dogs as well, and money for humane officers to enforce these laws in the Yukon! Because without the dogs, the Yukon Quest cannot exist; we (society) owe it to these dogs!*

*Thank you.*

*Mike Grieco, Whitehorse*

### **The perils of being a Yukon Quest or Iditarod sled dog:**

*“Little information about negative aspects regarding the health of Yukon Quest dogs has been published. However, in 2002, a study in the in American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine reported that 81% of the 59 dogs they examined after one Iditarod had "abnormal accumulations" of mucus or cellular debris in their lower airways. In addition to fluid in the lungs, bleeding stomach ulcers occur, as does general cramping, dislocations, fractures, muscle and tendon tears, tendonitis, dehydration, hypothermia, raw paws, penile frostbite and viruses. Female dogs may run while 'in heat' or during pregnancy; it is common for dogs to vomit or suffer from diarrhea from the extreme stress (including from their body temperatures overheating) they are forced to undergo, while running long distances.”*

*[Ref: [http://sleddogwatchdog.com/yukonquest\\_yukon\\_disgrace.html](http://sleddogwatchdog.com/yukonquest_yukon_disgrace.html) ]*

### **Humane Society of United States policy statement about Iditarod and similar races:**

***The HSUS opposes the Iditarod in its current form - or any other mushing event in which heavy emphasis is placed on competition and entertainment and in which dog deaths and injuries are regular consequences. The HSUS is NOT OPPOSED to non-competitive mushing or competitive mushing events in which the welfare of dogs is not sacrificed for the sake of entertainment.***

### **Iditarod [and Yukon Quest] violate accepted standards of animal treatment:**

*Races like the Iditarod [and Yukon Quest] violate accepted standards regarding animal cruelty as is shown by the laws of 38 states and the District of Columbia. These 38 states and the District of Columbia have animal anti-cruelty laws that say "overdriving" and "overworking" an animal is animal cruelty. The California law is typical:*

*"597. Cruelty to animals: (B) Every person who overdrives, overloads, drives when overloaded, overworks... any animal... is, for every such offense, guilty of a crime punishable as a misdemeanor or as a felony or alternatively punishable as a misdemeanor or a felony and by a fine of not more than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000)."*

*[Source: Animal Welfare Institute, Animals and Their Legal Rights]*

## **Yukon Quest is “sheer exploitation of sled dogs”:**

*In this experienced dog driver's humble opinion, the Yukon Quest is sheer exploitation of sled dogs. It's one thing to be an "extreme sports" practitioner, one of those people who really don't care if they live or die as long as they can get that adrenaline fix that is their main reason for existing. If they kill themselves, who the hell cares? BUT THE SLED DOGS DIDN'T VOLUNTEER FOR THAT KIND OF DANGER AND MISERY, PARTICULARLY AT THE HANDS OF A DRIVER WHOSE JUDGMENT IS IMPAIRED. (As it arguably must be for anyone to voluntarily subject himself and his dogs to the Quest.) Extreme sports should not involve animals.*

*Dog mushers reflexively close ranks and form a defensive circle like muskoxen when the humane aspects of a race are questioned. They would do better to clean this race up, find a permanent trail for it that avoids the river and the summits, and get rid of the extreme-macho adrenaline-freak aspects of it, before something happens that will generate so much negative publicity it kills the race permanently.*

*Long distance racing, sensibly organised, could be fun for dog drivers of a wide variety of age, ability and experience -- if the extreme-sport "toughest race on earth" bullshit could be got rid of. The Quest started its existence as an alternative to the Iditarod Trail race for mushers who could not afford the expenses of that race, and was conceived as an event that would be enjoyable for its drivers. Why should it not be possible for drivers to get enough sleep? Why not have enough checkpoints to keep sled loads reasonable? Why not a permanent trail that avoids really dangerous situations?*

**WHY SHOULD A LONG DISTANCE RACE NOT BE FUN AND SAFE FOR DRIVERS AND DOGS?**

[Ref: [http://news.seppalasdogs.com/blog/2006\\_02.html](http://news.seppalasdogs.com/blog/2006_02.html) ]

**‘No lack of public assistance’ provided to Yukon Quest:**

*'TV crew to start work in City in February'* by Sarah Niman, Star Reporter  
[Story from Whitehorse Daily Star, January 16th, 2008]

*A television crew will be arriving in Whitehorse in February to chronicle the Yukon Quest and Arctic Ultra marathon for the series 'Angry Planet.' The reality adventure series airs on the Outdoor Life Network (OLN).*

*It follows veteran storm chaser George Kourounis around the world as he investigates various natural phenomena. The show also appears on the UK Travel Channel, which airs in Australia, Sweden, Finland and Hong Kong. The series has featured avalanches, tornadoes and even wildfires in past half-hour episodes.*

*The City of Whitehorse' tourism supervisor, Sheila Dodd, confirmed to the Star the television crew will arrive February 7 and stay for 10 days shooting footage for their next season. Yukon (Government) Tourism's Rod Raycroft has been handling much of the preparation. He said anytime a film or television crew comes up to the Yukon, it helps people elsewhere in the country and the world think of Yukon as a viable visit destination.*

*Peter Rowe, the show's producer, sent the Star an email, saying, "the new episode is on extreme racing in the hottest and coldest places in North America." The crew shot a race in Death Valley National Park in the southwestern United States last July, and will feature the Yukon Quest and Yukon Arctic Ultramarathon as the cold locales.*

**‘Minister Jim Kenyon, generous supporter of Yukon Quest (using public funds)’**

**‘Community Development Fund Awards Tier 1 Funding’**

*WHITEHORSE - The Community Development Fund (CDF) is contributing \$254,721 towards 18 approved projects under Tier 1 criteria. Tier 1 is for projects up to \$20,000. "This round of awards will generate an estimated 8,583 hours of work for Yukon residents," the minister responsible for the Community Development Fund, Jim Kenyon, said. "A wide range of projects include music festivals, trail system improvements and community garden projects."*

*The Yukon Quest International Association (YQIA) was awarded \$17,150 to develop three promotional DVDs.*

*"By developing promotional DVDs, we will heighten awareness about the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race, the Yukon and our unique culture," YQIA Manager Stephen Reynolds said. "This project will assist the Yukon Quest with future marketing efforts. Ultimately, we hope to attract both national and international media and sponsors to the Yukon Quest and the Yukon Territory." [continued]*

*Details: **Yukon Quest International Association** – Awarded \$17,150 to initiate a Promotional DVD Production Project, which includes three promotional DVDs that will durate 3 to 5 minutes. An estimated 400 hours of employment will be created for 5 people. Contact: Stephen Reynolds (668-4711)]*

*[Government of Yukon news release, March 1, 2005 – Ref:  
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2005/05-043.html> ]*

***Yukon Quest International Association** - \$10,000 Multi-Lingual Brochure Project - Phase II - Produce and distribute Yukon Quest brochure in four languages. **Contact:** Wendy Morrison at (867) 668-4711*

*[Government of Yukon news release, Sept. 14, 2007 - Ref:  
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2007/07-190.html> ]*

## 'The Questions'

Welcome to Lotteries Yukon - Lotteries Yukon - Windows Internet Explorer  
http://www.lotteriesyukon.com/

**LOTTERIES YUKON** Yukon Lottery Commission  
Yukon lottery dollars are helping your community... one ticket at a time.

The fundraiser for sport, arts, culture, recreation and community groups in Yukon.

Recent Winners	Funded Projects	Benefitting Yukon	Winning Numbers	Group Buying Agreement
<a href="#">Home</a> <a href="#">Minister Hon. Jim Kenyon</a> <a href="#">About Us</a> <a href="#">Mission/Mandate</a> <a href="#">Programs</a> <a href="#">Recreation Project Funding Program</a> <a href="#">Applicant Programs</a> <a href="#">Community Lottery Funding Program</a> <a href="#">Travel Assistance Funding Program</a> <a href="#">Yukon Lottery Commission Reports</a> <a href="#">News</a> <a href="#">History</a> <a href="#">Contact Us</a>	<h3>Yukon Dog Sledding Races!</h3> <p>Lotteries Yukon would like to congratulate Lance Mackey, the winner of the epic 1,000 mile Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race for the fourth year in a row! The Yukon Quest sled dog race has been run between Whitehorse, YT and Fairbanks, AK every year since 1984 with Lotteries Yukon support as a sponsor of this world renowned event.</p> <p>We can't get enough of dog sledding in the Yukon which makes March a terrific month to head to Haines Junction and check out the Silver Sled dog sled races. This event was created in 1996 by a group of friends who were sitting and talking about how great it would be to have a dog sled race in Haines Junction. Twelve years later this two-day, 100 mile round trip race from Haines Junction to Silver City is still going strong. As well as the Silver Sled race, the weekend is packed full of other activities including skijoring, a weight-pull contest, short races, junior mushing races and sled rides. There's something for everyone during this weekend full of family events.</p> <p>The Yukon Lottery Commission/Lotteries Yukon has been providing funding assistance to the Silver Sled Dog Race for the last ten years. Lotteries Yukon is pleased to assist with these exciting events and wishes all of the competitors, their teams and the Silver Sled Race Committee a safe and successful race.</p> <p><b>Yukon lottery dollars are helping in your community... one ticket at a time!!</b></p>		<h3>Important Information for Lottery Players</h3> <p>Tips on how to protect your play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>ALWAYS print your name, address and daytime telephone number on the back of your ticket as soon as you receive it. As of August 1, 2007, new policy requires that all tickets have a name or signature on the back prior to being validated at retail. It's your ticket! Sign it! Protect it!</b></li><li>• <b>Check your numbers</b> using one of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Go to <a href="http://www.wclc.com/winning_numbers/">www.wclc.com/winning_numbers/</a></li><li>o Ask for a winning numbers list from your retailer</li><li>o Use the ticket-checker at retail</li><li>o Call the Lotteries Yukon winning numbers line: 667-2417</li></ul></li><li>• <b>When your retailer validates your ticket:</b></li></ul>	

http://www.lotteriesyukon.com/index.html

### To Hon. Jim Kenyon, Minister of Economic Development, Minister responsible for Yukon Lotteries Commission:

1. Based on your considerable knowledge and experience as a veterinarian in the Yukon (and as a veterinarian who is apparently proud of his association with the Yukon Quest, Iditarod and other sled dog races), what is your comment on the issue of sled dog culling by Yukon Quest mushers, an issue which was made public by veteran Yukon Quest musher Frank Turner, prior to the start of the 2006 Yukon Quest?
2. Have you, or veterinary staff employed by you, ever euthanized otherwise healthy sled dogs and/or puppies (dogs deemed surplus/not suitable for use as sled dogs), raised by Yukon Quest musher clients and Yukon sled dog tour operators?
3. Are you aware of overworked dogs dying of their own accord, or being euthanized (by veterinarians or Quest mushers themselves) after Yukon Quest races due to the extreme physical demands placed on their bodies?

4. How can you as a veterinarian, condone and support sled dogs dying and becoming injured during the race, or dogs being forced to run while pregnant, injured, ill, or exhausted?
5. Why does the Yukon Lotteries Corporation flagrantly support the Yukon Quest and the Yukon sled dog industry on its web site? Did you personally have any influence in getting the corporation to provide such advertising?
6. How much money has the Lotteries Corporation provided to the Yukon Quest since the funding started?
7. Many animal advocates consider the common method of tethering (chaining) sled dogs to be a cruel practice (not to mention this practice being a potentially embarrassing eyesore for the image of the Yukon Territory). What is your view on dog tethering?
8. Do you recognize and support the need for strong legislation protecting dogs used as sled dogs, including the licensing and monitoring of all sled dog operations?

**To Hon. Elaine Taylor, Minister of Tourism and Culture:**

1. Do you consider it appropriate and publicly responsible to use public money to promote the Yukon Quest and sled dog tourism in light of all the cruelty (dead and injured Yukon Quest sled dogs) and exploitation (dogs used basically as slaves in the year round sled dog tourism business) involved?
2. What is your comment on 2006 Yukon Quest race marshal Mike McCowan's statement to media that the Quest organization is not concerned ["not their business"] about issue of dog culling by Yukon Quest mushers?
3. Exactly how has the annual (now \$150,000) money provided to the Quest for marketing purposes by your department been disbursed? Is it used to purchase favourable media coverage by local and outside media, especially official 'Quest media sponsors' such as the Whitehorse Daily Star, CKRW, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, and others? How much money, if any, have these media entities received from the Tourism Marketing Fund?
4. Do you recognize and support the need for strong legislation protecting dogs used as sled dogs in the Yukon, including the licensing of all sled dog operations, be they recreational/traditional or professional?
5. Do you recognize that the \$50,000 U.S. purse money which your department has provided to the Quest in 2007 and 2008 may serve as an extra incentive for Quest mushers to overwork and "overdrive" their dogs, leading to potential death and injury of sled dogs – veritable "blood money"?
6. How much money and/or Tourism Yukon staff working time went into assisting the Outdoor Life Network's upcoming television documentary which was filmed during the 2008 Yukon Quest?
7. Was public money spent to help subsidize travel expenses and accommodation for Jamaican Dog Sled Team trips to the Yukon? If so, how much money?

**To Hon. Patrick Rouble, Minister of Education:**

1. What do you have to say to those parents who do not approve of your department giving sanction to Yukon educators who disseminate Yukon Quest and other dog mushing propaganda to innocent school children?
2. Is there a document that exists which provides teachers with a curriculum/teaching guide for educating children about the Yukon Quest?
3. Do you not feel that instead of promoting in classrooms the exploitation of dogs used as sled dogs, that it is possibly more vital to teach children about humane education and our responsibility as a society to protect and care for our fellow sentient beings? [Continued]
4. Do you not think that it is somewhat misguided to promote and teach (via class field trips) the killing of animals in hunting (bison hunt permits 'available to Yukon schools') and trapping? Do you not recognize, given the current crisis of childhood obesity and related illnesses, the increased importance of teaching children about the dietary option of getting away from/restricting meat and other animal products (and refined foods) in order to improve health (e.g. veganism)? The Yukon Department of Health has in the past, subsidized the Yukon CHIP program (Coronary Health Improvement Project), the optimum diet of which is 100% vegan. This program should be introduced to Yukon students as an elective course.

**To Hon. Marian Horne, Minister of Justice:**

[Excerpt from 'Background' section, 'Animal Protection Act, Review of the Yukon Legislation report, September, 2007 - <http://www.community.gov.yk.ca/pdf/2007-Sept-AnimalProtectionActReview.pdf>

*It is important to note that the individual responsible for developing the draft report/legislation is listed as an 'on-call veterinarian' for the 2008 Yukon Quest race, on the Yukon Quest web site]*

*"The stakeholders affected by animal protection legislation include pet owners, **dog mushers**, farmers, outfitters, wilderness camp operators, humane societies and various other groups and individuals who interact with animals as part of their vocations, hobbies or other interests.*

*Effective animal protection legislation would meet the legislative goal of ensuring humane treatment of animals **without excessive interference** in the lives of the various stakeholders."*

1. What is the nature of the input and discussion with dog mushing 'stakeholders' regarding Yukon animals used as sled dogs (and their welfare), which is being considered in the proposed legislation?
2. Will the proposed act include detailed guidelines for improving the housing and care of sled dogs, and ensuring lifelong care for 'retired' dogs? [continued]

3. Will the act include stiff penalties for those who mistreat, neglect, kill or injure (or cause to be killed or injured) sled dogs, including by the Yukon Quest race and other competitive race organizers, officials and participants? [Continued]
4. Will the Yukon Government back the proposed act with an adequate number of full-time animal protection officers, who are given the power to enforce these laws?

Further reference:

<http://sleddogwatchdog.com>

<http://helpsleddogs.org>

A copy of this letter is being provided to the Senior Editor of the Yukon News in Whitehorse. The Yukon News, in my personal estimation, has been the most responsible media source for providing critical coverage of the Yukon Quest in the last few years, and the paper has also done some vital reporting on Yukon animal cruelty cases and related animal welfare issues.

The proper forum for these questions to be asked is in the public forum of the Yukon Legislature, whether that be during the daily 'Question Period' or during the various departmental budget discussions. On behalf of sled dogs, I respectfully ask that these questions be posed to the governing members during the current sitting of the Yukon Legislature. If these questions are not asked, or if full answers are not provided to the Yukon public, I would ask the Yukon News to please follow up with these or other pertinent questions.

On behalf of the dogs,

Terry Cumming,  
SledDogWatchdog.com  
Whitehorse, Yukon