



February 19, 2019

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney
Attorney General of Ontario
11th Floor, 720 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Minister

My name is Bruce Roney. I am President and CEO of the Ottawa Humane Society. I am writing today to strongly urge you to revisit the way the province of Ontario approaches dog bite prevention and to end breed specific legislation (BSL) in our province. Since the implementation of BSL in Ontario in 2005, too many innocent dogs have lost their lives due to legislation that is based on fear and a lack of scientific evidence. I am hoping that you can make a responsible decision to end these unfair and unwarranted practices.

BSL was introduced into our community in an effort to reduce dog attacks on humans. However, to date there is no scientific evidence to support that this legislation reduces dog bites. Dog aggression can result from many factors, including: lack of socialization, lack of training, lack of mental and/or physical stimulation, lack of sterilization, genetics, etc. These factors have nothing to do with appearance nor breed. To date, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) are the only organizations to have produced peer-reviewed scientific literature that details a thorough study of human fatalities resulting from dog bites, compiling 20 years of research. Their study demonstrates how BSL is ineffective, and as such is strongly opposed by both the CDC and AVMA.

BSL continues to penalize responsible pet owners. Many dog owners are forced to hide their family members, which can result in a lack of access to regular and preventative veterinary care, as well as many dogs go unlicensed for fear of being reported and taken away from their families. Many owners are also subjected to having their dogs labeled as a certain breed, based solely on appearance, not based on DNA, resulting in many mixed- breeds being mislabeled and discriminated against.

BSL destroys thousands of healthy and well behaved dogs each year across North America. Many open-admission shelters in Ontario that intake pit-bull type dogs, are unable to rehome them due to legislation. If rescues or other partner organizations that can rehome these dogs outside of our province do not have space, otherwise adoptable and innocent dogs are ultimately euthanized.

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Rather than penalize innocent dogs for their appearance, legislation should focus more on the responsibility of the owner to ensure their dog does not harm people or other animals—regardless of the breed—and seek to impose harsher penalties for irresponsible pet owners. We as an organization do not believe breed-specific bans are an effective way to protect the public from aggressive or dangerous animals. The only way to create a safer community is to take a community-based approach to dog bite prevention, where ongoing education in conjunction with the enforcement of breed-neutral legislation that encompasses all aspects of animal wellbeing and focuses on the irresponsible actions of respective owners and their dogs is enforced.

We would like you and your colleagues in government to:

- Revoke current breed-specific legislation in the Dog Owner's Liability Act and Animals for Research Act to create breed neutral laws;
- Veto all municipalities within Ontario from enforcing or creating breed-specific bylaws;
- Encourage municipalities to enforce pet licensing and enhance community education programs on responsible pet ownership practices such as sterilization;
- Develop breed neutral laws to deal with dogs who have been deemed as dangerous by a designated professional;
- Develop stricter penalties for irresponsible pet owners.

We seek your support in revoking the current legislation and would be pleased to assist you in drafting effective legislation to create a more humane and safe community for the animals and people of Ontario.

Sincerely,



Bruce Roney
President & CEO

c.c. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario; Sylvia Jones, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services