

Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2024 Annual Report

Date: May 27, 2025

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Chair of the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal (the Tribunal) must submit an annual report on its activities to the appropriate standing committee in accordance with its governance structure. Attached to this report is the Tribunal Chair's 2024 Annual Report.

The Tribunal is a City and local board under the authority of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* and carries out an adjudicative function in accordance with Chapter 349, Animals and Section 107 of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. Tribunal hearings are conducted in accordance with the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act* and the Tribunal's rules of procedure. The Tribunal provides an independent review of appeals to Dangerous Dog Orders that are issued by Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) under the authority of Section 349-15 of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals. The Tribunal has the authority to either confirm the dangerous dog designation or rescind the dangerous dog designation and exempt the owner from compliance with the requirements of a Dangerous Dog Order.

In 2024, MLS responded to 3,609 service requests related to a potentially dangerous act by a dog and issued 96 Dangerous Dog Orders. Of these Dangerous Dog Orders, 5 were appealed to the Tribunal, 3 of which were heard in 2024. The other 2 appeal cases were to be heard in 2025.

In 2024, the Tribunal convened 10 meetings, including 2 administrative meetings and 8 hearing days. In the 8 hearing days, 18 matters (appeals of Dangerous Dog Orders) were heard, 13 of which were for orders issued prior to 2024. 11 Dangerous Dog Orders were upheld, 1 was rescinded, 2 appeals were withdrawn, and 2 matters were deferred. Two requests for reconsideration were received in 2024, 1 resulted in a deferral to 2025 and the other resulted in the Dangerous Dog Order being rescinded.

This report also responds to requests from City Council in April 2025 ([2025.EC19.5](#)) to include information on what factors the Tribunal uses to determine severity and the criteria used to appoint Tribunal members.

This report was developed in consultation with Legal Services and the City Clerk's Office.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards recommends that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact arising from the recommendation contained in this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 23 and 24, 2025, City Council adopted Item EC19.5 – Addressing Dangerous Dogs – Response to 2024.EC16.3, where it approved bylaw amendments to clarify that unit doors in condominiums or apartment buildings are locations where the Executive Director of MLS can require a dangerous dog warning sign be posted. MLS was also directed to provide guidelines on how staff assess the severity of a dangerous dog act and make changes to the City's public record list of dangerous dog orders to publish all six digits of the owner's postal code when the dangerous dog was severe. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.EC19.5>

At its meeting on March 20, 2024, City Council adopted Item EC10.2 Response to EC6.9 – Incident and Operational Review of Serious Dog Attacks, where it approved program improvements. including a public registry of dangerous dogs, a standard dangerous dog warning sign, access to discounted dog trainings for those with dangerous dogs who cannot afford training and a request to the Province of Ontario to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to strengthen processes. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC10.2>

At its meeting 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>

At its meeting on April 25, 2023, the Economic and Community Development Committee adopted Item EC3.3 Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2022 Annual Report, which transmitted the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal Chair's Annual Report and

outlined how staff updated documents to provide additional clarity on the appeals process for dog owners, as requested by the Tribunal Chair.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2023.EC3.3>

At its meeting on July 19, 2022, City Council adopted EC31.5 Updates to Chapter 349, Animals, where it amended section 349-15B to read "Where the Executive Director has reason to believe that a dog has engaged in a dangerous act against a person or domestic animal, an officer may" to allow officer discretion in dangerous dog investigations.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EC31.5>

At its meeting on April 6, 2022 City Council adopted EC28.11 Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2021 Annual Report, where it amended Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals to add Subsections 349-15C(3) and (4) which clarified that a dog previously found to be acting in self-defence would not be counted against the dog if a subsequent dangerous act occurred.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EC28.11>

At its meeting on May 5 and 6, 2021 City Council adopted EC21.13 Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal 2020 Annual Report, which transmitted the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal Chair's Annual Report and provided the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards delegated authority to waive fifty percent of the Dangerous Dog Order appeal fee for low income households who meet the necessary criteria.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EC21.13>

At its meeting on July 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 30, 2018 City Council adopted, with amendment, LS27.1 Improved Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal, where it amended Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals to establish the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal as an Adjudicative Board.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.LS27.1>

COMMENTS

Dangerous Dog Orders

Toronto Animal Services (TAS) is part of Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) and is responsible for promoting responsible pet ownership, compliance with animal-related laws, pet adoption and pet licensing. TAS also responds to domestic animal and wildlife issues, investigates dog bite complaints, and provides shelter and veterinarian care.

Under Section 349-15 of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals, TAS Animal Control Officers investigate all complaints of dangerous acts committed by dogs. A dangerous act is any bite, attack, act of menacing behaviour, or any combination thereof. If an officer has reason to believe that a dog engaged in a dangerous act against a person or another domestic animal, they may:

- issue a written warning if it is the first such act on record and the dangerous act is not severe; or

- issue a Dangerous Dog Order if the dangerous act:
 - is found to be severe; or
 - is the second or subsequent act on record with the City; or
 - occurred while the dog was subject to a previous order under a City by-law or provincial legislation.

In 2024, TAS officers responded to 3,609 service requests related to a potentially dangerous act by a dog, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Dangerous Act Service Requests in 2024

Dangerous Act Type	Service Requests
Animal to Animal (Bite)	438
Animal to Human (Bite)	1,895
Animal to Animal (Attack)	213
Animal to Human (Attack)	316
Menacing Behaviour	747
Total	3,609*

*The significant increase in service requests in 2024 is in part due to an increase in awareness of reporting attacks/interactions.

These investigations resulted in 481 written warnings for non-severe dangerous acts and the issuance of 96 Dangerous Dog Orders in 2024. In 2023, there were 430 written warnings, and 137 orders issued.

If a Dangerous Dog Order is issued, the owner of the dog must follow certain requirements for the duration of the dog's life, including the following:

- The dog must be muzzled at all times when off the owner's property;
- The dog is not permitted in any designated leash-free area of a City park;
- The dog must be microchipped and must wear a dangerous dog tag, issued by the City;
- A standard City-issued warning sign must be posted on the owner's property, in a location determined by MLS;
- The dog must receive training within 90 days of the Order; and
- That arrangements are made with the City to enable the City to collect a photograph of the dangerous dog and any other necessary identifying information.

Owners who receive a Dangerous Dog Order have a right to appeal the decision to the Tribunal by submitting a written request and paying the applicable fee within 30 days after the Order is served to the owner. When a Dangerous Dog Order is issued, the

officer provides the owner with information and a brochure about the requirements of the Order and the appeal process.

Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal Overview

The Tribunal is a city and local board under the authority of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* and carries out an adjudicative function in accordance with Chapter 349, Animals and Section 107 of the *City of Toronto Act, 2006*. It is comprised of five members of the public appointed by Toronto City Council for a four-year term. The current Tribunal Chair was appointed in May 2023.

The Tribunal conducts itself in accordance with the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act* and its rules of procedure for governing the practices and procedures before it (pursuant to section 25.1 of the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act*). Its members are bound by the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*. The Tribunal is an adjudicative body that hears appeals to Dangerous Dog Orders issued by MLS under the authority of Section 349-16 of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 349, Animals.

The Tribunal has the authority to:

- confirm the determination of a Dangerous Dog Order; or,
- rescind the determination of a Dangerous Dog Order and exempt the owner from compliance with Section 349-15.1 of Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals (Dangerous Dog Order requirements).

The Tribunal receives administrative support from the City Clerk's Office. Meeting dates, agendas and written decisions are posted on the Tribunal's webpage online at www.toronto.ca/council. Tribunal hearings are open to the public unless otherwise ordered by the Tribunal in accordance with the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

Under the Tribunal's rules of procedure, a party can request that the Tribunal reconsider a decision. The Tribunal may grant a request for reconsideration where:

- The Tribunal acted outside its jurisdiction;
- The Tribunal committed a material breach of procedural fairness;
- The Tribunal made an error of law or fact such that the Tribunal would likely have reached a different result had the error not been made; or
- There is evidence that was not before the Tribunal when rendering its decision, could not have been obtained previously by the Party now seeking to introduce it, and would likely have affected the result.

In 2024, the Tribunal convened 10 meetings, including 2 administrative meetings and 8 hearing days. In the 8 hearing days, 18 matters (appeals of Dangerous Dog Orders) were heard, 13 of which were for orders issued prior to 2024. 11 Dangerous Dog Orders were upheld, 1 was rescinded, 2 appeals were withdrawn, and 2 matters were deferred. Two requests for reconsideration were received in 2024, 1 resulted in a deferral to 2025 and the other resulted in the Dangerous Dog Order being rescinded.

One of the Chair's duties is to prepare and submit an annual report about the Tribunal's

activities to the appropriate standing committee. The 2024 Tribunal Chair's Annual Report is appended to this report as Attachment 1.

Update on Tribunal Rules of Procedure from the Tribunal Chair

In the 2024 Annual Report, the Chair noted one update to the DDRT's Rules of Procedure.

As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen accessibility and procedural fairness, in 2024, the Tribunal made some procedural amendments to their Rules of Procedure related to the Tribunal's power to review or reconsider a decision. The changes ensure that parties understand the timeline for reconsideration requests, the use of designated Tribunal forms, and the specific circumstances under which reconsiderations may be granted. MLS staff will consider approaches to promoting this change, such as making use of relevant City webpages. The Chair indicates these are essential changes to the efficient functioning of the Tribunal.

Addressing Council Directives

As directed by Council in Item [2025.EC19.5](#), City Council requested the Executive Director, MLS to include the following information in the cover report to the Tribunal Chair's 2024 Annual Report:

- a. a review of decisions of the Tribunal and a summary of factors the tribunal has considered when determining whether a dangerous act is severe; and
- b. information on the criteria used to appoint Tribunal members.

a. Review of Tribunal Decisions

Staff reviewed the decisions of the Tribunal between January 1, 2023 and April 2, 2025 and found that the Tribunal has not adopted a set definition of "severe" in its decisions. Instead, the Tribunal has analyzed each case on its merits and come to conclusions on whether a dangerous act was severe based on the evidence in those particular circumstances.

Generally, the Tribunal has looked at the nature of the injuries sustained by the victim of the dangerous act in assessing severity. Where a dangerous act has resulted in multiple or deep puncture wounds, broken bones, surgery, and/or lasting injury such as scarring or euthanasia, the Tribunal has generally found a dangerous act to have been severe. The Tribunal's decisions have frequently relied on medical or veterinary records when assessing injuries in this context. Other elements of dangerous acts have been considered in this severity analysis, with actions such as a dog "grabbing and shaking" a dog or an unprovoked attack being referenced in decisions.

To support further clarity on how TAS staff assess the severity of a dangerous dog act in the course of their original investigation into dangerous dog acts, Council in item [2025.EC19.5](#) directed MLS staff to make changes to relevant webpages and/or develop a public document or bulletin that outlines in more detail the elements used by staff to

determine the severity of a dangerous dog act. MLS staff are working to implement this directive.

b. Tribunal Panel Member Selection Process

The appointment process and qualification criteria for Tribunal appointees was adopted as part of City Council's authorization of the Tribunal's governance structure in July 2018 (Item [2018.LS27.1](#)).

The Tribunal consists of five public members appointed by City Council through the City's Public Appointments process for a four-year term coincident with the term of Council. City Council appoints the Tribunal's Chair from among its members.

The Public Appointments Secretariat in the City Clerk's Office coordinates the appointment process and is the main point of contact for applicants. The selection process for public member appointments to City agencies, corporations, and other bodies is outlined in the [City's Public Appointments Policy](#).

City Council adopted the following DDRT member qualifications:

- Experience in adjudication and mediation;
- Ability to write clear and concise decisions;
- Excellent listening skills and ability to analyze complex information received;
- Sound judgement, tact, fairness, and decorum;
- Demonstrated high ethical standards and integrity;
- Ability to adjudicate without bias and free from the influence of advocacy groups;
- Ability to work under pressure to ensure timely hearing decisions;
- Respect for access to justice, diversity, and accommodation;
- Knowledge of the proper care and handling of domestic animals, particularly related to the care, training, behaviour, and handling of dogs would be an asset; and,
- Society of Ontario Adjudicators and Regulators (SOAR) certificate or Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) training is an asset.

In addition to the above and other eligibility requirements as set out in the Public Appointments Policy, DDRT public members:

- Cannot be former Members of Council who served in the immediately preceding term of City Council;
- Cannot act as an agent for applicants before the Tribunal or other local boards of the City, and would be required to resign from the Tribunal before doing so; and
- Cannot act as an agent for applicants or individuals appearing in Provincial Offences Court or in matters related to the Dog Owners' Liability Act where these matters are related to the City.

Candidates are shortlisted, interviewed, and nominated by members of the Nominating Panel for the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal. The nominating panel is composed of a subset of three members of the Tribunals Nominating Panel. The Tribunals Nominating Panel is composed of up to nine public members appointed by City Council on recommendation of the City Clerk. The Nominating Panel for the Dangerous Dog

Review Tribunal conducts interviews and recommends candidates for appointment as public members and one as Chair to the Tribunal to City Council. City Council then makes the final decision on the successful appointees. Additional details on the appointment process are available on the City of Toronto's [Public Appointments webpage](#).

TAS provides the City Clerk with a case scenario of a dangerous act, which is used as part of the written assessment of applicants. One TAS staff assists one Public Appointments staff from the City Clerk's Office to help mark the written assessment. Candidate identification is not provided to TAS while marking these assessments and thus they are marked without prejudice.

While TAS is available to answer questions and provide feedback to the nominating committee when they meet, TAS does not determine who is appointed and is not present during the Tribunal Nominating Panel's deliberations or interviews. Following the appointment process, TAS is one of the parties who presents to the new tribunal member(s), to explain how dangerous acts are investigated in accordance with the Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 349, Animals. Where requested by the Tribunal, other onboarding training is provided by Legal Services, the City Clerk's Office, and the Integrity Commissioner Office.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE



Carleton Grant
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal Chair's 2024 Annual Report