

April 5, 2019.

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Ontario Breed Specific Legislation

As a charitable animal welfare organization, we are at the front line in enforcing and managing dogs that fall under Ontario's Breed Specific Legislation. We would like to share our experiences and challenges faced with regards to this legislation.

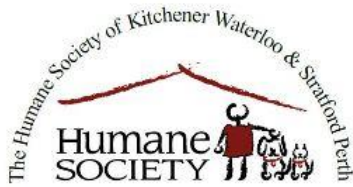
Since the beginning of 2015, we have admitted to our shelter, 48 dogs that meet the criteria of the legislation. In the first three months of 2019 alone, we have taken in five of these dogs, three of which remain in our care at this time. Of these 48 dogs, only four were noted to have a nervous or aggressive disposition; the remainder were found to be very friendly, happy and sweet.

Under the current legislation, we have very limited options on how to proceed with these dogs. We can adopt them to homes out of province, transfer to other rescue organizations in or out of province, or we humanely euthanize. In the last four years we have had to euthanize only three of these animals – one for medical reasons, one for aggression to other animals, and only one out of the 48 for aggression to people. For comparison, in 2018 alone we admitted 46 German Shepherds/Shepherd mixes, 7 of which were euthanized for aggression and behavioural issues.

Regarding the dogs we intake that are restricted by the legislation, the majority are transferred to other organizations. This poses many challenges for our organization. We are only able to transfer these dogs when space is available within the receiving groups. This means that many of these dogs are spending very long periods of time within the shelter waiting for transfer. On average, these dogs were housed in the shelter for 54 days prior to transfer. The longest stay was 141 days. Spending this length of time housed in a shelter not only places large financial pressures on our organization, but also has definite welfare implications for these animals. We see both behavioural and medical issues that develop secondary to stress, as well as the emotional toll placed on staff and volunteers caring for these animals. We do not even have the option of placing these dogs in foster homes while awaiting a permanent placement for them.

The average daily cost of housing a dog in our shelter is \$35. Additionally, these dogs receive routine vaccinations, parasite control, spay/neuter procedures, and treatment for any existing or new medical concerns that arise. The routine medical care for these dogs costs on average \$120-\$185 per dog. Additional medical treatments increase costs significantly. Therefore, for a dog that remains in the centre for the average 54 days and receives only preventative medical care, the cost to our organization is \$2075 per dog.

As mentioned previously, the majority of these dogs are transferred to other groups. Since the beginning of 2015, we have transferred 28 dogs to other groups. Ten of these were to local rescue organizations, and eighteen were flown to humane societies located out of province. The average cost of the out of province transfers is \$400 per dog.



One of the biggest challenges we face as an organization is that despite the legislation designed to eliminate the breed in our province; these dogs do exist within our communities. With a dual role of animal control enforcement and sheltering, we are presented with these dogs regularly, and the current legislation provides very limited options for ways in which we can manage them. As you can see, the financial burdens alone are considerable, in addition to the stress placed on both the dogs and the caregivers. Of the 28 dogs transferred in the last four years, not one has been reported to have behavioural concerns or aggression by the receiving organization.

In our experience, targeting specific breeds has not been successful or beneficial. Ignoring the fact that these dogs remain in the province to this day and not allowing for more reasonable management options is detrimental to our organization as well as the dogs themselves.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laurel Gale, BScH, DVM
Veterinary Director

Amanda Hawkins, Cert. FBST
Senior Manager, Animal Care

The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth