

# Ontario Coalition Against BSL

May 21, 2019

Dear Mr. Piccini,

The Ontario Coalition Against BSL, composed of Hershey's Anti BSL group, Miss Dixies Foundation, United Paws, and Ottawa Citizens Against Breed Specific Legislation/BSL, would like to provide you with our full support in your quest to repeal the breed specific language from the Dog Owners' Liability Act of Ontario.

As you know, Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) has plagued the responsible owners of Ontario since August 29, 2005, and has been the cause of heartache to thousands of innocent Ontario families. For years, Ontario parents have had the burden of trying to explain to their children why their best friends have suddenly disappeared. And why? Not because of a behavioral problem, but because their dog was labeled as a "pit bull".

Since put into law, BSL has failed to protect the citizens of Ontario from dog related incidents and bites. Statistics held by virtually all municipalities in Ontario will demonstrate that dog bites are still sadly a regular occurrence. Dog bites have steadily been on the rise, each year, and the dogs responsible for these incidents are rarely dogs that are grouped under the umbrella term "pit bull". Sadly, it is only when a dog labeled as "pit bull" is involved that you hear of these attacks.

When originally written into legislation, then Attorney General, Michael Bryant, made the bold statement that this law would prevent any future dog bites in Ontario. He described the law as necessary because of all the alleged "pit bull" attacks in Toronto that had been reported by media. This was against the advice and testimony of experts in animal behavior across the province, many called in by Bryant himself. Sadly, he stood by his decision, completely ignoring the scientific and statistical evidence that was provided by his own experts. He was warned over and over that BSL would not help to ensure public safety, but he ignored their advice, and went ahead with his new legislation.

Since 2005, the people of Ontario have felt the brunt of this ineffective law. Tax payers have been burdened with a price tag of approximately 50 million dollars per year; responsible owners have been targeted by not only the government, but by neighbors who have bought into the hype; and the list goes on. Every day, "pit bull" owners have lived in fear of losing their well behaved dogs due to their appearance, rather than their behavior. How is this considered to be right? The people of Ontario deserve better than this!

With the newly elected Progressive Conservative Government in Ontario, we finally have a chance to make things right again for the people of this province, as well as their pets. With the plethora of evidence available proving BSL as ineffective, unjust, and a massive burden to tax payers, city law enforcement officers and court systems, we are in full support of an immediate suspension of the breed specific components in the Ontario Dog Owners Liability Act until such a time that the law can be adequately reviewed and replaced with breed neutral language and owner accountability.

We thank you for your work on the repeal of BSL in the Dog Owners' Liability Act and look forward to working with you to help to ensure safer kinder communities for all of Ontario.

Sincerely,

Alix Packard – Ottawa Citizens Against Breed Specific Legislation

Emily Mallett – United Paws

Fran Coughlin, Liz Sullivan and Cheryl Benson – Hershey's Anti-BSL group

Chandra McKinnon – Ontario Coalition Against BSL

Chrissy Bowles – Miss Dixies Foundation

Candy Beauchamp – Ontario Director for the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club of Canada

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Pit Bull Facts (point form - long form available on request)

1. There is no breed of dog called a “pit bull” – this is a term based on physical appearance, used mostly by media, to describe any dog with short hair, a blocky head and muscular build. The term could include up to 100 different breeds of dogs based on this description, but most commonly the term “pit bull” means American Staffordshire Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers, and the American Pit Bull Terrier, which are the pure breeds of dogs as recognized by the Canadian Kennel Club.
2. Certain media has reported that the pressure of a “pit bull” type dog is similar in strength to that of a shark, or a bite strength of up to 1600 pounds per square inch (psi). Statistically, a great white shark has a 669 psi bite strength and a “pit bull” has a 235 psi bite strength. This referenced statistic is obviously exaggerated.
3. “Pit bull” type dogs do not have locking jaws. It has been scientifically proven that there is no locking mechanism in their skulls. This is not only the case for “pit bull” type dogs; it is proven as fact for all breeds.
4. “Pit bull” type dogs do not have aggression bred into them. Temperament tests have proven that they consistently rank in the top 5 of all breeds of dogs tested. It is important to note that 98% of a dog's DNA is universal across ALL breeds, with only 2% being attributed to physical appearance. It is also noteworthy to state that regardless of breed, even the most aggressive dogs can have perfectly tempered puppies.
5. All dogs have the potential to bite. A dog's behavior is shaped by the owner and the environment in which the dog is raised. Dog owners must be held accountable for their dog's behavior and practice responsible pet ownership.
6. “Pit bull” type dogs are constantly the victims of gross over exaggeration and the most mislabelled, targeted type of dog in media reporting. Statistically, on average, media will report on a dog attack by a “pit bull” type, or an alleged “pit bull” type dog 200 times more than any other breed of dog, regardless of fact finding or proof. In the event that the breed of is proven as a mistaken identification, it is rarely rescinded.
7. It has been proven that “pit bull” type dogs can be rehabilitated over 95% of the time from the most excruciating of circumstances. Dogs seized from dog fighting rings have been successfully rehabilitated into therapy dogs, family companions and police K9's. They are humanely euthanized less than 1% of the time due to their temperament, as their originally perceived behavior is almost always based on fear, not aggression.
8. More and more police forces are adopting “pit bull” type dogs from shelters and training them as K9 unit dogs. Not only is there a proven excellent success rate with these dogs, this initiative is promoting “adopt don't shop” mentality, as well as saving tens of thousands of tax payer dollars.
9. It has been proven by SPCA's across the world that removing the label “pit bull” from healthy adoptable dogs has resulted in increased adoptions as it has drastically lowered stigma surrounding these dogs. Most are instead using a far more accurate description of “large mix breed” or similar.
10. Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) is a law that has been proven not only to be costly, but also 100% ineffective in protecting the public from dangerous dogs. There is not one community across the globe that has ever had it in place where it has resulted in a reduction of dog bites or attacks, nor has it ever kept the public safe from same.
11. BSL is extremely difficult to enforce, as more often than not, untrained law enforcement personnel are determining the breed of the dog by visual identification. This is not only ineffective, it is virtually impossible to correctly identify the breed or type of dog solely based on visual evaluation, even to the highest trained animal experts. DNA testing can assist in determining the percentages of breeds within dogs, however it is only approximately 85-90% accurate.
12. BSL is very costly to enforce (costing upwards of one million dollars a year per municipality) and has been proven as being both an “over inclusive and under inclusive law”. Loosely put, this means that many well behaved dogs determined to be a banned breed under BSL are unfairly victimized, while many misbehaved dogs of excluded breeds are not properly dealt with by city officials.
13. In cities across the world, BSL is being repealed due to ineffectiveness, expense, and difficulty of enforcement.