

**City of Toronto
Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal
2025 Annual Chair's Report**

Overview

The work of the Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal in 2025 reflects a continued commitment to principled decision-making, procedural fairness, and the protection of the public interest. The Tribunal remains mindful that each appeal before it involves not only legal questions, but real impacts on families, communities, and neighbourhood safety.

There has been a continued decline in hearings year over year. This trend may reflect more effective education of dog owners regarding responsible management, increased compliance with Dangerous Dog Orders, and improved public awareness of the governing by-law framework. At the same time, the Tribunal has remained steadfast in safeguarding the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness in the adjudication of appeals arising from Dangerous Dog Orders within the City of Toronto.

Tribunal Composition and Vacancy

At the conclusion of 2024, a Tribunal Member resigned. In February 2025, Sophia Davis was appointed as a new public member, restoring the Tribunal to its full complement. The Tribunal benefits from the diversity of experience and perspectives that each member brings to the adjudicative process.

Tribunal Activity

The number of Tribunal hearings has declined significantly over the past several years.

In 2023, the Tribunal conducted 35 hearings.

In 2024, that number decreased to 18 hearings.

In 2025, eight hearings proceeded and were resolved as follows:

- Confirmed: 5
- Withdrawn: 2
- Rescinded: 1

In addition to hearing dates, the Tribunal convened one business meeting dedicated to governance and operational matters. Three additional hearing dates (April 17, May 15, and December 11, 2025) were scheduled but were ultimately cancelled due to withdrawals or the absence of an application requiring adjudication. While the overall volume of hearings remains modest, the matters that proceed to hearing often involve serious injuries and significant community concern. The Tribunal approaches each case

with care, ensuring that evidentiary findings are grounded in the record and that decisions are reasoned, proportionate, and transparent.

Hearing Volume Trends and Systemic Review Considerations

As previously mentioned, the decline in hearing volume over the past three years has been notable (decreasing from 35 hearings in 2023 to 8 hearings in 2025). While the year over year decline in hearings may reflect positive developments in compliance and education, it also warrants thoughtful reflection.

The Tribunal recognizes that a sustained and significant reduction in appeals may arise from a range of factors. These may include enhanced enforcement practices, greater awareness among dog owners of the consequences of non-compliance, or improved administrative screening processes. At the same time, it is appropriate to remain attentive to whether any structural or systemic features of the Tribunal's appeal framework or governing legislation may be contributing to the decline.

Members have also observed that, absent any indication of a corresponding reduction in the dog population within the City, it may be worthwhile for policymakers to consider whether broader systemic factors could be influencing the number of appeals reaching the Tribunal. Such factors could include aspects of the appeal process itself or features of the governing regulatory framework.

While the Tribunal's mandate is adjudicative rather than policy-making, ongoing dialogue with City staff and Toronto Council regarding broader trends in appeal volumes may assist in ensuring that access to the review process remains clear, transparent, and accessible to the public. Continued monitoring of these trends should therefore remain an area of interest.

Privacy and Cybersecurity Awareness

Tribunal records often contain sensitive personal information, including veterinary evidence and medical details relating to both animals and human victims. Protecting that information is essential to maintaining public confidence in the Tribunal's work.

Recognizing the increasing prevalence of phishing attempts and cybersecurity threats, the Tribunal formally requested and received education and training to ensure strict adherence to privacy obligations and secure document-handling protocols. Member awareness in this area remains a priority.

Governance and Training

On May 2 and May 15, 2025, I met with City staff and a solicitor from Legal Services to review the Tribunal's operational framework and identify key training priorities for the year.

Our June 12, 2025 business meeting was devoted to governance, orientation, and procedural education. Members received a refresher on the applicable by-law provisions, the investigative process that leads to dangerous act determinations, and the responsibilities that accompany public appointment.

We also spent time reviewing the reconsideration process under Rule 21 of the Tribunal's Rules. The discussion went beyond timelines and forms and focused on the limited and principled grounds upon which a decision may properly be reconsidered — including jurisdictional error, a material breach of procedural fairness, a significant error that could have affected the outcome, or genuinely new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the hearing.

The education reinforced an important point: reconsideration is not a second hearing, nor an opportunity to re-argue a case simply because a party is dissatisfied with the result. It is a carefully defined safeguard, designed to preserve fairness while protecting the integrity and finality of the Tribunal's decisions.

Ongoing education remains essential. It promotes consistency in approach, reinforces disciplined adjudication, and strengthens public confidence in the Tribunal's work.

Operational Transition to Court Services

Effective January 1, 2026, meeting management support for the Tribunal transitioned to Toronto Court Services. In anticipation of this administrative change, preparatory meetings were held to coordinate implementation and ensure continuity.

The Tribunal looks forward to seamless integration within Court Services and the enhanced administrative structure this transition provides.

Public Safety Considerations

Incidents involving dangerous dog designations frequently arise in densely populated residential settings, including condominiums and multi-unit dwellings. These cases serve as a reminder that public safety in a growing city requires shared responsibility — by owners, neighbours, enforcement authorities, and policymakers.

As Toronto continues to intensify and urban living spaces become more compact, proactive education regarding responsible ownership, leash compliance, and early intervention measures may further reduce the number and severity of incidents requiring enforcement. Obviously, prevention remains preferable to adjudication.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Tribunal, I extend sincere appreciation to Tribunal members, City staff, legal counsel, Court Services, and administrative personnel for their professionalism and

team spirit throughout the year. The effective functioning of the Tribunal is the result of shared commitment and quiet diligence behind the scenes.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey L. Hamilton
Chair, Dangerous Dog Review Tribunal
March 16, 2026