

Ward 12 - Toronto-St Paul's

Responding Candidates:

[David Cottrell](#)

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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
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
3. I believe that education alone can be the solution to the City's off-leash dog challenges.	Strongly disagree
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Mildly agree
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.	Mildly disagree
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?	I would support improving off-leash areas so they are safe, accessible, well-maintained and genuinely useful to dog owners. That means appropriate fencing, reliable gates, suitable surfaces and drainage, shade, waste receptacles, seating and clear signage, while ensuring these spaces are located where there is demonstrated need. I would also support using community feedback and 311 data to identify problem locations and prioritize improvements. If we expect dog owners to use designated off-leash areas, those spaces should be functional and inviting enough that responsible use is the easier choice.

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 Council has directed the City to improve off-leash enforcement, then the budget should reflect that direction. It does not make sense to invest substantial public money in building and maintaining designated off-leash areas while failing to provide adequate resources to enforce the rules in adjacent parkland. I would advocate for a targeted enforcement allocation focused on locations with persistent complaints, environmentally sensitive areas and repeated non-compliance. Enforcement should be data-driven and proportionate, but Council should not adopt rules and then fail to fund their implementation.
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 because a licensing system only works if there is meaningful participation. The current gap between the estimated dog population and the number of licensed dogs suggests the system is not functioning as effectively as it should. I would first look at why compliance is so low: whether the process is inconvenient, residents are unaware of the requirement, the cost is a barrier, or there is simply little expectation of enforcement. I would support making licensing simple and easy to complete, improving reminders and public education, working with veterinarians and animal-service providers to promote registration, and increasing targeted enforcement where appropriate. Revenue from improved compliance should help support animal services, responsible dog ownership and enforcement rather than simply increasing fees on the relatively small number of owners who already follow the rules.