



The Hammer comes down:
It's the Pits 2.0

Description

What the suspension of certain sections of the Montreal Animal Bylaw really means

By Linda Hammerschmid

No matter what any pundit or naysayer may proclaim Mayor Valerie Plante and Projet Montreal were elected in large part thanks to animal activists bent on ousting Denis Coderre due to his Montreal Animal Bylaw.

That Bylaw came about following the tragic death of Christiane Vadnais, whose death was blamed on a “Pit Bull” living next door. However, in haste to adopt legislation to demonstrate ‘action’ in light of this occurrence, proper analysis and consultations were lacking.

The end result, October 3, 2016 saw a knee-jerk reaction Bylaw passed causing hundreds of people anguish and despair over the possible confiscation and euthanization of their family members, their pets.

Five breeds of dogs were targeted although classification of “Pit Bull type” dogs is inexact and arbitrary and cannot be determined by looks alone.

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The Bylaw’s purpose was to ensure residents’ safety – an aim that negates the health and safety of the very animals many residents own. Special dog permits (and of course the requisite license fee for owning this ‘type’ of dog), coupled with mandatory muzzling and invasive ‘canine’ inspectors did nothing but add salt to wounds.

Panic set in causing dog owners to ship their beloved pets away from the threat of death imposed by the past administration. Fines ranging from \$300 to \$600, and \$500 to \$700 for safety issues, were implemented and the war was on.

Both the SPCA and CPSPC filed lawsuits and much ink was spilled and Facebook pages set up to wage war against this arbitrary piece of legislation.



The result – on December 20, 2017, certain sections of the Bylaw will be suspended by Projet Montreal, a campaign promise made during the election by then candidate Valerie Plante.

But what does this suspension mean for dog owners and the public at large?

‘The Bylaw remains in force and only the sections suspended will no longer apply.’

Firstly, the Breed Ban sections of the Bylaw will be suspended. Note: suspension does not mean cancellation. The Bylaw remains in force and only the sections suspended will no longer apply.

Secondly, presumably, a committee will be formed to re-write the Bylaw, hopefully in a saner manner than when first drafted.

Thirdly, muzzles will no longer be mandatory unless your dog was already deemed (ruled) to be dangerous.

Fourthly, the extraordinary \$150 license fees, I am told, will be abolished. What does this mean for those who were forced to shell out this sum since the Coderre Bylaw came into force? Apparently, you will benefit from a ‘free’ year and no fees will be due until 2019. Of course with the annual regular tariff being around \$20.00 per neutered dog you certainly won’t be saving much with this freebee.

Unless a Class Action is started to attempt to claim back the \$130.00 difference, it is doubtful that those who paid the exorbitant price will be suitably compensated.

‘... if dog owners do not remain vigilant when walking their newly un-muzzled dogs the Mayor could just as easily move to lift the suspension.’

But a bigger problem looms. Those dogs that were forced to wear muzzles (perhaps only politicians should be made to wear them) have suffered undue stress, and most likely have not socialized with other animals since per October 2016. Owners who expect to see their dogs re-adapt quickly may be in for a surprise and worse, the dogs may act out in which case we will hear cries, from all those who were in favour of the Breed Ban, that the Coderre Bylaw worked and now the public safety is in peril.

Remember, the Breed Ban sections are only going to be *suspended* – and if dog owners do not remain vigilant when walking their newly un-muzzled dogs the Mayor could just as easily move to lift the suspension.

Two other issues to be aware of. Until the suspension is voted, the current Bylaw remains. Meaning, tickets for non-compliance can still be handed out and the chances of successfully contesting a ticket, even one given December 19, are not great.

‘... mandatory courses for all dog owners should be implemented... and make the obligation a condition of the licensing process.’

If the new guard at the City of Montreal really wants to effect positive change, mandatory courses for all dog owners should be implemented, both for new and current owners, and make the obligation a condition of the licensing process. New owners would have to successfully complete a course in order to buy/adopt a dog, while current owners could be given a delay from license renewal to complete the course. And every owner would have to renew their certificate every three years (the same time frame which applies to vaccinations against rabies).

After all, there are no bad dogs, only bad owners!

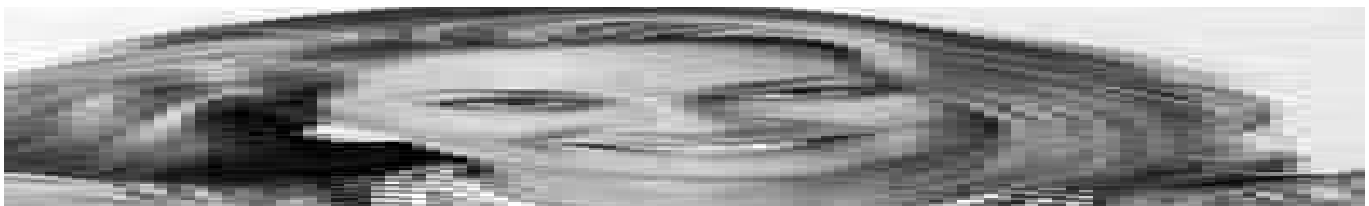
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