

Why Is there still a Public Safety Debate Surrounding Breed Specific Legislation (BSL)?

Dogs - they are a part of your family. How many of you have looked at your own dogs, with those loving eyes and big smile, and thought “BSL will never affect our family, our dog is not a pit bull”? Sadly, you could be one of thousands of people who have been unjustly targeted by this draconian law, who’s dog has been confiscated by animal control for no reason other than their appearance.



As currently written, Ontario’s BSL includes 3 pure breeds of dogs: The American Staffordshire Terrier, the American Pit Bull Terrier, and the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, grouped under the common slang term “pit bull”. The law also stipulates that any dogs who have similar characteristics to any of these 3 recognized breeds shall immediately be considered as dangerous, and therefore banned throughout the province, despite the fact that they may not share any genetic lineage to the banned breeds. This means that virtually any dog with short fur, a muscular build, or a large blocky head is at risk. Sounds a little ridiculous, right? WRONG! This is the reality of BSL.

Imagine bylaw suddenly appearing at your door, without a warrant and without cause, advising you that your dog is being confiscated because he has the characteristics of a “pit bull”. While you plead your case, your heart breaks, and the tears fall down your face, you watch helplessly as your dog is loaded into the animal control van to meet his fate. Nobody, including your dog, is able to understand what he did wrong. How would you explain this to your child, who has just watched the definition of biased profiling?

This is the constant fear and sad reality of the thousands of responsible owners across Ontario who have a dog who could be typed by the province as a “pit bull”, and targeted by a law that does not focus on the behavior of the dog, but instead their physical characteristics. Imagine if we treated one another this way – if we, as a society, deemed a specific race of people to be dangerous due to their beliefs or their appearance? Disturbing thought, right?

The Pro-BSL community has only one weapon: fear. They produce graphic images of maulings, mostly to children, and scream that it is the fault of an alleged “pit bull”. Unfortunately, much of this information is collected by partisan statistics, and is only included when it can further their agenda, which is to eradicate “pit bull” type dogs from the world. Science and statistics prove that all dogs are



individuals whose demeanors are determined by experiences. No breed, or mix breed, of dog is born more aggressive or more docile than any other. This is a proven fact.

The Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act has failed in its promise to ensure public safety, and has cost the tax payers of this province hundreds of millions of dollars to enforce. DOLA forces animal control to virtually ignore dogs who pose a real threat to the public who are not "typed". Irresponsible owners of other breeds are then left to continue posing a threat to their communities, while responsible owners of dogs with "pit bull" characteristics continue to be unfairly punished.

Until Ontario realizes that the only way to ensure that the people of this province are protected is through laws that focus on irresponsible ownership of all breeds, the province will continue to pay the price. And this price will be paid with the loss innocent lives as well as the devastation of responsible dog owning families.

The debate around the effectiveness of BSL is over. Why is Ontario the only state or province in all of North America that continues to ban certain types of dogs, when research proves time and time again that BSL does not protect society?

Think about it.

Alix Packard is an animal welfare advocate, focusing on educating the public on the ineffectiveness of Breed Specific Legislation. She runs multiple advocacy groups, and founded the group "Ottawa Citizens Against Breed Specific Legislation/BSL". For more information on Ontario's BSL, please visit endtheban.ca.