



November 28, 2016

Licensing & Standards Committee  
c/o Dela Ting  
City of Toronto  
100 Queen Street West  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, West Tower  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2  
lsc@toronto.ca

Re: LS 15.1: Amendments to Chapter 349, Animals – Dangerous Dogs

Dear Committee Members,

With the increasing number of people and dogs in the City, and with limited space and facilities that must be shared by all, conflict is inevitable. Thank you for approaching the dangerous dogs issue in a rational, evidence-based manner and for consulting with experts, stakeholders and the public in drafting the proposed amendments. We are encouraged that the City's focus is on individual situations (as blanket approaches like breed bans simply do not work) and are happy to support the majority of the amendments, with a few recommendations and one concern.

At the Toronto Humane Society we work with dogs every day, including dogs with medical and behavioural challenges. Every dog is different and any dog can bite – out of fear or pain, when expressing guarding behaviours or prey drive, or when others do not understand or respect the dog's warning signals. Nobody wins when a dog bites – not the victim, not the owner, not the dog.

### **Promote effective training**

We are heartened to see the by-law includes mandatory training for owners of dangerous dogs. Behavioural problems can be caused by a lack of/improper training and socialization, lack of exercise and mental stimulation, and simple owner ignorance. However, while training can help remedy behavioural problems, it can also make them worse.

*Recommendation: promote training options based in learning theory, such as positive reinforcement / operant conditioning, to maximize the likelihood of success.*

### **Clarify the appeal mechanism**

We are also pleased to see the City adopt an appeal mechanism and consider whether the dog was acting in self-defence. We hope this section will be interpreted broadly and allow the consideration of other variables such as the dog's temperament and precautions taken by the owner.

*Recommendation: clarify the by-law by adding "interalia" to §349-16 B.*

B. In deciding whether to confirm or rescind the determination of a dangerous dog pursuant to subsection A, the Executive Director may consider, **interalia**, whether the dog was acting in self-defence when the dangerous act leading to the order to comply under § 349-15 occurred.

### **Allow reconsideration and rescinding of the dangerous dogs label**

Just like humans, dogs can and do change. We see this at the Toronto Humane Society every day! Interventions like sterilization, proper training and changes in living situations can significantly improve a dog's behaviour. A dangerous dog label is a warning to others – it does not reduce threatening behaviours or aggression; it is a tool, not a solution. Allowing owners to revisit and have orders rescinded if they can show the dog no longer poses a threat provides an incentive for responsible dog owners to address any underlying medical or behavioural issues.

Sadly, we expect that the dangerous dog provisions will lead more owners to surrender their animals to us, and those with a dangerous dog label will be **very difficult to adopt, regardless of their actual behaviour**. We work with dogs to overcome behavioural issues and request the ability to revisit dangerous dog labels, if a behavioural issue has been addressed.

***Recommendation: allow owners to appeal, and the City to rescind, a dangerous dog order beyond the 30 day initial appeal window if the dog no longer poses a threat.***

### **Clarify tethering limits**

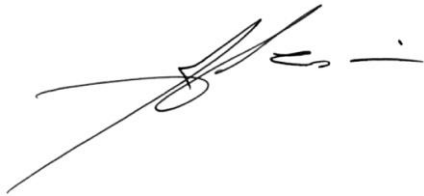
The restrictions on tethering and leaving dogs outdoors in extreme weather are very welcome, and should both prevent bites and improve animal welfare. We are also glad to see by-law officers gain the authority to enter private property and hope this provision will be used to enforce the standards of care. We encourage the City to work with the OSPCA to remove animals and lay charges if they encounter animals in distress.

*Recommendation: clarify section §349-8 E. of the by-law to match neighbouring cities' limitations*

E. No animal shall be tethered for longer than three consecutive hours **in any 24-hour time period**.

Finally, we wish to commend Toronto Animal Services for their ongoing public education and outreach efforts – from mobile spay/neuter and microchip clinics, to campaigns promoting responsible pet ownership. We strongly endorse this proactive and positive approach and are happy to work with the City to make Toronto a better place for both people and animals.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacques Messier', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jacques Messier, DVM, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer  
Toronto Humane Society

cc: Elizabeth Glibbery, Manager, Toronto Animal Services  
Tracey Cook, Executive Director, Municipal Licensing & Standards  
Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker  
Councillor Frank Di Giorgio  
Councillor Jim Karygiannis  
Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti  
Councillor Josh Matlow  
Councillor Cesar Palacio