



September 20, 2023

To the members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Toronto Dog Park Community, a grassroots dog park advocacy group with over 5,900 members across the city. We urge you to vote in favour of Councillor Moise's motion.

We have been advocating for an off-leash area master plan since 2016. It was obvious to us then, as it is now, that more comprehensive off-leash area planning would be advantageous to all park users.

In response to growing populations of people and dogs, cities across North America have developed evidence-based strategies and plans for off-leash areas to bring harmony to their shared spaces. These helpful plans are based on research, international reviews and public consultations. They consider everything from the environment to enforcement, signage, design and population growth.

Toronto deserves an equally comprehensive plan. The challenges we are experiencing can be avoided.

Unfortunately, the 2010 People, Dogs and Parks – Off-Leash Policy is brief, outdated and insufficient. Giving dog parks a few pages in a master plan for all park facilities is atypical and inappropriate.

In October 2019, following deputations from our members, the Executive Committee passed a motion "That City Council request the General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation to review the dogs off-leash policy applying international best practices and report back in 2020." No action was taken. Today, matters are worse. Please take this opportunity to create positive change.

To ensure this initiative is successful, we recommend the following:

- **Engage consultants**, including landscape architects, facilitators and dog behaviourists
- **Develop a wholistic plan** that covers leashed and off-leash areas (like Vancouver)
- **Use Vancouver's People, Parks and Dogs Strategy** as a model (with an equally detailed process)
- **Hold multiple consultations with all stakeholders**, including dog owners, park users, residents, environmentalists, naturalists, birders and dog industry professionals (absolutely critical)
- **Include public guidelines for dog park design** that reflect international best practices
- **Create signage and online materials for etiquette** and dog body language
- **Include adequate bylaw enforcement**

Consultants are necessary, as they will bring an impartial, objective view. An evidence-based off-leash area master plan that reflects best practices will be helpful for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric Code".

Eric Code
Founder and Chair
Toronto Dog Park Community
www.dogparksTO.com

See our petition for more

<https://www.change.org/p/toronto-needs-an-off-leash-area-master-plan>

Statement on the PFR Facilities Master Plan Implementation Strategy

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/ex/comm/communicationfile-98315.pdf>