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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 18 April 2012

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 18 avril 2012

**Standing Committee on  
Regulations and Private Bills**

**Comité permanent des  
règlements et des projets  
de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair: Peter Tabuns  
Clerk: Tamara Pomanski

Président : Peter Tabuns  
Greffière : Tamara Pomanski

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON REGULATIONS  
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS DE LOI  
D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ**

Wednesday 18 April 2012

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*The committee met at 0816 in committee room 1.*

**PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS  
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA SÉCURITÉ  
PUBLIQUE LIÉE AUX CHIENS**

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act with respect to pit bulls / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche et la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens en ce qui a trait aux pit-bulls.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order.

We're here for public hearings on Bill 16, An Act to amend the Animals for Research Act and the Dog Owners' Liability Act with respect to pit bulls.

Please note there are written submissions received on this bill and they're on your desks.

**MR. MICHAEL HOWIE**

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'll now call on Michael Howie, who will speak to us via teleconference. Mr. Howie, you have 10 minutes for your presentation, and up to five minutes has been allotted for questions from committee members.

Could you please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

**Mr. Michael Howie:** My name is Michael Howie. I'm a reporter with North Oakville Today newspaper.

Members of the committee, I am not an expert in canine behaviour, genetics or breed. I am a journalist and it is regarding the media's role in the initiating of the breed-specific legislation that I will be speaking.

In 2004, Mr. Michael Bryant stood up in the Legislature and read excerpts from news articles. He used these to portray what appeared to be an alarming trend and voiced a call for action. While I believe Mr. Bryant had his constituents' best interests at heart, as most politicians do, the very basis of his arguments had a major flaw: the reliability of the media.

Reporters are skilled storytellers. They find facts, research issues and consult experts. They present information in a complete package and provide readers a non-biased view of events. Unfortunately, it isn't always that simple.

In a 24-hour news cycle, there isn't always time for experts. Background information can be scarce and the glory of a front-page headline can overtake a journalist's moral obligations. Either intentionally or unintentionally, they use fear to generate interest and bring attention to a story.

Dr. Shelley Alexander at the University of Calgary conducted a media content analysis study and showed just how biased journalists can be when they write about animals. Utilizing over 200 articles on the subject of urban coyotes, Dr. Alexander grouped the descriptors used when humans killed coyotes and when coyotes killed pets. When humans killed coyotes, the common descriptors were "killed," "euthanized," "put down," and "removed"—very simple and fact-based terms. When coyotes killed pets, the common descriptors were "brazen," "brutal," "marauding" and "an unreported plague." These descriptions do not provide more insights; they provide fear, and journalists will grab on to fear and push it. We aren't talking about coyotes here, but that bias remains and is quite powerful almost any time an animal is discussed in the news.

In my own research, a psychotherapist explained why the media can have such a profound impact on public opinion. The exercise of visualization is so powerful that simply reading an article using highly descriptive wording can trigger a chemical fear reaction in a reader's brain. They become afraid too, as though they witnessed or were a part of the event. In the instances of so-called pit bulls, it was quite apparent that journalists were utilizing this fear and not spending time researching, fact-checking or interviewing experts.

As you will hear from other delegates, "pit bull" is not an actual breed. I've seen Labrador retrievers called pit bulls at dog parks. I've seen bulldogs and Boston terriers called pit bulls on the street. The public—and journalists, it would seem—do not know what a pit bull looks like.

Most of the alleged attack stories were based entirely on the accounts of rightfully frightened individuals. While these interviews certainly have a place in an article, any police officer or litigator would tell you that

eyewitness testimony is the least reliable form of evidence.

Perhaps most worrying is that one of the key questions was never asked: Why? Rarely was the cause of an alleged attack explored. There are thousands of animal behaviour experts who can analyze and interpret data from an event to provide understanding as to why an alleged attack took place. Even the severity of a bite was glossed over, though there are multiple acceptable scales to measure the severity of a bite or aggression.

It is clear that the news items which led to the creation of this public policy were flawed in their structure and truthfulness. The facts were skewed and sometimes skipped, and as a result, policy was created that ignored facts and the truth. The single most powerful thing any of us can do is tell the truth, and frankly, the truth is this policy was built on an unreliable, sensationalized foundation.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my thoughts on this.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, sir. The round of questions will start with the official opposition. Mr. Hillier.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Howie. That was very insightful. I have to congratulate you for taking the time and presenting to the committee today. I do believe you've hit on a number of very key and important elements in this whole pit bull saga, and that is that it was driven by hysteria within the media and without facts, truth and objective analysis of what actually was going on.

You followed this, obviously, back in 2004 and 2005. I'm not sure if you've followed it with Bill 16, in our debates, but maybe if you might share with us—I view that we still saw an element of that hysteria and the absence of fact or objective analysis during some of the debates when it was referred to as these horrific, murderous, marauding animals that would tear off the genitalia of people. I don't know if you watched that debate, and if you have, if you could maybe expand on it a little bit.

**Mr. Michael Howie:** I think anyone who is in the business of communicating will default to visuals. As I said, visualization is an exceptionally powerful tool, and I believe that in debate in the Legislature in 2004-05 and more recently, as well as the media, that was seized upon. It was pushing a purpose, which was, "We are afraid, and we have to do something to protect ourselves against this perceived threat."

The same thing occurs any time there's a shark attack. You start reading about how horrifically mangled people are. Last summer, there was a great example of that with a grizzly bear attack. I can provide those headlines for you; they're actually highly amusing. But I do believe that the hysteria, as you called it, did lend itself to pushing this through and has again come up when people talk about it. It is an innate, instinctual fear that is played upon.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I assume that you've been a journalist for some time now, Mr. Howie. I'm just wondering

from your own experience and observations—we can obviously see that the media does drive public policy in a number of cases. From your view and from your experience, do you believe that most journalists and reporters understand what their participation is in the system and how their participation also drives public policy? Or are they not seeing the consequences and just thinking that it is a story that they're writing, without any public policy consequences?

**Mr. Michael Howie:** I believe that most journalists are fully aware of what they're doing. However, as I mentioned in my presentation, the glory of a headline can overwhelm that sense of moral obligation. When you've got a great story coming up, be it something about the pit bulls, be it a serial killer, be it a political rally, if you've got a headline, it's blood lust almost. It's exciting. It drives you to do a better story, and unfortunately that drive overshadows the importance of our role in this society.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Howie. Again, I have to commend you for taking the time out and providing those insightful comments to the committee today. Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Howie, thank you. We now have to go on to make the connection with our next presenter.

**Mr. Michael Howie:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Mr. Chairman, what is the time allotted for questioning?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Five minutes per party, and we're rotating.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** So the next speaker from the NDP will be asking, then the third speaker—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yes, correct.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Okay, thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Just to note, Rebecca Ledger for 8:45 a.m. has cancelled. We're trying to see if we can move up the 9 a.m. speaker. If we can't, we'll recess briefly. Cheri?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a quick question about process. Usually in the other committees, for hearings the presenter has a 15-minute span and whatever time they don't use is divided equally among the parties. Is there a particular reason that's not operative here?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** We agreed earlier that we'd allocate 15 minutes and that each party would rotate the opportunity to question presenters, rather than splitting up the five minutes.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** If there is time available or left over, I certainly think it would be—or is that going to throw a monkey wrench into the program, if there's time left over and it goes to another party?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** If we have time, we have time. Are people agreed?

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** No problem.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Great. Do we have our next person?

## CITY OF CALGARY

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'll now call on Bill Bruce to speak. He's also on teleconference. Mr. Bruce, you have 10 minutes for your presentation and up to five minutes that have been allocated for questions from committee members. If you could state your name for Hansard and then begin.

Technology has never been a simple thing.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** It's getting worse.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** It's getting better.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** We're hopeful that it will.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Good morning.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Good morning, Mr. Bruce.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** How are you this morning?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Bruce?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Yes?

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have 10 minutes for your presentation and then up to five minutes have been allocated for questions from committee members. Could you please state your name for Hansard and then you can begin.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Sure. My name is Bill Bruce. I am the director of animal services for the city of Calgary.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to comment on and present to you on two things I'm very passionate about: community safety and dogs. Also, I appreciate you accommodating a teleconference.

I'll open by saying that canine aggression is not acceptable in any community, regardless of the breed involved. Speaking of Calgary's experience with dog aggression, we have developed a program that does not rely on BSL to reduce canine aggressive incidents, yet we have managed to reduce those incidents by 78%. The program has been based on current scientific understandings of canine behaviour and it starts with a basic understanding that all dogs can bite.

We've studied that behaviour extensively in Calgary over the past 20 years. We currently have a population of 1.1 million people and 125,000 dogs, and last year we had 127 bites. That's about 0.1% of dogs that actually got involved in an incident, and very few of those incidents turned out to be serious injuries.

**0830**

It started with trying to obtain a deeper understanding of what triggers dogs to bite, and there are several reasons why they would do that. It could be anything from fear—a dog that's lost, alone, frightened; it's a defensive thing that dogs do—to actually people that have trained their dogs to bite or to attack people. Of course, we know that's not an acceptable social behaviour.

When we studied bites we looked at well-known behaviourist Ian Dunbar, who describes aggression in six levels, and that plays remarkably strongly into what we need to do and understand if we want to stop canine aggression.

Level one is a simple chase threat; the dog has not made any contact with the person or other animal, but it's exhibiting a threatening behaviour. That's the first move they'll do.

After that, if that's not corrected, it could escalate to a second level, where they actually make contact but do not bite. It's called bite inhibition. The dog is still trying to use the teeth as a tool to communicate with.

The next level is, they actually puncture. That's where the bite actually starts. Those other two sections are very correctable.

The fifth level, of course, is a fatal attack. Thank God we have never had one in Calgary, but they can happen.

What we have learned, though, is that that early level of canine aggression—it can be as simple as a dog blocking the door to the bathroom, if that's where he's getting his water from; he's protecting it. Those are things that need to be properly identified at early stages and then properly addressed with training and behaviour assessments and behaviour modification.

One of the things we had to do to do this successfully was shift our thinking away from a standard model of animal control to more of a responsible pet owner model. What that means is moving away from enforcing only after something has happened and looking more to working with the community about setting what the acceptable standards of animal behaviour in our community are going to be, and then setting out to teach people about what that means; what a responsible pet owner is; what is required; understanding the canine aggression model; early intervention when you see that first sign of any kind of unacceptable behaviour; teaching safety around dogs for kids especially and for service providers like postal workers in the community; and then really coming back to that owner responsibility, understanding that it is the owner that is 100% responsible for what their dog does.

The last step, of course, in that continuum of responsibility is significant consequences. While we don't have BSL law in Alberta or Calgary, we do have probably the strictest regulation around aggressive dogs, regardless of breed.

As we went down this path of study, we reviewed many different strategies around the world using different legislation to try to control dangerous dogs. What we did learn is that when you do ban a breed, of course, the bites go down for that specific breed; that's no surprise. If there are fewer of them, there are fewer opportunities. But what we found is that bites tend to go up dramatically in other breeds. That took us to the understanding that any dog, again, can bite, and it's coming back on the owner to make that determination if a dog is safe or not.

At the end of the day, when we looked at many of them we saw there was no change in the overall number of bites in the community, just the dogs that were doing the biting. Often, we would see an increase in overall bites, which is quite interesting and strange.

Going back to our original goal, which is community safety, that was not going to improve our community safety levels. A couple of examples you are probably

very familiar with are Italy and the Netherlands, who have withdrawn theirs after years of scientific study finding it wasn't working. Great Britain, of course, is in the process right now of switching from a specific legislation to an RPO model.

What we've been able to do with all this research and work, relying on many scientific organizations—the National Canine Research Council has incredibly effective research. It documents an effective program to reduce incidents of canine aggression using programs supported by the communities, sustainable programs that effectively, in essence, modify human behaviour around dogs. What we did learn is that there are really fundamentally two ways to get an aggressive dog, and that is to specifically train it for that purpose, or to be what we call an unconscious incompetent: The owner got a dog, didn't see the signs, didn't do the training, didn't manage the dog properly in the community and it became aggressive.

What I've given you today—and I wanted to leave some time for questions, so I'm trying to keep under seven minutes for the talk. This is just a very high-level brief on a different yet effective way to address an issue—a method that is highly supported by the community and receives extremely high voluntary compliance with the community. We don't have to do a lot of enforcement, but when we do, it's serious. We have embedded programs where we actually have the ability to order a dog owner with a dog that is going the wrong way—he can actually be ordered to take training from a certified trainer to correct the problems we see—usually, it's a change in the owner's behaviour with the dog and the owner's control over the dog—and reduce that dog from a high risk or a dog going to risk to a safe dog in the community. We can order that and then reassess the dog and see if the dog's behaviour has changed. Also, to alert the owner as to what their responsibilities are: shifting all the responsibility on to the owner.

What I'd hoped to do today was to encourage you to explore deeper some of the proven scientific solutions to prevent and reduce canine-aggressive situations and increase your community safety around dogs.

That's my very high-level overview in my seven minutes. I do, as I said, want to leave time for questions. This was really just a very, very high-level overview of the programs.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you. This round of questioning will start with the third party. Ms. DiNovo.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you so much, Mr. Bruce. You've really created the gold standard for Canada and the way we should be approaching this problem.

I just wanted to highlight a couple of things that you said: number one, that breed-specific legislation has never worked in any jurisdiction it has been tried in; that your approach and others' approaches like yours around the world have worked, and that is the preventive model, where you actually do some training in schools and do some training for pet owners about how to have a dog, and then you enforce, of course; and also what we've

heard from trainers—people as famous as Cesar Millan, who has pointed out, using pit bulls as his training dogs, that it's not the breed; it's the owner. So I want to thank you for that.

It's too bad we have such a short amount of time, because I think what's really telling about the Calgary model, as it has come to be known in Canada, is the way you've gone about it and the specifics. You've given a very general overview, but hopefully, if you could maybe submit to this committee some of the things that you've done—for example, I know you run programs in schools, that kind of thing, to teach children about how to be around dogs. You've done other things like that. I would love to see the specifics, if you could give them to us.

The only study that we looked at here in Toronto—the Toronto Humane Society did a five-year study and discovered, of course, that breed-specific legislation doesn't work here either, like everywhere else in the world. You mentioned that Italy had moved away from it; Sweden, I know—there are a number of jurisdictions in the States, all of whom have ditched it because it was ineffective.

Perhaps you could answer one question, though, and that is: If you could name maybe three things that you have done that have made a significant difference in the number of dog bites, that would be great.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Certainly. Ironically, the education, especially with the children and service providers, on how to prevent being bitten by a dog should they come across a stray is incredibly effective. One thing we did was, we banned the tethering of dogs in public places—people who have a habit of going to a restaurant and tying their dog up outside while they go and have breakfast. When we did that, we saw an incredible drop—those were fear bites. We saw a big drop there—so understanding canine behaviour and why a dog tied up would do that.

I think the last, most effective thing we did was the legislated system we set up to deal with people before their dog bit—so, when it shows a chase threat, we're there, we investigate it, we do an assessment; we can even order the dog into training and work with that owner to get that dog corrected. Those are probably three of the key things.

A lot of it comes back to really embedding in our community the model of responsible pet ownership, so, broader education, understanding that if we want to change canine behaviour, we have to change human behaviour with our dogs. The most effective way to change human behaviour is through education. We actually have six education programs that are part of our school curriculum that we deliver at no charge to the schools, and we have board-certified teachers on staff to do that kind of work.

One other thing that I did not mention that may be of interest to you is: This whole program is not funded by tax dollars. The entire animal program—animal services—is funded by generated revenue, primarily from licensing. So none of this is involving any cost to the taxpayer at large.

0840

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Thank you.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Now, we have some time left. Thank you, Ms. DiNovo. Are members of the government interested in putting forward questions? Mr. Berardinetti?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Mr. Bruce. My name is Lorenzo Berardinetti.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Good morning, sir.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Good morning. I just have a quick question. Do you have in place what is called the vicious animal licensing policy?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Yes, we do. If an animal has been declared vicious by the courts, we have a licensing program that requires a much higher payment, far more significant consequences and conditions that could be placed on the animal with regard to confinement, control. We can also, through that program, order the dog into training.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** So if someone has a pet and the owner of the dog has it declared a vicious animal—do you think Ontario should do the same thing and obtain what's basically a special vicious-animal licence?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Absolutely. If a dog has displayed a level of aggression that's unacceptable, it's about bringing it to their attention and increasing the consequences. So a dog licence that might have normally a cost of \$36 is now a \$250-per-year licence. The property must be posted. The property must be secure. The dog will be required to be kept in a six-sided run that it can't escape from. Very significant—if it's out, it must be on a short leash, muzzled. We can order all those things on a specific case where the dog has started to show inappropriate signs. The dog must be leashed and in the control of a person over 18.

So we have a lot of conditions we can place on a specific dog that's been identified as a threat to the community.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Bruce, I have to interrupt you and Mr. Berardinetti for a moment. We've used up our allocated five minutes. Our next presenter is not yet here. If the committee is interested in having a few more questions, I'd be happy to go forward with that. Otherwise, we'll recess until 9 o'clock.

It looks like there are a lot of nodding heads. I will—

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Mr. Chair, unless some other presenters are here that are willing to move ahead—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Well, we have part—

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I do understand.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Yeah. Go ahead, Mr. Berardinetti.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I had one question, if Mr. Bruce is still on the line. I don't know.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Yes, I am, sir.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Okay. Thank you. Going back to the vicious-animal licensing policy, just so I understand correctly, who's the person declaring the dog a vicious animal? Is it your department that does that?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** No. What we do is we take it to court and we have a hearing where we present the evidence on why we believe the dog should be designated. The dog owner has a right of defence and the court will make the decision based on the evidence. We have about a 99% success rate.

I should mention, too, at that time the court also has the ability, under our legislation, to order that dog destroyed if the belief is that the dog is not going to be properly controlled and will continue to be a threat. Or the judge could even take the dog away, destroy it—ordered it destroyed—and order the individual that they may not get another dog for a period of time.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Then just following that further, let's say someone has a pit bull and treats the pit bull poorly, but your department never sees this and never observes this happening—let's say the pit bull is kept inside for most of the time or in a backyard that's basically enclosed, but one day that owner takes the dog out for a walk and the dog bites someone. How do you prevent that from happening?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Well, that's where the education comes in and that's why we may, depending on the dog—the dog, before we go to court, gets a professional assessment from my staff behaviourist, who is also a peace officer.

Part of the behaviour program is learning what are the triggers that make the dog do what it does, and every dog has triggers that will set it off and things that don't set it off. So we work with the owner on that consultation, if the court decides to allow him to keep the dog, and what he's going to have to do to prevent that.

Of course, typical of that, we would be ordering—if we thought the dog was very reactive to other dogs or certain situations, we might order a harness situation, which is more secure than a standard leash. We might order a muzzle. We put conditions on that respond to what the dog's triggers are and what he's reactive to so he could maintain that control. Now, of course, if you do have another offence, your fines will automatically go up 10 times.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I remember in my years, some owners drop out of school in grade 9 or grade 10 and go on and do other things and are very successful. But let's say someone drops out of school in grade 9, doesn't attend many classes—I know this is hypothetical, and I appreciate that and I hope you do as well. But let's say someone doesn't attend school after grade 9 or earlier and doesn't receive the education but still owns a pit bull. Again, if that pit bull goes out and bites someone, doesn't it seem—and I'm asking this in a very friendly manner. If that hypothetical situation occurs and the dog bites someone, isn't it—and this is in a friendly way again—too late to deal with the behaviour of the dog or even the animal licensing policy?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Not necessarily. Generally, I believe that very few dogs start off biting. It starts off with much lesser behaviours. Our goal is to identify those early and work with the owner on education to correct those behaviours before they will escalate. So no dog wakes up one morning and decides it will start biting today. It starts with lesser behaviours, and we find that there's really only, as I said, two ways to get an aggressive dog. Very few people are setting out to do this deliberately.

So by working with the owner in an educational way—in our educational programs, we really target: From ECS and kindergarten to grade 6 is where we have to start putting this information before them. Then once we're aware of the dog in the community, we can work more directly with them. It has been extremely effective.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Have you ever had to put down a dog, let's say a pit bull, as a result of a bite?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Absolutely. I have two in custody right now that are going to be put down as soon as I'm before the courts in a couple of weeks. These were dogs that were being used for protection around some illegal activity. A person came on the property and was bitten. The dogs were immediately seized, held, and we'll take them to court. We'll be asking, in this case, for—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Berardinetti, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Hillier, because it looks like we have another presenter just about ready to come in.

Mr. Hillier?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Mr. Bruce, thank you very much. I'll make this very quick. I just want to reiterate some of the things that I've heard from you.

The city of Calgary had a 78% reduction in dog bites, down from 127, where I believe in Toronto we're at about 5,000 dog bites—

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** That's correct.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:**—and that when bites go down in one breed, they go up in others.

Unlike the question from the government side, who were talking about hypotheticals, I think the proof is in the pudding about how to prevent dog bites. The city of Calgary has demonstrated how you prevent, it in a fashion, with what you have done out there.

But I will ask you this one question. From your presentation, it sounded very much to me that the best level or order of government to deal with aggressive dogs in a community is not the provincial level of government, and that the municipality is probably the best-suited government to deal with aggressive dogs. What are your thoughts on that, Mr. Bruce?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Actually, I'm glad you raised that. Yes, every community has its own characteristics and features and individualities, so it can be different from community to community, the level of control you need to put in there.

I do agree it's well legislated. We operate from a Municipal Government Act of Alberta, which just probably puts on to a municipality the ability to regulate both wild and domestic animals. At the provincial level, we

deal with animal cruelty and we deal with a Dangerous Dogs Act.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Mr. Bruce, can I ask you just one more question? How many vicious-dog licences are issued in Calgary each year?

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** I think last year I issued eight.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Eight. Thank you very much.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Mr. Bruce, thank you very much.

**Mr. Bill Bruce:** Thank you very much.

#### ONTARIO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I'll now call on the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association to come forward: Dr. Scott, Doug Raven, John Stevens. Gentlemen, if you could come forward to the seats there. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, and up to five minutes has been allocated for questions from committee members. Could you please state your names for Hansard, and then you may begin.

0850

**Dr. Dale Scott:** Dr. Dale Scott.

**Mr. Doug Raven:** Doug Raven.

**Dr. Dale Scott:** Good morning, honourable members of the committee. My name is Dr. Dale Scott, with the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association. With me is Mr. Doug Raven, CEO of the OVMA. Thank you very much again for the opportunity speak to this most important issue.

Veterinarians are trained to take a science-based approach to any issue, including aggressive behaviour by dogs towards humans or other animals. As such, OVMA has conducted a thorough review of the available research on dog bites and the use of breed-based bans to curb dog attacks. Based on that review, we are here today with three clear messages:

First, breed-specific dog bans are not an effective way to deal with dangerous dogs in Ontario, specifically because research shows that numerous breeds are reported each year in attack and fatality reports.

Second, the current legislation has resulted in the unnecessary euthanasia of over 1,000 dogs and puppies in Ontario. Many of these had no history of violence against people or other animals.

Third, research clearly shows that a more effective approach to dealing with dangerous dogs is improving bite prevention education and implementing non-breed-specific dangerous dog laws, enacted to place the primary responsibility for a dog's behaviour on the owner, regardless of the dog's breed; in particular, targeting irresponsible dog owners.

Let me now address these messages in turn.

First, why are breed-based bans ineffective? It's because they are based on two simple but incorrect assumptions: (1) that only certain breeds of dogs are dangerous, and (2) that all dogs that belong to those breeds are

dangerous. Data available when this was introduced in 2005 does not support either of these two assumptions.

A 1996 study by James Badow, the then general manager of animal control services for the city of Toronto, found that dog bites in the city were reported for more than 20 breeds and crossbreeds. Pit bull terriers accounted for only 4% of the reported bites and ranked ninth on the list of identified breeds in terms of bites.

At the time that Kitchener, Ontario banned pit bull-type dogs in 1997, they ranked eighth in terms of the breeds for which dog attacks had been reported for the preceding year. In Essex county, where Windsor banned pit bull-type dogs, statistics indicate that the five worst offenders in terms of dog bites were German shepherds, Labrador retrievers, huskies, cocker spaniels and Jack Russells.

In Winnipeg, there have been bites by 87 identified breeds and 94 crossbreeds since 1989. Since pit bulls were banned in 1990, there have been over 3,000 dog bites in that city. Clearly, banning pit bulls did not prevent the vast majority of dog attacks.

The Toronto Humane Society issued a report recently on dog bites in the province of Ontario, concluding that since the ban was put in place, there has been no impact on the number of dog bites in the province. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of dog bites in Ontario has remained consistent with the number of bites from before the ban was enacted. According to the Toronto Humane Society, "The new law has not worked. It has not reduced the number of dog bites and increased public safety. All it does is punish one breed of dog."

An argument is sometimes made that, while all dogs bite, only a few breeds cause serious injury when they attack. Again, this hypothesis does not withstand scrutiny. A study by the Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program examined the dog breeds involved in attacks that were serious enough that the victim sought medical attention at one of the eight reporting hospitals. The study revealed that 50 different purebreds and 33 types of crossbreeds had been involved in the attacks—many of those show more attacks than pit bulls.

What about the most serious of attacks, those resulting in the death of a person attacked? Over 17 years, between 1990-2007, there were 28 reported human fatalities in Canada due to dog attacks. In one of those incidents, a pit bull was blamed, and there is statistically no relevant change in the number of fatalities after the breed ban was implemented.

What about the second assumption, that all pit bulls are dangerous? Trying to determine what percentage of pit bulls are involved in attacks is difficult, if not impossible. As it is generally acknowledged that a large percentage of dogs are never licensed, it is impossible to know how many dogs there are of each breed in a municipality.

However, in the 1996 city of Toronto study referred to earlier, the pit bulls involved in biting incidents accounted for only 1% of the pit bulls licensed in the city

at the time. For comparison purposes, 5% of Labs and 6% of German shepherds licensed within the city had been involved in biting incidents over the same period. Clearly, the assumption that all pit bulls are dangerous is not a fact.

To summarize, there is no scientific data on which to base the conclusion that a breed-based ban is the answer to dealing effectively with the dangerous dog issue. Although such bans might comfort individuals who have had unpleasant experiences with particular breeds or who have heard of attacks by specific dog breeds in the media, the bans do not effectively regulate dogs that should be considered dangerous in general, regardless of their breed; nor does it adequately regulate the responsibility of their owners.

To my second main point, one could take the view that while a breed ban might not be effective, it won't harm either. However, such views ignore the fact that many serious problems resulted from the passage of this legislation. I'd like to quickly mention three such problems that need to be considered:

First, as predicted by many experts in 2005, difficulties associated with breed identification have made a breed-based ban very difficult, if not impossible, to enforce. There are many breeds and crossbreeds that resemble the banned breeds, and municipal law enforcement officers do not generally have the training to determine if a dog is in fact a banned breed. Even if they have that training, they lack the scientific means for determining a dog's breed that can withstand the rigours of a legal challenge.

Second, municipalities have borne the cost of enforcing the ban and of housing, euthanizing and disposing of banned dogs. Provincial taxpayers have footed the bill for the court costs associated with the ban. At a time when all levels of government are struggling to fund even essential services, surely this is money that would be better spent elsewhere.

Finally, and most importantly, the legislation has resulted in the unnecessary euthanasia of over 1,000 dogs across Ontario. Many of these are dogs that had no history of violence against people or other animals. They simply looked a certain way, and that appearance was unfortunately enough to earn them a death sentence if they lived in Ontario.

And my third and final key message: There is a better way. If Ontario removes the breed-specific ban, what could it do to address the dangerous dog issue? It must be noted that the province already took several commendable steps to address dangerous dogs as part of the non-breed-specific amendments to the Dog Owners' Liability Act passed in 2005. For example, the current legislation enables the courts to identify a dog that has behaved in a manner that poses a menace to the safety of a person or domestic animal and sets out that certain precautions be taken to protect the public from these dogs. However, there are several other actions that could also be taken.

First, the province could better regulate dog breeders to ensure that those who breed dogs are appropriately

qualified to do so and prevent those who have a history of rearing dangerous dogs from doing it in the future.

Second, the province could work with veterinarians, breeders and other interested parties to educate the public about pet selection and responsible pet ownership.

**0900**

By educating dog owners about how to choose a dog that's right for them, train the dog appropriately and recognize aggressive behaviour early on, most potential attacks can be prevented.

One study that comes to mind was conducted by animal behaviourist Dr. Stanley Coren. His study showed that dogs with basic obedience training were 89% less likely to be involved in a biting incident.

Finally, the province should increase the potential penalties available to the courts when a dog owner fails to act appropriately to safeguard the public from his or her dog.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you, sir. Questions will now go to the government. Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Some jurisdictions that don't outright ban pit bulls or use similar definitions as currently contained in the Dog Owners' Liability Act to classify restricted or naturally aggressive dogs do require restrictions like muzzling or leashing in public or that the owners carry liability insurance. Do you support such an approach in Ontario?

**Dr. Dale Scott:** Yes, we do. For any dangerous dog, we would support all of those restrictions.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** There was a document that was produced in 1993, an article from Dr. Clifford and Dr. Scott from the American Veterinary Medical Association, called *Dos and Don'ts Concerning Vicious Dogs*, and within that there were some strong points around pit bulls. They made a few specific points, and I'd just like to get some feedback from you around these statements: Pit bulls have a very high pain threshold; pit bulls will attack any part of the body and will not let go, no matter how much they are punished; pit bulls are unique as they don't show any threatening signs prior to an attack; as a group, pit bulls are unquestionably the most dangerous and unpredictable dogs out there; mace and other spray repellents don't effectively work against pit bulls; and finally, one of the stronger instincts of pit bulls is—stronger than most dogs—their instincts within them show very aggressive traits, unlike other dogs. Would you agree with those points from the American Veterinary Medical Association?

**Dr. Dale Scott:** I'm not aware of that study and its US statistics. But definitely we're talking about a dangerous dog—and that's exactly what the OVMA would want to be regulated in Ontario is what you're saying. In Ontario, the data doesn't substantiate that the pit bull accounts for the greatest number of attacks, whether fatalities or bites, in various communities. So we're onside exactly with what they're talking about as far as restricting dangerous dogs—and you're describing a dangerous dog—but to paint that all pit bulls are exactly what is described in that document is what we feel, in Ontario, isn't substantiated by the data.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** There are obviously outliers in all different types of things in life, but just overall, not all pit bulls—would you say the majority of pit bulls would show these types of behaviours as listed?

**Dr. Dale Scott:** I don't think so, because it's how they're raised, the owners, the responsibility of the owners or the irresponsibility of the owners and how they have taken those dogs and trained them to act that way. That's what we're seeing in the media presentations: the pit bull fighting or dogfighting generally. That doesn't show a picture of the general population.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** One of the claims is that they're unpredictable prior to attack. Is that a trait that you would agree with?

**Dr. Dale Scott:** Not necessarily on the whole breed. I think that's definitely a trait that—any dangerous dog trained to be that way would be unpredictable.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** The dangerous dog plans that have been implemented in some jurisdictions do protect against a second attack. How do we protect against that first attack?

**Dr. Dale Scott:** I think, again, that is education. That is going through veterinarians and breeders and those that are interested in this issue and coming together with government and forming laws.

Also, the whole part of training a dog and training yourself, I think that is the biggest answer and opportunity we have to prevent dog bites, dog attacks and fatalities.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** So you would agree that some type of—

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Last question, sir.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** I know, but we're out of time.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

**Dr. Dale Scott:** Thank you very much.

#### SUPPORT HERSHEY'S BILL

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** The last presenters, because others have run late, is the Support Hershey's Bill group, Frances Coughlin and Elizabeth Sullivan. Thank you.

You've been here this morning; you know you have up to 10 minutes to make your presentation, and then there will be five minutes of questions. If you could please state your names for Hansard and then begin.

**Ms. Frances Coughlin:** Frances Coughlin. I am a real estate broker and a founding member of the Support Hershey's Bill groups. Over many decades I have been a community volunteer for Variety-The Children's Charity, Church on the Queensway and the Variety Club telethon, and I captained the Lieutenant Governor's Games at Variety Village. I am a responsible and conscientious citizen.

I am also a dog owner and for almost two decades have shared my life with dogs that could easily be deemed substantially similar to banned breeds. My time

now is spent fighting the inequality I and thousands of others endure due to current legislation which private members' Bill 16 will correct.

Ontario has been home for generations. Both my grandfathers fought for Canada in World War I. In 1968, my maternal grandfather's dog Sam was the first canine inducted into the Purina Animal Hall of Fame.

Now however, current legislation has made going for a simple walk in the park with my dog a burden. All too often now I am shunned, ostracized and even yelled at for having the wonderful dog I do. Media has managed to label and profile most medium-sized, muscular, short-haired dogs as pit bulls and their owners as either criminals or thugs. Due to this profiling, I am now subjected to harassment, called unacceptable names and treated unequally.

Were I not to speak against current legislation which incorporates breed-specific legislation, hereafter referred to as BSL, I would be remiss in my responsibility to myself and the thousands of others who, because of BSL and the desire to abolish it, I am now acquainted with.

Hershey's support groups have organized numerous rallies at Queen's Park and for other dog owners who have had their innocent dogs taken, seized, sent out of province or killed. During our events, people line up to sign petitions and the support continues to grow.

Since 2005, I have spent numerous hours reviewing professional studies and, in spite of public safety being initially cited as the main reason for Ontario's breed ban, have found that they have not reduced incidents. I don't find a single place where BSL has been effective in enhancing public safety. My faith in mainstream media has been lost, as it has for those politicians who catered to media's propaganda, fear-mongering, sensationalism and hype.

Every credible expert organization and individual testified against breed-specific legislation during the first round of committee meetings. Many more places have since proved BSL a failure. In the United Kingdom and in most other places, including the much-touted Winnipeg, dog bites actually increased after BSL was instituted.

I came here to plead for common sense. It should not be a provincial offense for responsible citizens to own and raise good dogs. Neither should good citizens be targeted or live in fear of being harassed and penalized due to a pet's appearance.

Those who have attended our rallies have included virtually every sex, age, race, culture, creed, religion and profession, yet this is not reported in media. It appals me that many legislators have not acknowledged the consequences BSL has had on numerous Ontarians. Breed discrimination, in fact, created a culture of unfairness, inequality, intolerance and second-class citizenship.

**0910**

Now citizens are forced to defend themselves in court when no crime has occurred, if anyone subjectively assumes a family dog to be substantially similar to one of the banned breeds. Now, as then, Ontario needs to take irresponsible dog owners to task.

Hershey's Groups requests all citizens be equal under Ontario law. The passing and approval of Bill 16 will restore equality to all dog-owning citizens.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you.

**Ms. Liz Sullivan:** Liz Sullivan. I have been a provincial chairperson for National Access Awareness Week; elected and served on the women's executive of Variety Club and the Singles Alive ministry of Queensway Cathedral. I am also a recipient of the CRA minister's award and the commemorative medal of Canada. As a vested and concerned Ontarian, I believe breed-specific legislation, hereafter referred to as BSL, has tarnished Canada's image, and this reflects poorly on the traditional inclusiveness of Ontario's communities, cities and towns.

Canadians with mixed breeds are no longer able to travel freely across Canada due to BSL. An example of travel restrictions due to BSL garnered much publicity when TV celebrity and renowned dog trainer Cesar Millan could not bring his dog Junior into Ontario for fear he would be seized and destroyed. Junior is not a dangerous dog, but he was and is a victim of canine profiling. We have received messages from people who left Ontario and who want to return home, but because of the look of the dog that they own and BSL, they remain alienated from their families. The most heartbreaking stories involve our military, who after putting their lives on the line for Canada are no longer welcome in Ontario due to the appearance of their canine companion.

These are the harsh repercussions of BSL existing in Ontario, and it is a sad state of affairs.

Hershey's Groups includes the cause "Ban the Pit Bull Ban," which is closing in on 97,000 supporters. The "Support Hershey's Bill" Facebook site now borders on 8,000 supporters, showing many Ontario dog owners feel persecuted. And to demonstrate how offensive Ontario citizens find the current ban, one website we initially founded has sent over 209,000 documented emails to Queen's Park, petitioning for BSL to be removed.

The Hershey's Groups website, [www.support-hersheysbill.com](http://www.support-hersheysbill.com), is designed to dispel myths and educate. We ask committee members to visit Hershey's site, look into the faces of those in attendance, and view photos and videos of the protests, special events and rallies that have occurred throughout Ontario. Hundreds of average citizens have attended these events, and I believe that if it were geographically possible, one would see thousands of Ontario citizens in the photos and videos.

One menu tab, titled "Resources and Documentation," on the site includes the university study Panic Policy Making: Canine Breed Bans in Canada and the United States. This detailed study, starting from page 19 to page 24, addresses how media bias and influence affected the ban being passed in Ontario. We request committee members to review the study online as part of our presentation, or I can provide later a paper copy.

Again, thank you for allowing us to speak with you today in support of Hershey's bill, trusting that in the

future it will be known as Hershey's law with the passing of Bill 16.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you for your presentation, and questions will go to the official opposition.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Thank you very much, Fran and Liz, for coming today and presenting to the committee.

I want to expand a little bit on the negative consequences a little bit later on, because I think that's one aspect of the present bill that is not well seen or understood by some members of the Legislature. But before I get there, I want to just reiterate that we often hear about, how do we prevent the first bite? We've already heard the evidence from Bill Bruce in Calgary that how you prevent the first bite is by preventing bites overall, by education, by responsible dog ownership. The numbers speak for themselves in Calgary, where they're down to 127 dog bites in a city of a million people—approaching a million people in Calgary.

In 2006 in the province of Ontario, the year of the BSL, we had 5,360 reported bites. The next year, a full year with the BSL, it went up to 5,492; the year after, 5,463. So there's been no change in the number of bites here in Ontario.

The government wants to know, how do we prevent the first bite? Prevent them overall. Take that Calgary model and implement a thoughtful, education process.

But I do want you to expand a little bit about the fear of walking your dog—a calm, friendly responsible dog—in a park and having somebody seize that dog from you for no apparent reason other than its physical appearance—not its physical action, its appearance. Because I do know that people have had their family pet seized and destroyed.

**Ms. Frances Coughlin:** We had one of our members send us a message. Her name is Courtney Elliot. She's walking along the street in Cambridge with her cane corso, and he's walking beside the carriage. He's tied to the carriage with her baby. A woman in a truck comes up and throws a brick at the dog, almost hits the baby: "How can you own a dog like that?" That dog is a family dog. It's raised with children. It's not dangerous.

These are some of the incidences that we experience as dog owners, as responsible dog owners, good dog owners, and we just ask that—you know, you can't fix stupid with laws. If there are problems with a particular owner who has raised a dangerous dog, take that owner to task, but leave the citizens alone who are responsible and have good dogs. That dog wasn't even a pit bull dog. Most of the people who yell and scream in the parks, "It's a pit bull. It's a pit bull"—they're not even one of those breeds.

**Ms. Liz Sullivan:** There have been many incidences where we've had phone calls, people—just heartbreaking. I got a call on a Friday night from a woman, her two children. She has three dogs and one of the construction workers left the back gate open. She always locks the back gate, so she didn't think to look. The next thing you know, the dogs are out running around the neigh-

bourhood. She got two of them back and her words to me were, "The best dog of the group didn't come home." I spent hours with her on the phone.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** You have one minute.

**Ms. Liz Sullivan:** I know when I go for a walk, putting—and a lot of people have met my dog. He's been on television a number of times, been in rallies a number of times, and he's a very gentle, extremely well behaved boy, and yet when I muzzle him, every time we go outside, it induces fear. It promotes the propaganda that media has done, making a certain type of dog dangerous.

Media has done this in the past to people of colour. This kind of profiling has to stop. It's canine profiling.

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** Thank you very much. I appreciate your presentation today.

#### CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB

**The Chair (Mr. Peter Tabuns):** We go on to the next presenter. I'll call the Canadian Kennel Club to come forward.

Good morning. You know you have 10 minutes for a presentation and then we'll have five minutes of questions. If you could state your name for Hansard, and then begin.

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** Yes, Sonny Allinson.

First of all, good morning. Thank you to everyone who brought Bill 16 forward, supporting it. A tri-party private member's bill is a difficult one to anticipate the outcome of and hopefully, through the deliberations of this committee and weighing the reiterated input from a number of years ago, things will change, and we're very, very pleased to be here and speaking.

**0920**

From a small gathering in London, Ontario, dog fanciers in 1888 began the Canadian Kennel Club. It has grown to be recognized internationally as Canada's authority on purebred dogs and maintains one of the world's most accurate pedigree registries. As a not-for-profit organization with nearly 25,000 members across Canada and some 11,000 members here in Ontario, we continue, as we have since our inception 124 years ago, to look to the future.

The Canadian Kennel Club also consists of approximately 700 individually sanctioned local area dog clubs in Canada. These local area clubs hold approximately 2,500 events in localities across the country. CKC members voluntarily adhere to our code of ethics, and the Canadian Kennel Club member breeders voluntarily adhere to our breeder code of practice. These codes require the development of responsible ownership practices amongst all of the 75,000 new dog owners in Canada of purebred dogs each year.

The Canadian Kennel Club introduced the first national program for canine safety, and that is the Canine Good Neighbour program, approximately eight years ago. This was in response to an inquest at that time, prior

to the deliberations on the original Bill 152, I believe, commonly referred to as the pit bull ban.

The CKC-recognized clubs host training and education sessions across Canada for members and new dog owners. These are available for both purebred owners and non-purebred owners. The CKC-recognized clubs hold obedience events, reinforcing responsible ownership throughout the year.

All Canadian Kennel Club-registered purebred dogs are uniquely identified and the ownership is known. In Ontario currently, under the definition, two of our breeds are banned. There are 111 Staffordshire bull terriers in this province, and there are two American Staffordshire terriers. We know who those people are; we know where those dogs are.

All of the above is done voluntarily and it's unsupported by municipal, provincial or federal funding. The Canadian Kennel Club operates under the auspices of the federal Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and is an adherent to the federal Animal Pedigree Act.

Our mandate is to register and maintain pedigree records for 175 distinct breeds of purebred dogs that have completed a 19-step process in order to become recognized as such and to be included in our registry. We do it proudly and with accuracy for, as I said, approximately 175 individual breeds per year.

As well as maintaining one of the most accurate registries in the world, the CKC develops the rules and regulations for 19 different types of competitive events, such as conformation, obedience, field trials, water rescue, and agility, which is the most rapidly growing sport in the world.

We're the strongest canine voice in Canada and speak on behalf of every dog and every owner in this country. Diversity of interests keeps the organization unique, but it is the simple, common love we all share of the dog that brings our membership together and puts us before you today.

Whether you are a proud new puppy owner, whether you breed champion dogs, compete in events or simply look to your pet for companionship and comfort, you'll be touched by the issue of breed-specific legislation.

We have strong traditions of encouraging, guiding and advancing the interests of purebred dogs, responsible owners and reputable breeders. We have strong traditions of promoting the benefits which dogs can bring to our society, and we have a strong tradition of speaking out at times such as this, when we believe that legislation is not ultimately effective in achieving its purpose.

The issue at stake today is correcting, through the passing of private member's Bill 16, the misplaced ban on the generic broad term for a population of dogs—not a breed of dogs—commonly referred to as pit bulls in this province.

Legislation banning specific breeds, as the approach to improving public safety, is by no means a new concept, nor is it taken lightly by the Canadian Kennel Club and many, if not all, of the experts who have spoken to

groups similar to this in the past and will be over the next two days of your meetings. In fact, it's usually the first idea suggested when the issue of vicious and/or dangerous dogs impacts any community. It has been described as a knee-jerk reaction. It's not the solution and it has not been the solution in Ontario. It's not an acceptable method for solving the problems of dangerous dogs. In fact, it creates additional problems for the owners of the dogs and the dogs themselves, which have never been nor ever will be vicious or dangerous. It creates problems for the individuals responsible for enforcement and in many other circumstances.

Our focus, and we hope yours, will be to understand that the problem must be dealt with, but that it is the individual dog and irresponsible owner that must be dealt with by making them accountable for their actions and the actions of their dogs. Make responsible owners accountable owners, but not through the banning of all dogs of a specific breed or breeds. The considered and collective opinion of the National Companion Animal Coalition, consisting of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council of Canada and ourselves, the Canadian Kennel Club, all support dangerous dog legislation and not breed-specific legislation.

BSL has been of concern for many years and the official CKC position has not changed, nor has our official policy statement prepared on the subject in 1987 regarding dangerous or vicious dog legislation. The CKC is frequently consulted by national and local media, concerned citizens, municipal bylaw officers and government bodies across Canada for input and thoughtful perspective.

Our intent is very simple: to encourage the improvement of current legislation through the passing of Bill 16 and deal with the individual circumstances surrounding any individual dangerous dog and their owners.

Our position is clear: The CKC supports dangerous and/or vicious dog legislation in order to provide the most appropriate protection for the general public and the innocent dog owner and the dog.

In closing and on behalf of the purebred dogs and their owners in the province of Ontario, please note for the record that the Canadian Kennel Club supports the opinion of all the experts that breed-specific legislation does not work as a solution for safer communities in this province or anywhere else. We also believe that the passing of Bill 16, reversing current legislation, will correct the serious legislative flaw that banned under the current definition of a pit bull three pure breeds and untold numbers of generic, randomly bred mixed-breed dogs also caught within the current laws.

The Canadian Kennel Club respectfully requests that you vote to support change through your support of private members' Bill 16. Thank you all very, very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you for your presentation. The third party now has five minutes for questions.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I want to first start out by thanking you for your presentation and all the good work that you do, but also correcting something that was erroneously put into the record by Mr. Michael Coteau. I wanted to point him to a piece of paper that we've already received from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association: The American Veterinary Medical Association opposes all breed-specific legislation. That is their official stance. There was a piece read out from the American Veterinary Association which was read erroneously, and we can go into the details of that after, but their official stance is anti-breed-specific legislation. I want to make that very, very clear. In fact, every veterinary association that we have here listed—if you look at the OVMA's second page, you'll see every single one listed there.

To get back to—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Mr. Chair, point of order.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** No. To get back to the point—I've got five minutes; sorry—made by our deputant here, and it's a very important point, there are only 113 dogs that actually could be called pit bulls in the province of Ontario. Can I repeat that—

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** Under the current definition of "pit bull." They are not pit bulls.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Yes, exactly, so 113 purebreds. Every other dog—1,000 have been euthanized that we know of—that has been targeted out there is a mixed breed. They could be more Labrador than anything else, and you would have to do, I'm sure, DNA testing to discover exactly what the mix is. The reality is that it's just the way a dog looks. It has nothing to do with their breed. So even if that description of a breed were correct, it would still be irrelevant—Michael, are you listening to this? It would still be irrelevant, even if that description were correct, because we're dealing with mixed-breed dogs.

0930

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** We'll stop your five minutes and take the point of order. Mr. Coteau.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** There was just a reference made that I gave some incorrect information. I just want to be absolutely clear: The points that I referenced were from a 1993 article by Dr. Donald Clifford, Kay Green and Dr. John Scott. It was published by the American Veterinary Medical Association. I could easily submit a link to that article if necessary.

But I want to be very clear: I didn't say anything outside of what they reported. There were several points that they made. I was very clear. I think the member should refrain from pointing out that I've gave incorrect information when I've only referenced an article from 1993. If the veterinary association in America agrees or disagrees, that's one thing. What I'm speaking to is specifically another point from a 1993 article. I just want to be clear.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Okay, but I just wanted to be very clear that it was not the position of the American Veterinary Medical Association—

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Mr. Chair, I never made reference to that. I want to be clear. I think she should correct herself.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Fair enough. I stand corrected. I wanted to make sure that the record showed very clearly that it wasn't the American Veterinary Medical Association that put forward that opinion.

To get back again to the question of what kinds of dogs are, first of all, being taken and then euthanized, they do not necessarily have anything to do with a purebred dog of any sort. So any descriptor of a breed would not be relevant to a dog, based on its facial characteristics, unless you could prove—again, these are mixed-breed dogs—that it had to do with all the mixes in that dog.

Again, I wanted to highlight our deputant's critical point: 113 dogs only could be considered purebred, and the rest of the dogs that have been taken are not purebreds of any breed. I think that's critical, because in the debate, what we've been talking about is that there is no such thing as a pit bull, and that's what we've been referencing.

I just want to thank you. I wanted to clarify some things that have been put forward on the record and again direct the committee's attention to all the associations—reputable associations—who are supporting this bill.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** I'd like to go back to the point of order. I don't think it's a point of order; it's a dispute of the facts.

Did Mr. Sergio have a point of order?

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Mr. Chair, for clarification, in the rotation process here, do we have the opportunity to ask questions of the deputants or can we make comments? How do we take the five minutes? Can we spend it just making comments, or do we have to address questions? Is that optional?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** I believe the five minutes were for asking questions of the witnesses.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Okay. So if we want to make comments without asking questions, it's not permitted, right?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** I think it would be up to the questioner—how they would want to preface those questions—how they use that five minutes.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Okay. Thank you. I thought I would clarify that.

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** I'm fine either way.

Can I ask myself a question at this point? I would like to ask myself how I handled the best dog I've ever owned when it became a threat. It was a large breed. All large-breed dogs can be dangerous; they can be a threat. As a responsible owner, at four years old, the best dog I ever owned—and I don't judge, I don't show, I don't breed, I don't do any of that. I just love dogs and happen to be in a wonderful position to support them. I had to put the dog down. I had to put the dog down.

That's my choice; it's not the choice of a law.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** We still have some time left for questions. Yes?

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for the clarifications. Yes, I think you've pointed out—and I thank you for that additional question you asked yourself, because all large dogs can be dangerous. I thank you for really representing dog owners across the spectrum. I personally have an English bull terrier who meets—

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** We won't hold it against you.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Exactly—who meets the definition of this law but isn't targeted, because I can prove it's not a pit bull.

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** Exactly.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** But my heart goes out to those who can't prove their dog is not a pit bull, where really the onus is on proving your innocence rather than your guilt, with this law.

Thank you again for all the work you do. I took my time to make some points, because I thought it was absolutely necessary to do so on behalf of dog owners and their dogs.

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** Thank you all very, very much.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you for your presentation.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Is there still time remaining? Can we continue to ask questions? Okay, so I have a quick question.

We've heard from some deputants that some educational courses would be appropriate for dogs that show natural aggression. Would you agree with that?

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** Absolutely. Education is the key, and it's the education that leads you to the point where you will know your dog: You will know when it is safe within a community, if you deem it to be unsafe at some times, and it will provide a grounding so that you can be comfortable with your dog in public.

Our program, the Canine Good Neighbour program, as I say, is available for anyone in this province and any other province across the country. It's a very simple program where you, as the person who is most responsible for that dog, go through a series of 12 or 14 stages of learning on how to read your dog and how to be safe.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Would you agree that that type of course should be mandatory for owners of certain types of dogs?

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** At the original meetings with Attorney General Bryant, it was my suggestion at that time that the element of an educational unit of some sort be part of whatever legislation unfolded. That is a missing link within the current laws.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** And that would be mandatory—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** The time for questions is up, and we'll let him answer.

**Mr. Michael Coteau:** Thank you.

**Mr. Sonny Allinson:** It could be.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

## MS. HEATHER MACK

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** I will now call on Heather Mack to please come forward. Welcome to the committee.

**Ms. Heather Mack:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, and up to five minutes has been allotted for questions from committee members. Please state your name for Hansard, and you may begin.

**Ms. Heather Mack:** My name is Heather Mack, and I'm here today just as a private citizen, an average person. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 16.

I used to deliver newspapers when I was a kid and ran into a lot of dogs. When I was about 12 years old, I was the victim of a dog attack and I ended up in hospital. A clueless house guest allowed a dog out the door and he attacked me, thinking he was defending his property. I can tell you that an attack by a Doberman is a very scary thing to go through. But even as I was sitting at the ER, being 12 years old, I was angry at the owner and not the dog. I remember being scared that the dog would be put down, so I didn't even allow myself to cry for fear that my parents would do something. I still have the scar from that bite.

But the experience didn't stop me from owning a dog, and today my heart belongs to a one-eyed basset hound named Winnipeg. When I first brought her home, I went through the horrible, painstaking exercises to socialize her. My friend Victoria told me that you're a good dog trainer when your neighbours think you're nuts. Any time Winnie was exposed to a new sound, noise or person, I'd clap my hands and tell her how wonderful it was. When she was scared, I wouldn't pick her up and cuddle her, because I didn't want her to learn to be afraid. Now I have the slowest-moving animal in creation, because she thinks that everyone wants to pet her and give her cookies. She has never bitten anyone, and I don't think she would, but I know she's capable and I believe that in defence of her own life she would protect herself.

I believe that every dog has the capacity to bite—just as every human has the capacity to harm another—and, given the right circumstances, it could happen. But I don't believe that any specific dog is programmed to bite. I know there are much smarter people than me that will tell you about biology and behaviour of dogs, so I want to just talk about my own understanding of the issue.

Back in 2004, the Legislature was presented with the perceived problem of pit bull attacks in our communities. The victims are real, and I don't dispute that. I don't dispute their pain, nor do I dispute the need for the government to act, but I do disagree with how the Attorney General responded.

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Citizens and experts testified about canine behaviour, but no one was able to present local statistics or facts. Many experts, in fact, pointed out that there were no data.

The US data are not applicable because we have a very different dog culture. I think if you look at the crowds here that rallied to overturn the pit bull ban, or people involved in online groups, or many of the people you'll hear from today and over the coming days, they're overwhelmingly women, not thugs. They are average Ontario women, not the people who come to mind when you think of a pit bull owner, because the stereotypes of pit bulls and their owners are wrong. I can't disprove the stereotype with statistics, but neither can it be upheld.

But what does exist is a fear-based media that creeps over our border from the United States, and I believe that the myth of the pit bull that impacted every side of this debate came from the American media and was perpetuated by the Canadian media. In the absence of facts, that's all we had to go on.

There was a recent story that caught my eye about a dog named Rumble in BC who was shot by an armed robber while defending his family home. Every last media outlet—and not using a wire story; it was all independent local reporting—referred to Rumble as an American Staffordshire terrier, which is true. Now, if Rumble had attacked his owner, I guarantee you that story would have been about a pit bull and not an American Staffordshire terrier, because the media uses “pit bull” as a negative term, and that inconsistent use has helped to shape public opinion.

Even if you believe the media myth, though, I can't ignore the fact that the policy intent has not been achieved from Bill 132. Public policy is not frozen in time. It should be assessed and re-evaluated for its effectiveness, and if it isn't meeting its objectives, it needs to be either modified or repealed.

In my opinion, one of the great failings of Bill 132 was that it did lack province-wide reporting. In an era of government transparency and accountability, new legislation should go hand in hand with publicly reported statistics, because how do you know if something's working if you can't measure success?

The city of Winnipeg was routinely cited in earlier debates as an example of a pit bull ban working. I'm from Manitoba, and it's usually a source of pride when Ontario follows our lead, but in this case you imported a bad idea. There were 275 dog bites in Winnipeg when the ban was established in 1990. Winnipeg city council passed that ban with only one dissenting vote from council—a very good friend of mine, the former city councillor from Fort Rouge, Glen Murray. After the pit bull ban, bites did go down and Ontario used that information to back its own policy. But it's now a generation since that ban has been in place in Winnipeg, and there are no pit bulls left, but the bite stats are back to where they were and they're on the rise again. I know you heard from Calgary today. They didn't ban pit bulls but focused on what I think is the correct thing, which is education and focusing on the owners. So if you look at the two cities as very interesting case studies—different approaches with different results—I think Ontario should aim for Calgary's results and not Winnipeg's.

In conclusion, I know that the politicians who voted in favour of Bill 132 don't hate dogs. I know many of you own and love dogs. I walk my dog around Queen's Park almost every night, and we often run into MPPs and staff who want to say hello to Winnie, because basset hounds are some of the cutest and funny-looking dogs, and they're probably the most non-threatening dog in existence. So you might think that pit bull bans are not a big issue for me, but I am here because I do love all dogs and I want my government to protect people and to protect those dogs. So I urge the committee to support Bill 16 and recognize that the original policy objective has not been achieved, and put the focus on the correct end of the leash.

Lastly, I do want to applaud the leadership of Ms. DiNovo, Mr. Hillier and Mr. Craitor in bringing support from all sides of the House to this issue. It's a really powerful demonstration to Ontarians that politicians of all political stripes can work together on a common cause. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you very much for your presentation. This round of questions will start with the government.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Thank you very much for your presentation. Just a couple of questions. First of all, I know you mentioned education.

**Ms. Heather Mack:** Yes.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** There are, I guess, two types of things that come out of that. There's training of the dog, which—my wife and I always watch that program with Cesar Millan, because we own pets as well—three cats; stray cats, actually. Do you support the same sort of thing, what happens, let's say, with Cesar Millan—he sort of goes into the house and trains the dog and basically—

**Ms. Heather Mack:** And trains the owners.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** —at the same time, trains the owners. He has done it with different breeds—I've watched several episodes of it. He goes into all types of people's homes, even some—I know you said that no thugs are here, but on the program I've seen some owners that appear not the best owners, but he's able to sort of deal with them. Do you agree with that approach?

**Ms. Heather Mack:** Yes. I support all forms of education for dog owners. I was lucky, I guess. Because I live in a condo, I have this constant fear of my neighbours complaining about my dog and eventually getting the boot, so I am very careful with training my dog. I support any public education, and I think people don't take dog ownership—it's more than feeding and watering your dog. You have to socialize it.

I look at my dog—because I live in downtown Toronto, we encounter different types of people, different breeds of dogs, and I think that's probably why she's so socialized. I look at my sister's dogs. They live in rural Manitoba. They have a huge yard. They have no need to really go out for—well, there's nowhere to walk to either. But they're not as social, because they just don't

encounter as many different people. But any education is good.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Okay. I'm going to ask you, and this is in the friendliest form of all, but we have different models in every state in the US and the various provinces. There is an Italian model. It's quite complicated, because they don't ban pit bulls, but they put a lot of restrictions in place. I'm just going to ask you if this makes sense to you.

What they've done in Italy, and I'm sure the opposition members are aware of this, under the law—there are five or six points here—all dogs must be identified by microchip and tattoo; secondly, all dogs must be registered; thirdly, all dogs must undergo a behavioural test by a veterinarian. The next one is that a list of “dangerous dogs” is kept by the government. The next point is that pit bulls and other dogs classified as “naturally aggressive breeds” must be muzzled and leashed in public. And finally, owners of “naturally aggressive breeds” must obtain liability insurance.

It's quite a lot of things to do, but—

**Ms. Heather Mack:** I agree with some of that. I'm not crazy about the muzzle part, because—

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I was thinking about that as well. The muzzle part basically makes the pit bull or even other dogs that some may want to muzzle a target in a way, because I think we heard earlier of a situation that—I didn't have time to ask the questions, but even dogs that look like pit bulls become subject to attack by people who don't want to see the dog around, thinking that it's dangerous.

**Ms. Heather Mack:** I mean, I've never had to muzzle my dog, but I just think of the mechanics on a hot Ontario day and you're out with your dog. I don't understand how they can possibly be watered with the muzzle on. But requiring that a vet do a behaviour check actually has another advantage: that you're requiring your dog to get medical supervision, which is, I don't think, a bad thing.

As far as dog liability, most people would have third party liability under their homeowner's insurance. But, yes, I'd have to look more. I'm not really an expert on the actual mechanics of how that works.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Yeah, because the main thing is, if we amend the bill, how do we make sure that dog bites in general don't happen? We're just learning, as well.

So I guess the question is—I'm sorry to put you on the spot here—how do we keep the dogs, the pit bulls, without dog bites taking place, basically? I guess beyond that model that I gave you and beyond education—you know, I support the Cesar Millan model—what else do you think can be done to make sure that a dog is not put down but is supervised, whether it be a pit bull or other dog similar that may potentially bite?

**Ms. Heather Mack:** I mean, I really would look at the results of other jurisdictions. We don't have to reinvent the wheel here. Looking at a place with a similar dog culture—I mean, Canadian dogs. I would say we have a

lot of working dogs. We have a lot of farm dogs. We have a lot of dogs that we need for our very survival. So to find an example in Canada—and from what I do know about Calgary, I just hear such great things. I look at their outcomes and say that that's something we should aim for, that's something we like. I don't know all the details of it, but that's the way I think we should be going.

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I have looked at their public education material, which is great. Also, in preparing today, I thought about, who are the people most at risk of a dog bite—Canada Post, I would think, hydro readers, meter readers—and how do they educate their employees, how do they deal with that health and safety issue? Canada Post has a pretty interesting campaign for education as well. Nowhere do they encourage their postal workers to be more concerned about large dogs. Most of their bites come from small dogs. So it's an encompassing campaign to say that we need to reduce bites of all size of dogs, because I can tell you, a bite from a Doberman, not fun, and when my dog was teething with those sharp little puppy teeth, that was not fun either. So no bite is good.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Okay, so—

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you. Excuse me. The time is up.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your presentation today.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

**Ms. Heather Mack:** Thank you.

#### HAPPY DOG COMMUNICATIONS

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** I'll now call on Sarah Dann to please come forward: Happy Dog Communications. Good morning. You have up to 10 minutes for your presentation, and up to five minutes have been allotted for questions from committee members. If I could ask you to state your name for Hansard, and please begin.

**Ms. Sarah Dann:** Hello, my name is Sarah Dann. Can you all hear me okay?

Thank you very much for having me here today. Thank you to the committee for your close attention to the matter at hand, and thank you in particular to the members who had the courage to bring forward Bill 16.

I feel privileged to speak in the company of the OVMA, and I hope you paid close attention to Bill Bruce and heard that there is another way—a better way—to deal with dogs in our society.

I have seen committee members in the hall, the washrooms, and some are absent at this time. I would appreciate it if you would ask your members to go back and review the testimony they've missed. Also, I would ask that this committee consider the testimony that was put forward in 2005 as part of my presentation, if you wouldn't mind.

My name is Sarah Dann. Seven years ago, I presented to you. Seven years ago, I was part of what Michael

Bryant himself declared an unprecedented four days of hearings in response to the then-proposed pit bull ban, courtesy of the Liberal government of Ontario. Seven years ago, all the experts who presented spoke against a pit bull ban. Seven years ago, the Liberal government ignored the experts and passed the pit bull ban anyway. Seven years ago, the Liberal government ignored the many citizens, including myself, who spoke before their committee, ignored the facts and passed the pit bull ban anyway. In so doing, they ignored democracy. Seven years ago, the Liberal government passed the pit bull ban and displayed disrespect not only for pit bulls but also for those who spoke, disrespect for democracy, disrespect for the citizens of Ontario and disrespect for the truth.

Seven years later, my hope is that this committee will have the courage, the decency, the common sense and the respect for the truth and for democracy to right this wrong that was done in 2005 when the pit bull ban was passed. They say, as you probably know, that the truth will set you free. My hope is that this committee will set the tens of thousands of people who you condemned with the pit bull ban and their dogs free. I still have this hope because I believe in the truth, and therefore I believe in pit bulls, and I hope that I can believe in government. We shall see.

It is difficult for me to speak to you today. I feel the weight of thousands of pit bulls and the people who love them on my shoulders. I got to know many of these people and pit bulls in the years prior to the ban. Since the ban, I have heard many of their often sad stories. It is those of us who owned and love pit bulls who are most hurt by the ban. We saw the ban as a betrayal of us by the Liberal government, and we have been the ones to suffer the pain the pit bull ban brought this province. We are not here in mass numbers today, but pit bull owners and those who love the breed have not gone away. They spoke seven years ago and were ignored. They have fundraised and tried to keep the word alive, and this group votes. Their Ontario includes pit bulls.

Let's talk about people, the people that you are here to represent: the people who own pit bulls, who love pit bulls, who play with pit bulls, who let pit bulls lick their faces, who walk them and buy their food and put on their leashes and rub their tummies. Let's talk about these people.

Estimates in 2005 were that there were probably, at a safe guess, 20,000 people in the province who were speaking out in favour of pit bulls. If anything, since the ban, that number has grown, as any person who understands dogs has joined in the outcry against this frankly ignorant, pathetic, stupid and terrifyingly dangerous anti-democratic law the Liberal government passed, called in short the pit bull ban.

Let's speak for a minute about pit bulls, the dogs that, despite all the expert testimony, the Liberal government banned; killed in mass numbers as a result of this above-the-law ban; muzzled, courtesy of good owners, in defiance of "innocent until proven guilty"; and branded with a label of "dangerous" despite all evidence to the

contrary. So many dogs, so viciously manipulated for political purpose against all expert testimony in the Ontario government's own democratic system.

An unprecedented turnout: Michael Bryant himself testified in those hearings in 2005, and yet, since the hearings, hundreds—we heard today over 1,000—of pit bulls have been killed despite all the expert logic that should have saved them. Michael Bryant has killed more people than pit bulls have in the province of Ontario. The pit bull ban must be amended. We have all learned so much since then; let's be smarter.

As you have heard today, early identification of aggressive dogs is the surest way to protect the public. Education, not breed bans, could keep people safe. I would love to help with that education process.

Many who own pit bulls are the biggest dog lovers of all. These are the people and the dogs who have been punished by the pit bull ban. Good citizens with good dogs have tried to comply, mostly out of fear of what might happen if they did not. People with pit bulls are literally terrified that their dogs will be taken from them. Since the pit bull ban passed, I have watched hundreds of pit bull owners go almost mad in having to incorporate this legislation into their lives and the lives of their dogs: muzzling a great dog; not letting your dog play with its friends because it's a pit bull; paying attention to these new rules in your own life only because you are a responsible dog owner and fear that your pit bull might be seized under the new legislation and jailed. I've seen many owners barking mad because they could no longer properly socialize their pit bulls, well-behaved dogs, for fear of this lie of a legislation. The Liberal government asked good people with good pit bulls to stop properly socializing and exercising their pets. It was a travesty, a miscarriage of justice, a complete disgrace, and it was very hard felt by many residents of Ontario and their beloved pit bull pets.

How many of you have dogs? When you look into their eyes, what do you see? I can tell you for certain that no matter what dog's eyes you look into, you see the same thing I see when I look into a pit bull's eyes: love, hope, strength, intellect, trust. You are looking into the eyes of unconditional love—a dog's eyes. Think about muzzling that face for no reason, under word of a lie. Dogs trust us to make good decisions; we trust government to make good decisions.

Over the course of the pit bull ban fight in 2005 we learned many things; you've heard many of them again today. We learned that labs and retrievers and cocker spaniels bite as much as, if not more than, pit bulls do. We learned that German shepherds tend to bite more often. You didn't hear tell of a golden lab or a golden retriever or cocker spaniel ban, did you? Can you imagine the outcry if North America's favourite dog, the golden lab, was banned, or the golden retriever? But why not? As many were bitten by these breeds as were bitten by the pit bull. Why not? Because the pit bull ban was driven by fear, not by fact. The pit bull ban had a political agenda, not a practical one, and frankly, not even

Michael Bryant would have taken on labs and retrievers. But he was happy to go after pit bulls. The previous speaker spoke to the media myth that has been created around the pit bull terrier. In this case, I think it's fair to say that the bully was Michael Bryant.

Many people have never met a pit bull. Most who have recognize pit bulls for what they are: intelligent, athletic, loyal, confident and eager to please. I wish the same could have been said for the politicians who considered the expert testimony presented at the pit bull ban hearings in 2005. I often tell people that we're lucky that some weak-minded people want to own pit bulls.

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Pit bulls do not want to hurt people. They want to please them. There is a reason why Cesar Millan, the world's foremost dog trainer, relies on pit bulls for his interaction with other very difficult dogs. Pit bulls have incredible heart. They are a valiant breed, and I feel lucky to have come to know them as well as I do. I hope we can bring them back to the forefront in Ontario and educate people about the truth of the breed. Fact, not fear, is what we should be promoting; truth, not ignorance. As mentioned, I would be more than happy to assist with this education; in particular, as Bill Bruce of Calgary described.

I'm a citizen of the province of Ontario, and I speak on behalf of thousands of dog lovers and pit bull lovers in Ontario when I ask you to right the wrongs of the past seven years. Get rid of the pit bull ban and return truth, democracy and pit bulls to Ontario for dogs' sake, for all our sake and for safety's sake.

My name is Sarah Dann, and my Ontario includes pit bulls. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you for your presentation. We'll start the round of questions with the official opposition.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I don't really have a lot of questions, but I do want to put a couple of things on the record in response to your presentation and also to some of the discussion that's been going around this committee.

First, I'm going to say that bringing forth this bill, Bill 16, is an opportunity for us to begin to actually think about dog attacks. Bill 132, the original breed-specific legislation, took away the opportunity for us to think. I heard both Michael Coteau and Mr. Berardinetti talking about other models. We haven't had that opportunity to think about other models in this province, because there was no need to think. We just banned pit bulls. We were no longer required, or needed, to think. The corollary of zero tolerance is zero thinking. We have a zero tolerance policy for pit bulls and a zero thinking policy politically.

Really, what we've heard from all the evidence is that although legislation is good and proper to solve many of society's ills, it can't solve all of the society's ills. Education is a far greater effective tool to vet or solve some of society's ills, other than just legislation.

Just to put this into context and perspective again for all members of this committee, had we introduced a

model along the lines of the Calgary model back in 2006 instead of this banned thinking approach, instead of 1,000 dog bites a year in Toronto, if we implemented the Calgary model and had similar effects, we would have reduced about 800 dog bites each and every year, and they would have been first-time dog bites.

Again, under the Calgary model, if you do have a dog that has exhibited dangerous, aggressive behaviour, they have a means and a mechanism to deal with that as well.

You were here back in 2006 and you spoke to Bill 132, and I think you've shared that your voice was not heard.

**Ms. Sarah Dann:** Not just mine, but literally every single expert spoke against the ban, as they did today.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Yeah.

**Ms. Sarah Dann:** In my opinion, given that that was the case, that should never have been passed. That's just a failure in the political system. People wonder why people don't vote, and I often trot out the passing of Bill 132 as an example of why they do not vote.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Well, this is the time for us to think about things other than headlines when we develop public policy, and I truly hope that that is what we achieve at the end of the day with this.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Any further questions? Ms. DiNovo.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** Yes, I just want to thank you very much for your testimony, and apologies for all that you've been through. I know the 1,000 dogs—by estimation that was put forward here today—have been euthanized not for what they did but for how they looked. That's tragic for all the families that were involved. I think of the 100 sled dogs that were killed in BC and the uproar across the country. If people knew in this province how many dogs have been killed, there would be a similar uproar—and there is; I get that.

I wanted to also correct the record around muzzling as an alternative. Banning doesn't work; we know that. If you look at the statistics, as you pointed out—thank you for that—that cocker spaniels, Labradors and German shepherds are more likely to bite than pit bulls, then one would have to muzzle all large dogs. Obviously, that's not the answer either.

You pointed to education, and I think the Calgary model—but not only the Calgary model; many other jurisdictions also have made do and done better than we have in terms of reducing dangerous dog attacks and dangerous dogs, period, with education.

**Ms. Sarah Dann:** The reason I ask that the committee consider all of the words that were spoken in 2005 is because what was done over those four days was an incredible amount of conversation around owner responsibility, around some of the issues that were only barely touched on today, because they feel like they've been done to death by those of us who have been part of this fight for the past nearly 10 years.

But owner responsibility is the key to dog safety. Dogs do not go out in public on their own, generally. Particularly in urban environments, it's people who put them on

their leashes and who have to put the muzzles on them. So what you're doing is insisting that people, actually, take care of dogs, and that's why the Calgary model works, because they're putting the onus on people to make sure their dogs don't attack other people.

When Julian Fantino spoke in 2005, he mentioned that the police tend to know when they're going on to a property that has a dangerous dog. At that point in time, those dogs tended to be pit bulls trained to attack officers at grow ops. Well, those dogs don't need to be muzzled

on those properties. The ban does not work on so many different levels. Criminals don't take the time to put a muzzle on their pit bull. It's good people who do it, and it's not fair.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. John Vanthof):** Thank you very much for your presentation.

I believe that's our final presenter for today, so that would conclude our business today. The committee is adjourned at the call of the Chair. I always like to do this.

*The committee adjourned at 1008.*







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