

Ward 17 - Don Valley North

Responding Candidates:

[Sabrina Zuniga](#)

Sabrina Zuniga, PhD

Questions

Responses

1. As Councillor, I will advocate for staff to meaningfully fulfill the directions given by Council as part of the 2025 Off-Leash Strategy

Strongly agree
Council gave clear directions in its 2025 Off-Leash Dog Strategy, and residents deserve to see them carried out. As Councillor, I would press staff to explain the measurable goals, report publicly on patrols, warnings and charges, and bring the promised enforcement update to committee.

2. As Councillor, I will support fencing and enforcement where needed to ensure that Environmentally Significant Areas and community green spaces are protected from illegal off-leash activity.

Strongly agree
Don Valley North's ravines, green spaces, and other environmentally significant areas are home to wildlife and need protection from dogs running off-leash, digging, and disturbing natural habitats. As Councillor, I would support fencing where it is needed to protect sensitive areas. Community green spaces should be safe and welcoming for families and other residents, while dogs have well-maintained designated places to run where they can't damage the environment for other users.

3. I believe that education alone can be the solution to the City's off-leash dog challenges.

Strongly disagree
Education helps dog owners understand the rules, but the City has followed an "education first" approach for at least a decade, and illegal off-leash activity remains a problem. When a loose dog frightens a child (or worse), damages a school field or disturbs wildlife in a ravine, residents need more than another reminder of the rules.

4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.

Strongly agree
Leash rules mean little if people repeatedly break them without consequence, particularly in ravines, school fields and parks where children play. As your Councillor, I would advocate for more by-law patrols in areas with persistent complaints and ticketing for violations, supported by the resources officers need to do the job. I would also require public reporting on patrols, warnings and charges so residents can see accountability.

5. As Councillor, I will support by-law officers having Special Constable status to give officers the authority to require ID and to facilitate the enforcement of all by-laws, including off-leash by-laws.	Strongly agree I strongly support giving by-law officers the authority they need to enforce the rules, including when someone refuses to identify themselves after an off-leash violation. As Councillor, I would advocate for the City to pursue Special Constable appointments where appropriate and work with the province to ensure those appointments grant the specific powers officers need to enforce the laws.
6. As future Councillor, what are you prepared to do to improve off-leash areas so that they are more likely to be used in a responsible manner by dog owners?	Dog owners are more likely to use designated off-leash areas when they are safe, convenient and well maintained. As Councillor, I would work with residents to improve fencing, drainage, water access, waste collection and repairs, while keeping these areas free of drug use, discarded pipes and needles, and encampments through coordinated outreach and enforcement. Cigarette butts also need regular cleanup: they contain toxins, and their filters do not readily biodegrade. I have organized numerous park cleanups, including one with Councillor Brad Bradford, and I know residents care deeply about the condition of these spaces. Well-maintained off-leash areas give dogs room to run while helping protect ravines, school fields and other parks for everyone.
7. Even where off-leash areas exist, we see illegal off-leash activity in adjacent parkland. Taxpayers fund the installation of new dog parks (at a current estimated budget of \$535,000 per park) and the maintenance of existing off-leash parks (\$9.5 million budgeted over the next 10 years) but the City has not included specific additional funds for off-leash enforcement as directed by Council. As Councillor, how would you address this discrepancy? (City of Toronto, General Manager, Parks and Recreation, 2025)	If an existing off-leash area is not meeting the needs of dog owners, then we should address that. Maintenance is crucial and parks department should be held accountable for the status of each off-leash park. As Councillor, I would work to ensure enforcement is also funded and held accountable to all residents whether one is a dog owner or not. Safe and security for all is very important to me.

8. Based on the City's estimate of over 600,000 dogs in the City of Toronto, (City of Toronto, General Manager, Parks and Recreation) and the number of licenses issued, only 8-11% of Toronto dogs are licensed (City of Toronto, Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards). The money from licensing supports Toronto's Animal Shelters and could be used to support improving off-leash areas and providing support for by-law enforcement. As City Councillor, how important do you think dog licensing is and what are your ideas to improve licensing rates?	Dog licensing is important: it helps fund Toronto's animal shelters, and the low licensing rate cited in this questionnaire deserves action. As Councillor, I would push for a simple mobile-friendly registration process, timely renewal reminders, and clear information about fees, discounts and how licensing helps animals. I would work with veterinarians, shelters, rescue groups and pet stores to reach owners when they acquire a dog, and use signs at off-leash areas to explain how to register. I would ask staff to identify barriers to licensing, set a measurable goal for improving rates and report progress publicly. I would also work with different levels of government for licensing standards across jurisdictions to make it easier for dog owners to make sure their dog is licensed.
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