

Update on Actions to Address Dangerous Dogs

Date: October 8, 2024

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The City is committed to continuous improvement of the dangerous dogs program to support prevention of dangerous acts and effective enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders. Following an increase in dangerous dog service requests since 2022, as part of [Item 2024.EC10.2](#), the City reviewed its procedures and processes and has recently taken a number of education and enforcement actions to address dangerous dogs in Toronto, and support public safety.

So far in 2024, the number of Dangerous Dog Orders and written warnings served by Toronto Animals Services (TAS) is trending down compared to previous years. TAS has also issued fewer charges for dog owner non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order so far in 2024, indicating increased bylaw compliance even with an increase in proactive enforcement visits.

This update report includes the following sections:

1. Recent actions to address dangerous dogs
 - Details on key proactive actions the City has initiated since spring 2024, including a standard dangerous dog warning sign, development of the Dangerous Dog Orders map, and steps to address off-leash dogs on school properties.
2. 2024 and 2025 public education campaigns
 - Results from a summer 2024 campaign, and plans for an enhanced campaign starting in 2025.
3. Responses to City Council directives
 - Staff address outstanding directives resulting from [Item 2024.EC10.2](#) and [Item 2024.EC13.1](#).
4. Service standards for dangerous act investigations
 - Clarification of TAS' service standards related to dangerous dogs.

This report was developed in consultation with Legal Services and Strategic Public and Employee Communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards recommends that:

1. City Council reiterate its request to the Government of Ontario to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act (DOLA) to provide an expeditious process to hear Dog Owners' Liability Act proceedings, as well as an explicit mechanism for municipalities to recover costs incurred by the municipality when it holds an animal pursuant to a warrant or interim control order under the Dog Owners' Liability Act.
2. City Council amend Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals to replace Section 349-15.1(6) with the following:

“(6) That arrangements are made with the City to enable the City to collect photographs of the dangerous dog that:

- (a) are clear and have a neutral background,
- (b) show the front, back, left side and right side of the dangerous dog,
- (c) do not contain personal information as defined by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), such as information that would identify a person or address, and
- (d) include any other necessary identifying information of the dangerous dog as determined by the Executive Director, MLS.”

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from this report.

As part of [Item 2024.EC10.2](#), City Council has requested that the Mayor include resources in the 2025 Budget (up to \$500,000) for the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division to implement a proactive communication strategy and public education campaign to support compliance and enforcement with the goal of reducing the occurrence of dangerous acts. Accordingly, as part of its 2025 Operating Budget submission, MLS intends to request \$350,000 for a public education campaign starting in 2025, as well as funding for additional Animal Control Officers (ACOs) to support enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders and other animal-related issues. Moving forward, MLS intends to invest annually in public education on dangerous dogs.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

EQUITY IMPACT

The identified actions and improvements to procedures and processes for the compliance and enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders have been analyzed for potential equity impacts on Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities. The overall equity impact of this work is low positive.

In some cases, owners of dogs who have been issued a Dangerous Dog Order are unable to comply with the requirement that their dog receive socialization/obedience training, as they cannot afford the expense. Staff are exploring opportunities to provide access to discounted training to reduce any financial barriers. In addition, TAS is committed to continuing to build partnerships with community groups to strengthen its ability to address issues with animals before conflict situations arise, and to reframe the ways in which residents interact with animal life in the city.

DECISION HISTORY

On September 6, 2024, the Service Excellence Committee received Item 2024.SE5.5 - Municipal Licensing and Standards Service Standards and Trends for Animal-Related Service Requests – for information. The Item was a presentation by Municipal Licensing and Standards on the Division's service standards, and actions taken to prioritize and improve response times, with a specific focus on service requests responded to by Toronto Animal Services. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.SE5.5>.

On May 29, 2024, the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted Item 2024.EC13.1 - Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2023 Annual Report, with amendments. The Committee received the Tribunal Chair's 2023 Annual Report, and requested MLS, in consultation with the City Solicitor, report back in the fourth quarter of 2024 on the definition of severity of a dangerous act. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC13.1>

On March 20, 2024, City Council adopted Item 2024.EC10.2 - Response to EC6.9 - Incident and Operational Review of Serious Dog Attacks, with amendments. The report summarized operational reviews of a specific dangerous dog attack undertaken by MLS and Toronto Public Health, as well as actions identified to improve processes and enhance public safety, including establishing a public dangerous dog registry and creating a new standard format dangerous dog warning sign. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC10.2>

On September 21, 2023, the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted Item 2023.EC6.9: Incident and Operational Review of Serious Dog Attacks, requesting staff to review procedures and processes for the compliance and enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders and to report back in the first quarter of 2024. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC6.9>

On July 28, 2020, City Council adopted Item 2020.CC23.1: Ombudsman Toronto 2019 Annual Report, which included an enquiry into how Toronto Animal Services handled a dangerous dog investigation and appeal. The report described several actions Toronto Animals Services took to improve the dangerous dog investigation and appeal process, which has resulted in a fairer process.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2020.CC23.1>

COMMENTS

Toronto Municipal Code [Chapter 349, Animals](#) requires that dogs must always be kept on a leash when off the property of their owner (except in designated off-leash areas in parks) and under the control of their owner (which includes a person in possession or custody of the dog). Every owner must take reasonable precautions to prevent their dog from engaging in a dangerous act (defined as any bite, attack, act of menacing behaviour or any combination thereof). Ultimately, dog owners are responsible for their dog's actions and dangerous acts can be prevented when proper precautions are taken.

Chapter 349 also sets out criteria for when a Dangerous Dog Order may be issued and outlines associated conditions a dog owner must comply with. Toronto Animal Services (TAS) within Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) investigates all dangerous acts (any bite, attack, act of menacing behaviour or any combination thereof) committed by a dog and enforces requirements under Chapter 349. TAS may also commence proceedings under the provincial Dog Owners' Liability Act (DOLA), which states that dog owners are liable for damages resulting from a bite or attack by their dog on another person or domestic animal.

An overview of applicable laws and TAS' role in dangerous act incidents is explained in further detail in [Item 2024.EC10.2](#).

1. Recent Actions to Address Dangerous Dogs

The City is committed to continuous improvement of the prevention of dangerous acts and enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders. This section summarizes key proactive actions that the City has initiated since spring 2024 to address dangerous dogs and support public safety.

a. Standardized warning sign and proactive compliance checks

When a dog owner is served with a Dangerous Dog Order, they are required to post a warning sign on their property. In 2024, the City introduced a new standardized warning sign (as shown in Attachment 1) as previously there were no standard requirements for what the sign must look like. Anyone approaching a dwelling where a dangerous dog resides is now made aware via the standard sign.

In Spring 2024, TAS ACOs conducted proactive visits to all owners of dangerous dogs to deliver the new sign and ensure the owner was complying with requirements of the Dangerous Dog Order. Staff did not identify any issues of non-compliance and did not take further enforcement as a result of the visits.

Going forward, in addition to investigating all reported service requests regarding non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order, ACOs will also be conducting proactive compliance visits to owners of dangerous dogs involved in severe attacks every 6 months, and annually for all other dangerous dogs. To ensure regular compliance checks can be operationalized without an impact on service levels of other animal-related investigations, MLS intends to request additional ACOs as part of its 2025 Operating Budget submission.

b. Development of the public registry of dogs with a Dangerous Dog Order

As directed by City Council, in summer 2024, staff created a public registry of all dangerous dogs in the city that includes the first three digits of the dog owner's postal code and the ward number, the dog's name, breed and colour, and the date and severity of the dangerous act that resulted in the Dangerous Dog Order. In posting the information, staff took into consideration the privacy, security, and safety interests of affected individuals. The registry is available through [open data](#) and also as an [easily searchable map](#) on the City's webpage.

The purpose of the registry is to notify the public where Dangerous Dog Orders have been issued and the type of dog the order was issued for. When coupled with the requirement that the owner of a dangerous dog post the required warning sign on their property, this helps the public take appropriate action for their safety.

As of October 3, 2024, there were 356 dogs subject to a Dangerous Dog Order on the registry.

c. Proactive dogs off-leash enforcement in City parks

Dog attacks can be prevented if dogs are kept on a leash, and MLS consistently reminds residents that it is a bylaw requirement for all dog owners to keep their dogs on leashes when out in public (except when in designated dogs off-leash areas).

MLS Bylaw Enforcement Officers (BEOs) undertake frequent proactive enforcement patrols in priority parks (where there are persistent and problematic issues with bylaw compliance) and visit all other parks at least monthly. During patrols all aspects of relevant bylaws are assessed for compliance. In some cases, MLS also works in partnership with Toronto Police Services to conduct enhanced targeted enforcement in specific areas. By teaching dog owners about bylaw requirements, such as the importance of always keeping dogs on a leash and under control to prevent dangerous acts, BEOs take an education first approach to obtain compliance. BEOs may also take escalated enforcement action when appropriate, including laying charges.

d. Addressing off-leash dogs on school properties

School boards often have rules which do not permit dogs on school properties, and school boards implement and enforce their own dog-related policies on their property. However, recently off-leash dogs on school properties have led to an increase in the number of unwanted interactions and complaints. To help address this issue, MLS worked with 311 to make system updates so that residents can now call 311 or submit information online to report dogs off-leash on school properties. Chapter 349's leashing requirements also apply to school properties.

TAS now uses the data collected through 311 to identify the schools where dogs off-leash are particularly challenging and undertakes monthly proactive patrols at the properties with the most complaints. This is done in collaboration with Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and/or Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) security staff. During patrols TAS ACOs educate dog owners about bylaw requirements such as the importance of always keeping dogs on a leash and under control to prevent dog attacks. ACOs may also take enforcement action when appropriate, including laying charges.

In May 2024, TAS engaged school administrators in the TDSB and TCDSB to advise them about this new program, educate them about bylaw requirements, and build partnerships.

e. Teaching children about dog safety

To further enhance partnerships with school boards, and to support community safety, TAS staff have also visited schools to teach students about dog safety. TAS has shared information about these visits with TDSB and TCDSB school administrators, who are able to request a visit at any time. TAS has visited three schools in 2024 and staff are looking to continue this initiative throughout the school year.

f. Establishment of a community safety listserv

In August 2024, MLS launched a listserv that will send out information to registrants when the City is investigating a potential severe dangerous act in the city where the dog(s) or the dog owner(s) involved have not been located. Any member of the public can register to receive notices through the listserv via a link on the City's webpage. City school boards and childcare centres have been notified directly about the listserv and were encouraged to register.

g. Advocating for changes to the provincial Dog Owner's Liability Act (DOLA)

In March 2024 ([2024.EC10.2](#)), City Council requested that the Government of Ontario consider amendments to DOLA to provide an expeditious process to hear DOLA court proceedings, as well as a mechanism for municipalities to recover costs incurred by the municipality when it holds an animal pursuant to a warrant or interim control order under DOLA. TAS has collaborated with other municipalities and has shared a detailed proposal of recommended legislative changes with the province but, at the time of drafting this report, has been unable to secure a meeting with provincial officials to discuss the matter further. TAS will continue to explore all possible avenues to advocate for changes to DOLA. Staff also recommend that City Council reiterate its previous request to the Government of Ontario to consider these amendments to DOLA.

h. Hiring more Animal Control Officers

As part of the 2024 Budget ([2024.MPB15.1](#)), City Council approved funds for MLS to hire three additional ACOs to support the critical work of investigating reported dangerous acts and enforcing Dangerous Dog Orders, expanding the total staff complement from six to nine ACOs for the City. MLS also intends to request funds through the 2025 Budget for additional ACOs.

i. Strategies to increase dog licensing compliance

Chapter 349 requires that all dogs living in the city be licensed. There are numerous benefits to licensing a dog, including that if a dog is lost or involved in an emergency, a licence provides the information needed to contact the owner and return the dog. Additionally, all pet licensing fees go directly to TAS to support animals in City shelters and other important work. Licensing information can also support ACOs in conducting dangerous act investigations.

While dog licensing rates in the city remain low (44,351 dogs were licenced in 2023), TAS continues to seek ways to increase pet licensing compliance. TAS conducts annual pet licensing education campaigns, and in spring 2024 TAS launched a partnership with DocuPet, a third-party online pet licensing and lost pet platform to modernize licensing and make it easier and more valuable for residents. DocuPet is used in over a hundred North American municipalities, many of which have seen increases in pet licensing compliance through the program. Staff will continue to monitor dog licensing compliance and will report back on the DocuPet partnership.

2. 2024 and 2025 Public Education Campaigns

The City has proactive communications strategies and annual public education campaigns that aim to educate residents on responsible dog ownership and the requirement to keep dogs leashed when in public (except in designated dogs off-leash areas). However, there is a need for more robust campaigns to change public behaviour and further support compliance and enforcement to reduce dangerous acts.

This section provides an update on the City's summer 2024 public education campaign, as well as proposed campaigns going forward.

2024 campaign results

In July 2024, staff launched a strongly worded and powerful campaign that stressed the urgency of keeping dogs on leashes and informed dog owners that most dangerous acts can be prevented if dogs are leashed and under the control of their owner. The campaign budget was \$60,000 and employed a range of tactics including high exposure transit shelter ads, TTC ads, online ads, social media ads, influencer marketing and multi-lingual online ads. Overall, the campaign was well-received with high engagement rates across tactics, including approximately 25,000 webpage views and 1.4 million social media ad and post views. See Attachment 2 for an image of the campaign.

Proposed 2025 and future campaigns

Staff are planning to build upon the success of the 2024 campaign and intend to request a budget of \$350,000 through the 2025 Budget process for a more robust campaign starting in 2025. If approved, the updated campaign will build on messaging used in the 2024 campaign and further the reach of the campaign by employing tactics that proved most successful and by introducing new high-impact tactics to reach a broader target audience. Noting the importance of a proactive communication strategy and public education in supporting enforcement and compliance with the goal of reducing the occurrence of dangerous acts, MLS intends to invest annually in campaigns.

3. Responses to City Council Directives

The sections below respond to directives from City Council and the Economic and Community Development Committee resulting from [Item 2024.EC10.2](#) (March 2024) and [Item 2024.EC13.1](#) (May 2024).

a. Feasibility of including dog photos on the public record

As part of item 2024.EC10.2, MLS was directed to assess the feasibility of including photos of dogs on the public record of Dangerous Dog Orders, including an assessment of privacy, technology, and legal considerations.

MLS consulted with Legal Services, the City Clerk's Office, and Technology Services Division to assess the feasibility of including photos of dogs on the public registry of Dangerous Dog Orders. Staff have concluded that while adding dog photos is feasible, it may not be a valuable addition to the registry and is unlikely to significantly enhance public safety, for the following reasons:

- Many dogs of the same breed look very similar, and having photos on the registry is unlikely to help residents distinguish a specific dangerous dog from other dogs of the same breed.
- Over time, posted photos may not accurately reflect the appearance of a dog as this can change due to a number of factors, including aging, grooming, etc.
- Adding photos may cause residents to misidentify a dangerous dog, and/or make residents unnecessarily fearful of dogs in their neighbourhood that look similar to a dangerous dog.
- The requirement in Chapter 349 that the owner of a dangerous dog post a warning sign on their property with respect to the presence of a dangerous dog is a more effective way to ensure residents are made aware of which dogs in their neighbourhood are under a Dangerous Dog Order.

If City Council were to direct staff to include photos of dogs on the public registry, the following should be taken into consideration:

- Photos could be added to the searchable map within a timeframe of six to twelve months at no additional cost outside of current operating budgets.
- Any photo included on the public registry must not contain personal information as defined by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), such as information that would identify a person or address.
- As of May 2024, TAS operationally implemented standard requirements for photos of dangerous dogs, including that photos must have a neutral background, not include any features that would identify a person or address, and include the front, back, and side profiles of the dog. In order to include dog photos submitted before this date (approximately 600) on the public register, the photos would have to be manually reviewed by staff and any identifiable features (i.e. a person or unintended information in the background) would need to be blurred out using photo editing software. This process would be resource intensive and may result in low-quality images.
- Section 349-15D of Chapter 349 would require an amendment to specify that the public record include a photo(s) of all dogs that are the subject of a served Dangerous Dog Order.

For clarity and transparency for owners of a dangerous dog under Chapter 349, staff recommend that Chapter 349 be amended to include the new standard requirements for dangerous dog photos that TAS has implemented, including that the photo must be clear, have a neutral background, show the front, back, left side, and right side of the dog, not include features that identify any person or address, and include any other necessary identifying information to the satisfaction of the Executive Director, MLS.

b. Defining the term “severe”

As part of 2024.EC13.1, MLS, in consultation with the City Solicitor, was requested to report back on the definition of severity as discussed in the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2023 Annual Report.

As required under Chapter 349, when a dangerous act is reported to the City, a TAS Officer will examine all available evidence and circumstances to determine the severity of the act. If the dangerous act is the first on record for a dog and the dangerous act is determined to be non-severe, TAS will serve the owner of the dog with a written warning. If the dangerous act is determined to be severe or is the second or subsequent dangerous act on record, TAS will serve the owner of the dog with a Dangerous Dog Order.

In the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2023 Annual Report, the Tribunal Chair recommended that the term "severe" be defined to provide clarity in interpreting what qualifies and meets the threshold of a severe dangerous act. Staff reviewed this proposal and as part of [Item 2024.EC13.1](#) did not recommend defining the term severe in Chapter 349. Instead, TAS recommended staff continue to provide public guidance on its website (toronto.ca/dangerousdogs) and other materials on the dangerous act investigations process and factors that TAS ACOs consider in assessing if a dangerous act is severe.

As directed, staff have continued to review this issue further in consultation with Legal Services. Staff are looking to balance the need to provide clarity to the public with the identified risk of having a definition of severe that limits TAS' discretion to issue a Dangerous Dog Order and protect public health and safety.

Staff will continue to review and monitor this issue and will provide an update on the work as part of the 2024 Dangerous Dogs Review Tribunal annual transmittal report (scheduled for Q2 2025).

c. Update on Dangerous Dog Order compliance

MLS was directed to provide an update on whether all dogs subject to a ‘Severe’ Dangerous Dog Order are complying with By-law requirements.

In spring 2024, TAS conducted proactive compliance visits to all dangerous dog owners (approximately 350), prioritizing those where dogs were involved in severe dangerous acts. Staff did not identify any issues of non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order and did not take any further enforcement as a result of the visits.

To support dog owner compliance with requirements of Dangerous Dog Orders, TAS will continue to take the following actions:

- ACOs will follow up with dog owners immediately after an Order is issued to ensure compliance, including confirming that correct signage has been posted, ensuring the owner has a muzzle for the dog, and reviewing microchip medical reporting and training reports.
- ACOs will conduct proactive compliance visits for owners of dangerous dogs involved in severe dangerous acts every 6 months, and annually for all other dangerous dogs.
 - In October 2024, TAS is conducting 6-month compliance checks for owners of dangerous dogs involved in severe dangerous acts.
 - This work is dependent on staff availability, other urgent priorities, and service request volumes.
- TAS investigates all reported service requests related to Dangerous Dog Order compliance.

In cases of non-compliance with bylaw requirements during a proactive compliance visit or as a result of a validated service request, TAS may take further enforcement action including issuing tickets for non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order.

So far in 2024, the number of Dangerous Dog Orders and written warnings served compared to 2022 and 2023 is trending down. TAS has also issued fewer charges for dog owner non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order so far in 2024 compared to previous years, indicating increased bylaw compliance even with an increase in proactive enforcement visits. Dangerous act service requests are increasing in 2024, however this may be due to increased public awareness of the issue.

Staff also reviewed this data to see if there have been notable differences since the City undertook the actions highlighted in Section 1 of the report beginning in spring 2024; however, staff were unable to identify any significant differences since dangerous acts also typically increase in warmer months as more people are out and active. Staff will continue to monitor data trends year over year to further assess the impacts of recent education and enforcement actions. Detailed data is available in Attachment 3.

d. 2024 actions and 2025 Budget proposals

MLS was directed to provide details on program and By-law changes implemented in 2024 and proposed in the 2025 Budget to support proactive enforcement of the most severe and dangerous cases.

Details on program and by-law changes implemented in 2024 are summarized in Section 1 of this report above.

To support bylaw compliance and proactive enforcement, MLS intends to propose the following as part of its 2025 Budget submission (subject to Council approval):

- \$350,000 to implement a robust proactive communication strategy and public education campaign starting in 2025, as described in Section 2 of this report.
- Funds to hire additional ACOs (approximately \$110,500 per ACO) to support the critical work of investigating reported dangerous acts and enforcing Dangerous Dog Orders, as well as additional animal-related enforcement.

e. Increased set fines

In March 2024, City Council expressed its support for higher set fine penalties for offences related to Chapter 349, Animals, Section 349-15 (Dogs that have bitten, attacked or pose a menace.) MLS was also directed to report back on proposed increases to fines for unlicensed dogs that are subject to Dangerous Dog Orders.

Staff reviewed all dog-related set fine penalties across Chapter 349, Animals and Chapter 608, Parks to ensure fine amounts are appropriate for the offence and align with amounts across other City bylaws. Legal Services are in the process of submitting an application to the province to increase these set fine amounts. The application, including any proposed changes to set fine amounts, must be approved by the province. Once approved, new set fine amounts will be communicated publicly on relevant City webpages.

f. 2019 Ombudsman recommendations

MLS was directed to provide an update on the results of the 2019 Ombudsman Recommendations, including the provision of accurate and timely information to victims, the elimination of staff's ability to deal with severe dog bites in the first instance and any additional recommended changes.

As part of the Ombudsman Toronto 2019 Annual Report, the Ombudsman undertook [an Enquiry into how Toronto Animal Services Handled a Dangerous Dog Investigation and Appeal](#). The specific case occurred in June 2017 when a young boy was injured in an incident involving two dogs owned by his neighbour. After reviewing the incident, Ombudsman Toronto found unfairness in three areas: TAS' investigation of the incident, the administration of the appeal process, and TAS' response to the family's complaints.

TAS takes all dangerous dog incidents seriously and is continuously working to improve the dangerous dog program and ensure staff are trained properly. Many of the challenges noted in the Ombudsman Toronto report would not occur today due to the improvements that have been made since 2017.

Specifically, in 2017 TAS undertook the following actions to address errors in responding to the incident before Ombudsman Toronto became involved:

- Addressed the investigating officer's errors and provided enhanced ongoing training for all officers on investigation techniques and communication with victims.
- Undertook a review of job classifications to ensure investigating officers have the skills necessary for the role.

Starting in 2017, TAS undertook the following actions in response to the Ombudsman Toronto's recommendations while the enquiry was ongoing:

- Provided training to all investigative staff about how to interview child witnesses.
- Recommended that City Council create the DDRT as a new independent adjudicative body to hear appeals of Dangerous Dog Orders.
- Developed a standard operating procedure for staff on how to prepare for DDRT hearings.
- Started sharing information with the public about how TAS assesses the severity of a dangerous act.

- Developed a standard operating procedure for staff on how to communicate information to victims, including if a Dangerous Dog Order is issued, if it is appealed, and the outcome of any appeal.

In 2019, Ombudsman Toronto made the following further recommendations:

- TAS further apologize to the victim and his parents and thank them for bringing their complaint forward.
- TAS make publicly available their guidance scale for determining whether an injury from a dangerous act is severe.

TAS has since completed both of the final recommendations. Ombudsman Toronto concluded in their 2019 Annual Report that as a result of the actions of the victim's family and TAS' response to the enquiry, the way in which the City handles reports of dangerous dogs is now fairer for everyone involved.

As part of [2024.EC10.2](#), Council requested staff provide an update on the results of the 2019 Ombudsman Recommendations including "the elimination of staff's ability to deal with severe dog bites in the first instance". There were no bylaw or program changes made as a result of the Ombudsman Toronto report that would have eliminated staff's ability to deal with severe dog bites in the first instance. Per Chapter 349, TAS fully investigates all reported dangerous acts. If the dangerous act is the first on record for a dog and the act is determined to be non-severe, TAS will serve the owner of the dog with a written warning. If the dangerous act is determined to be severe or is the second or subsequent dangerous act on record, TAS will serve the owner of the dog with a Dangerous Dog Order.

4. Service Standards for Dangerous Act Investigations

This section provides clarification of TAS' service standards related to dangerous dogs.

MLS and TAS use a priority response model to triage and prioritize more urgent service requests that present a health and safety issue and based on frequency and severity. The model sets service standards within which complainants should expect a first communication from MLS.

The ability to reach these standards or target response times are dependent on the volume, frequency, and complexity of service requests. All of MLS' service standards are published publicly on the [City of Toronto webpage](#) and staff use various tools to monitor service request volume and service standard performance and make data-driven enforcement and policy decisions.

TAS routinely evaluates and updates their priority response model to ensure that enforcement officers can continue to respond to severe incidents as quickly as possible and to manage public expectations about service levels. As was communicated in both [2024.EC10.2](#) and [2024.SE5.5](#), in March 2024, updates were made to service standards to better prioritize TAS' response to the most serious dangerous dog incidents:

- The standard for dangerous acts resulting in a bite was maintained at a 24-hour response time;

- The standard for dangerous acts not resulting in a bite was changed from 24 hours to 48 hours; and
- The standard response time for dangerous acts that were menacing was changed from 24 hours to 5 business days.

These service standard updates will also be outlined in MLS' 2025 Operating Budget submission. Compared to 2023 dangerous act investigation response times, as of August 2024, performance against targets has improved by 31% and has improved for other TAS enforcement categories by 4%.

In addition, during discussion as part of [2024.SE5.5](#), questions were raised about the difference between service standards for an unknown/stray dog attack and a dog attack where the dog is known/secure. If the dog(s) involved in a bite incident is still "at large" (i.e. running loose) or the dog's location is not known, TAS aims to respond within two hours. This is treated as a more urgent priority to ensure the dog is located and secured. The Toronto Police Service may also be called to the scene in these cases. In cases where the dog is with the owner and under control and/or the dog's location is known, TAS will initiate an investigation within 24 hours. In all cases, TAS will investigate all reported dangerous acts and may begin an investigation sooner than the operational service standard.

5. Conclusion

The City is committed to continuous improvement of the dangerous dogs program to support prevention of dangerous acts and effective enforcement of Dangerous Dog Orders. Staff will continue to implement the enforcement education actions identified in this report and monitor outcomes. In October 2024, in addition to investigating all reported service requests regarding non-compliance with a Dangerous Dog Order, TAS will also be undertaking the next round of proactive compliance visits to owners of dangerous dogs involved in severe attacks. Pending Council approval of MLS' 2025 Operating Budget submission, TAS will begin planning for the enhanced 2025 public education campaign and hiring of additional ACOs.

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SIGNATURE



Carleton Grant
Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Format of Final Standard Dangerous Dog Warning Sign

Attachment 2: Image From the Summer 2024 Dangerous Dogs Public Education Campaign

Attachment 3: Dangerous Dogs Data Tables