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September 17, 2004

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Thu, September 16, 2004

Ontarians bullish on ban Most residents want pit bulls outlawed: Poll

By **ANTONELLA ARTUSO**, Queen's Park Bureau Chief

TORONTO -- The majority of Ontarians would support an outright ban on pit bulls, according to an SES poll obtained by the Sun. Nik Nanos, president and CEO of SES Research, said Ontarians, horrified by recent reports of ferocious attacks, have strong feelings about the controversial canine.

"I think the clear message is that a majority of Ontarians -- almost six out of every 10 -- want the pit bull breed of dog off the streets," Nanos said.

"There's a certain image of the pit bull and it's not positive."

Forty-two percent of people polled said they would "strongly support" a ban on pit bulls, while another 16% "somewhat support" such action.

Another 15% "strongly oppose" the ban while 11% "somewhat oppose" it. Fourteen percent of people polled were unsure.

'STRONG OPINION'

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"The fact that four out of 10 Ontarians have a very strong opinion on this is very significant; it was the No. 1 response overall," Nanos said. "Not only do people have an opinion about banning pit bulls, but that opinion is actually quite strongly against pit bulls."

Attorney General Michael Bryant is considering introducing legislation to ban pit bulls in Ontario. Several cities are contemplating similar action.

Bryant launched the consultations after a Toronto man was nearly torn apart last August by a friend's two pit bulls.

At a recent round-table discussion at Queen's Park, pit bull fans rallied round the much-maligned dog, blaming irresponsible owners for the problems.

Nanos said their views don't reflect those of most Ontarians.

"I don't think we should confuse the presentations of pit bull owners with the opinions of Ontarians -- there's obviously a silent majority out there that have a problem with pit bulls," he said.

Bryant is expected to make a decision on a province-wide ban by the end of the year.

The SES Research poll was conducted on Sept. 11 and 12 with 500 eligible voters. Results of the survey are accurate to within 4.5 percentage points, plus or minus, 19 times out of 20.

BAN THE BEAST?

Would you support or oppose a law that would ban owning the pit bull breed of dog?

- Strongly support 42%

- Somewhat support 16%

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- Somewhat oppose 11%
- Strongly oppose 15%
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