



CANADA

Primate sanctuary target of threats over Ikea monkey, court told

June 10th, 2013



THE OWNER OF THE SEIZED IKEA MONKEY, YASMINE NAKHUDA, LEAVES COURT IN OSHAWA, ON AFTER THE FIRST DAY OF HER CIVIL TRIAL TO GET HER PET MONKEY RETURNED. IT WAS SEIZED LAST WINTER BY AUTHORITIES.

Credits: MICHAEL PEAKE/ TORONTO SUN/ QMI

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OSHAWA, Ont. -- Threats and aggression accompanied a campaign waged by a monkey owner who tried to have her pet primate returned to her -- despite the fact that it would've been too much for her to handle.

This is what court heard Monday from the founder of a primate sanctuary currently housing Darwin, the young Japanese macaque found in December wandering the parking lot of a Toronto Ikea store wearing a tiny winter coat and diaper.

Yasmin Nakhuda is suing Story Book Farm Sanctuary to have the monkey returned to her.

Sherri Delaney, founder of the sanctuary, told court that shortly after Toronto Animal Services (TAS) brought Darwin to her sanctuary, Nakhuda became aggressive during a phone request to see Darwin, and that threats were made toward the sanctuary by some of Nakhuda's supporters.

"There were threats towards me . There were threats to kill me, to burn down the sanctuary," Delaney alleged.

Delaney also testified that while it was clear Nakhuda had a motherly attachment to Darwin, the young monkey is a wild animal whose biting and aggressive behaviour would have become worse if it aged into puberty surrounded by humans.

She also said that since being at the sanctuary, Darwin has become more socialized with other primates.

"He has become more of a monkey," she said.

Earlier Monday lawyers questioned David Behan, the Toronto Animal Services officer who captured Darwin from the parking lot and was present at TAS offices when Nakhuda showed up to claim him.

Nakhuda's lawyer, Ted Charney, argues Behan hoodwinked a distressed Nakhuda into signing a form that transferred ownership of Darwin to the city.

Charney has long alleged TAS officers pressured Nakhuda by telling her she could face federal criminal charges for having such an animal, as well as charges from public health officials.

"Whatever you said to (Nakhuda) after your conversation (with your supervisor) was in the context of getting her to sign that form," Charney said.

He also challenged Behan's earlier assertion that he properly explained to Nakhuda her monkey would become city property once she signed the form.

Charney accused Behan of not giving Nakhuda other options that would have been given to other pet owners, such as TAS returning Darwin to her if Nakhuda committed to moving it to a jurisdiction that permits monkeys as pets.

Behan maintained he was following direction from his supervisor, that dealing with a monkey was new territory for TAS and that TAS held Darwin in "protective care" because he is a prohibited animal in Toronto.

Behan also insisted Nakhuda voluntarily signed the surrender form, and knew what she was signing.