



Animal Alliance of Canada

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Project Jessie, November 2004

Dear Friend,

Project Jessie's mission is to help the homeless pet dogs and cats who others have abandoned as lost causes. *Project Jessie* was founded in 1991 to rescue—and to find homes for—pets condemned to be sold to research or to be killed for no other reason than it was the most convenient thing to do. These are the pets who no one wants, not even the humane societies. *Project Jessie*—and you and I—are their last hope.

However, *Project Jessie* is often called on to do even more to help lost and abandoned pets, which is why we're now confronted with the most difficult challenge in our history. Please, help us meet it. The lives of thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of innocent dogs hang in the balance.

Please, help today with your generous financial support, and by sending an Urgent Action Card to Michael Bryant, Ontario's Attorney General.

At this time of year as you and I celebrate generosity, love, and compassion, our *Project Jessie* volunteer foster parents are bracing themselves for an impossible number of requests to shelter thousands of unjustly condemned dogs who Michael Bryant has falsely accused of being “ticking time bombs.”

Please help us find a way to stop the mass killing of dogs who have shown no signs of aggression, who are gentle and friendly—the dogs who have been abandoned because of the fear and hatred callously exploited by Mr. Bryant and his Liberal party for political gain.

The hapless dogs who need our help—and who strike fear and loathing in so many people—are pit bull terriers, and all the other dogs targeted in Ontario's regressive legislation including Staffordshire bull terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, American pit bull terriers and even “any dog that has the appearance and physical characteristics that are substantially similar” to those dogs. As an example, the puppy, rescued by Project Jessie and featured on the Urgent Action card would be caught by this ban.

In the aftermath of a number of horrific and media sensationalized attacks on people and pets by pit bulls, Bryant tabled legislation to ban them—and any dogs that looked similar to them. Consequently, many of the pit bulls who have been brutalized—beaten, starved, drugged—to make them aggressive are now being cast out as “garbage” by their cruel and irresponsible owners.

Even though the majority of pit bulls are well-cared for and as gentle as any other dog, they are at risk as well as responsible owners face onerous care conditions and impossible insurance costs. In fact, Mr. Bryant's Draconian law only targets law-abiding pet owners who neuter, license and

microchip their dogs while leaving the real culprits—the puppy mill and backyard breeders and those who beat dogs to make them vicious—free to inflict their evil on other breeds.

Now, no one wants pit bulls. As dangerous and frightening as some of them may be, we must have the strength do all we can for them. They are not “ticking time bombs.” They are the needless victims of callous—often criminal—individuals who ought not to have ever been permitted to have an animal.

As difficult and controversial as it may be, with your support, *Project Jessie* will help the dogs unjustly condemned by Bryant, just as we do other dogs who no one wants. We are their last hope.

It is easy and natural to help the animals we like. The test comes when we are asked to extend our helping hand to animals who, in our hearts, invoke fear and abhorrence.

Helping the animals who our neighbours hate and persecute demands not only our wisdom and compassion, but also our courage.

Let me make our position on the “pit bull issue” clear. There is no place in our communities for dangerous dogs, no matter the breed. But, most dogs are not born vicious. People make them vicious—people who revel in and “sell” violence, cruelty, and even death.

We need laws to control the people who make dogs dangerous. Experience has taught us that banning breeds does not prevent the problem of dangerous dogs; it exacerbates it.

And that’s why—thanks to your past support—we have been at the forefront of successfully convincing communities across Canada to pass animal services bylaws that result in responsible companion animal care, and that eliminate most dog bites and attacks.

Animal Alliance of Canada is not alone in its fight against breed-specific bans, and for effective animal services bylaws which increase public safety. For example, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association, City of Toronto Animals Service, the Canada Safety Council, and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals actively oppose the breed-specific ban tabled by the Ontario government, because they know it won’t work.

The communities of Halifax, Ingersoll, Mississauga, Cambridge, Toronto, and Edmonton, to name just a few, have all studied and rejected breed-specific bans because they too concluded that they don’t work.

Opposition to breed-specific bans is not unique to Canada. In the United States, groups as diverse as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have voiced their opposition—again because breed-specific bans don’t work. Some of their comments follow:

“Such laws not only fail to make communities safer ... they can create a false sense of enhanced public safety and they may punish responsible pet owners whose dogs are entirely friendly and well-behaved.

“The task force formed in 2003 to study the ban deemed it ineffective ... it stated that ‘public safety is not improved as a result of [the ban]’ and ‘there is no transgression committed by owner or animal that is not covered by another, non-breed specific portion of the Animal Control Code (i.e. vicious animal, nuisance animal, leash laws).’

“In a study of human fatalities resulting from dog bites, CDC criticized breed-based laws citing ... that as certain dog breeds are regulated, those who exploit dogs by making them aggressive will merely turn to other, unregulated breeds.

“The CDC also noted ... a dog that is chained or tethered is 2.8 times more likely to bite than one who is not chained or tethered. And more than 70 percent of all dog-bite related cases involve male dogs that have not been sterilized with unneutered males 2.6 times more likely to bite than males who are neutered.

“Breed specific laws—which have expanded in some localities to include not just Pit Bulls but Rottweilers, Dalmatians, Chows, German Shepherds, Dobermans, and any mix of these breeds—can also have wholly unintended consequences.”

Already in Ontario we’re seeing the tragic “unintended consequences” of Bryant’s ill-conceived pit bull ban. It’s not just the animals who are suffering, so are their owners. The other day I received a very disturbing e-mail from Steve Barker, the Ontario Director, of the Dog Legislation Council of Canada.

“Last week, a good friend of mine was physically attacked while walking her ‘pit bull’ type dogs in a local park in Toronto. I cannot go into details yet, but she was hurt and a police report was filed. This lady is a perfect example of what a responsible dog owner is supposed to be and her people-friendly dog-friendly pets are ambassadors for their breed.

“Note that during this attack, her ‘inherently dangerous ticking time bombs’ did not show any aggression, not even to protect her, and only after the men left did the dogs come over and sit beside her.

“I already have numerous documented cases of physical assault and verbal harassment being directed at members of our dog community since Michael Bryant started his campaign against pit bulls.”

If experience has proven beyond doubt that breed-specific bans not only don’t work, but also exacerbate the problem of dangerous dogs why is the Ontario government banning pit bulls?

Politics! A dramatic, highly-publicized pit bull ban gives Michael Bryant a cheap political benefit, while deceiving a mostly uniformed public—which is rightly concerned about safety—into believing that he is doing something to protect them, when nothing could be further from the truth.

So intent is Michael Bryant on shining in the political limelight of his pit bull ban that he refused to consider any of the evidence that I and others tried to put before him that proved his ban would not work, and that showed what should be done to protect the public. Bryant's conduct is not only irresponsible, it is dangerous.

Please, send your enclosed Urgent Action Card today. And, please find a place for lost and abandoned pet dogs and cats in your seasonal giving plans.

Month after month, Animal Alliance's *Project Jessie* rescues lost dogs and cats from pounds. Many of whom are fated to be sold to researchers. Others are doomed for no other reason than they are homeless.

It costs about \$50 for *Project Jessie* to rescue a dog from a pound, and \$35 for a cat. However, the costs don't end there. On average, another \$100 to \$150 is spent helping each animal. We give them whatever veterinary care they need, with costs sometimes rising into the thousands of dollars. They're spayed or neutered. We have them vaccinated and micro-chipped. We shelter them. Then, we find them loving homes. Perhaps you are sharing your home with a *Project Jessie* dog or cat.

Last year, your support made it possible for *Project Jessie* to find homes for over 400 abandoned and frightened animals. Please, help us do even more in 2005. Your support is more critical than ever. Fighting Bryant's dangerous pit bull ban is putting extraordinary pressure on *Project Jessie's* resources and volunteers. Your help is crucial.

At this special time of year, please keep *Project Jessie*, and the innocent dogs and cats that need rescuing in your thoughts, and please find a place for them in your holiday giving plans.

In closing, let me add that to help you celebrate this time of year, we have created a special *Project Jessie* Gift Rescue Package that you can use to rescue a dog or cat in the name of someone on your gift giving list who, like you, cares about the animals.

From all of us at Animal Alliance of Canada and *Project Jessie*, please accept our best wishes and fondest hopes for the New Year.

Thank you for all the help you've given the animals.

Yours for the animals,



Liz White, *Director*

P.S. To save the lives of thousands of pit bulls, and mixed breeds whose only "crime" is they have some of the physical characteristics of pit bulls, it is vital that you send your Urgent Action Card and/or contact Bryant's office today (contact information is on your donor form.) There is very little time left to change the government's mind, and have the Province of Ontario pass the kind of proven laws that will protect not only people, but also the dogs who share our communities and homes. Please send your card today!