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# Pitbulls must now be muzzled in public

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**

*The Champion*

Pitbulls in Milton will now have to be muzzled as well as leashed when in public.

This comes as part of an amendment to the Town's animal control bylaw that council approved last week, a move that has sparked concern among some local residents and at least one Milton council-

lor.

"From the way it (the bylaw) has been written it would appear to have needed a little more consultation, at least as far as the Oakville Humane Society and some knowledgeable members of the public are concerned, to make it enforceable," Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray told *The Champion*. "The issue of what constitutes

a pitbull is also of concern."

Under the bylaw amendment, a pitbull is defined as a dog of any age identifiable by the humane society as a pure or mixed breed pitbull terrier, American pitbull terrier, pitbull, staffordshire bull terrier and American staffordshire terrier.

"This definition is consistent with other municipalities that have pitbull provisions

in their bylaw," a report from Town Clerk Troy McHarg said.

The amendment allows for pitbulls to be muzzle-free as well as leash-free in their owners' homes or yards that are securely fenced.

The animal control bylaw also deals with all dogs who have bitten or attacked a person or a domestic animal, which could be issued an interim muzzle order that would remain in effect until the court decides whether it should be upheld or withdrawn.

Ms Mowbray will try to get a delegation on the pitbull issue added to the agenda at the November 22 council meeting because Milton resident Carolyn Caldwell, who was listed as a delegate at last week's meeting, didn't get a chance to speak to the new restrictions before they were passed.

But, before Ms Caldwell can come before council, the majority of councillors will have to vote in favour of her making a delegation on safety concerns she has with the pit bull amendment.

"By muzzling specific breeds via the bylaw definition of pitbull or interim muzzle orders you are forcing people to purchase and utilize muzzles with no proper education on types of muzzles or the proper fitting of a muzzle," Ms Caldwell said. "This is and should be a safety concern to all residents of Milton — most muzzles give the general population a false sense of security."

At press time, the Oakville and District Humane Society had no comment on the pitbull issue, but indicated representatives from the local shelter will soon arrange to meet with Town staff on the new animal control bylaw and its amendments.

The Town's pitbull restrictions come on the heels of the Province implementing an Ontario-wide pitbull ban.

## Leash length debated

Another contentious part of the updated bylaw that came under scrutiny at last week's council meeting is the maximum leash length stipulation of seven feet.

Ms Mowbray brought forward a motion to have this section deleted so that 25-foot retractable leashes will still be allowed in Milton.

"The issue should be control, not the length of the leash," she said.

She presented a petition to council organized by Ms Caldwell with about 600 signatures of people supporting retractable leashes.

But Ms Mowbray's proposal received little support from the rest of council, with even the motion's seconder, Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau saying she still hadn't decided if she fully supported the idea or not.

Ward 4 Councillor John Challinor said he thinks the leash length council previously approved is reasonable.

"The issue is when that leash is at 25 feet, how do you bring it (the dog) back under control?" he said.

He added that the bylaw is in place to protect the 99 per cent of Milton's population from the one per cent "that don't get it."

But Ward 3 Councillor Cindy Lunau said she thinks the bylaw is also there to protect the rights of those who follow the rules.

"I think maintaining a seven-foot length is penalizing those that want to obey the law," she said.

Ms Mowbray's motion was defeated with only herself, Ms Schau, Ms Lunau and Ward 1 Councillor Rick Day voting in favour.

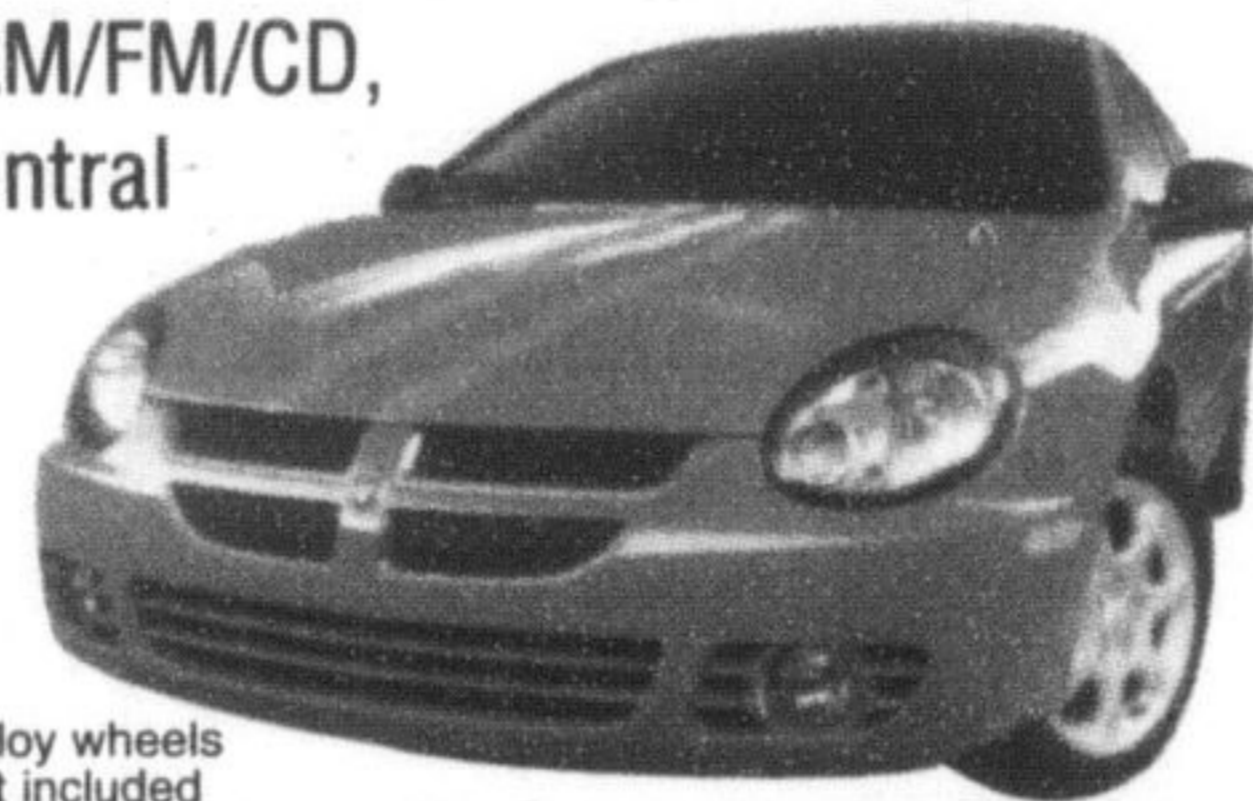
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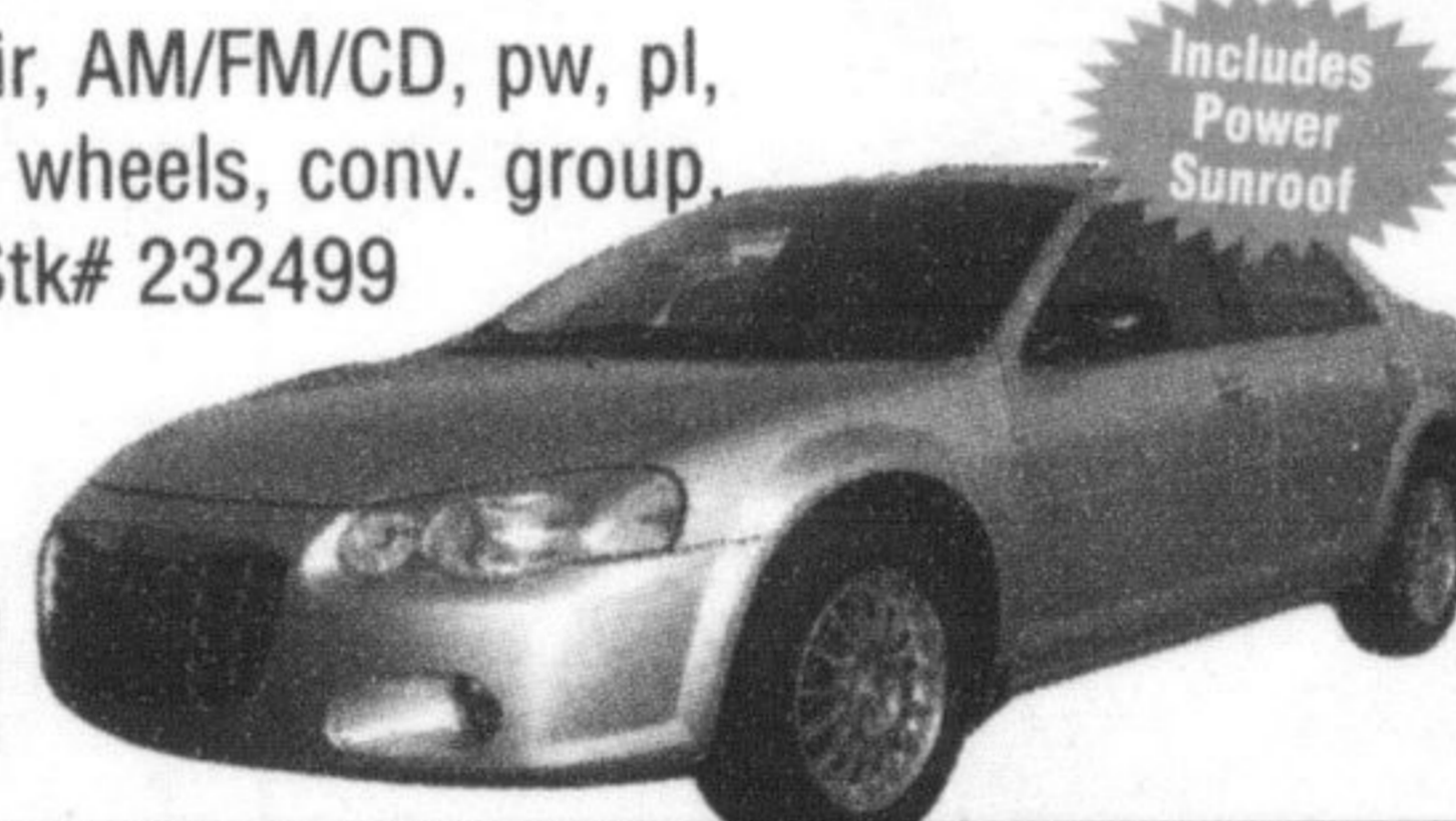
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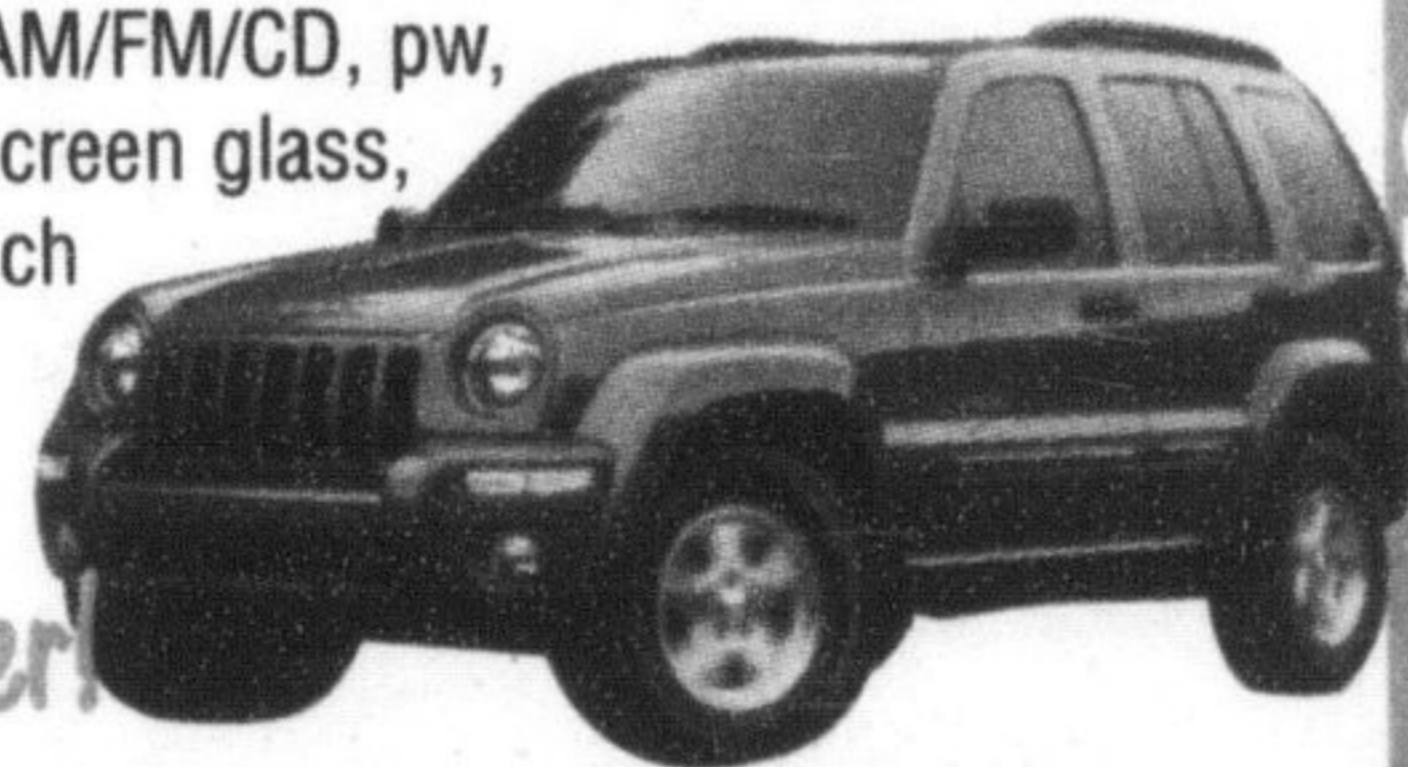
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