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M. Denis Coderre, Mayor, City of Montreal

Dear Mayor Coderre:

I am writing to you concerning the proposal to bring a rodeo to Montreal to celebrate your 375th anniversary. As an evolutionary biologist and an authority on animal behavior, animal emotions, and animal mistreatment worldwide, I would like to urge you not to do this.

Consciousness of animal abuse is growing worldwide, and with it an increasing opposition to “entertainment” in the form of badger-baiting, dog-fights, cock-fights, bull-fights, trophy-hunting, rodeos, and even worse. In 2013 I reported on a [particularly horrific happening](#) at a rodeo in which a horse, to make him more agitated, was electro-shocked before being released into the arena: the terrified victim was so frightened he ran straight into a wall and died within a few moments. This sort of flagrant abuse and suffering does not happen at every rodeo, but *in every single event there is always great stress and fear, and usually injury too*. And, as in most if not all sport, there is cheating. In rodeos, behind the scenes and also with concealed spurs, all sorts of sadistic things are done to the animals to agitate them more, or simply because blood sports bring out people’s brutality, participant and spectator alike. To put it simply, rodeo animals do not like being treated like this and they suffer deep and enduring pain that doesn’t end when the event is over.

This is *not* the way to celebrate a city’s proud history — especially a city that is not even historically associated with such extreme cruelty, as is Calgary. Personally, I was shocked to learn of your plans to celebrate your anniversary with a rodeo.

Let me also say there will always be individual veterinarians who are ready to certify that rodeos are harmless fun, just as there are still doctors ready to certify that smoking or working in a coal mine are harmless. But professional veterinary associations (including Canada’s) are clear in their definitions of activities that harm animals, and *all rodeo arena events fall clearly and unambiguously under those definitions*. It is inarguable that rodeos are inhumane.

We all also know this in our hearts. We would never allow such things to be done to our beloved family dogs or cats. Animals who are used for unnecessary entertainment are *not* made of other stuff. They do *not* suffer less than the companion animals with whom we share our homes. They too have nervous systems that feel fear and pain. They are conscious and sentient beings.

While the crowd at a rodeo is roaring with enthusiasm at the “contest” between the human and the nonhuman animal, anyone with a heart and familiarity with the behavior of mammals can see that the unwilling animal is in a state of terror, and often injured and in pain during these “contests.” *The only willing participant is the human.*

I understand that international animal welfare organizations are approaching the city as well as the sponsors of this event to urge them to call it off and to replace it with something that is humane, and positive, an event that reflects well on Montreal's heritage.

I hope you will heed them. The very fact of publicly calling off this rodeo would not only be good for Montreal's international image, but it would also help in the efforts to put an end to such archaic barbarity elsewhere in the world. I urge you to lead the way to call off this rodeo. This really is the correct and compassionate move that would reflect well on your wonderful city. And, I would be more than happy to spread the good word globally. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MB', written in a cursive style.

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