Ward 4 - Parkdale-High Park

Responding Candidates:

Diana Chan McNally
Debbie King
Bridget Ogundipe
Vanessa Raponi
Holly Weber
Steve Yuen

Holly Weber

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 I support this strategy, it is important for everyone to enjoy public spaces safely.
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 I support protecting our green spaces so that they can be maintained and enjoyed by everyone.
3. I believe that education alone can be the solution to the City's off-leash dog challenges.	Mildly agree Education is an important part of the strategy but I believe that we also need to focus on the enforcement as well.
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Strongly agree Enforcement is important, particularly for repeat offenders.
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 believe this approach will help ensure that people are following the by-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?	I will propose better maintenance of the off-leash parks including proper drainage to avoid mud and ice in those spaces. I would also support ensuring that there is seating in the area, shade, water stations (for both dogs and humans) and garbage bins distributed throughout the off-leash area. I would also like to see a separate area for large dogs and small dogs where this can be accommodated.

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)	I would advocate for additional funding for an increased number of by-law officers.
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?	I believe that dog licensing is important. There are several things I think we could do to increase licensing rates, first of all education is important so that dog owners know that the license needs to be renewed each year and that its only applicable to the specific municipality that it is purchased in. I think that we should also consider auto-renewal licenses, and look at the possibility of a flat fee for a one time license for the dog. The city should also do a mobile licensing blitz at dog parks and also install signs at dog parks that outline the requirements and have a QR code for the owner to easily access the city's licensing portal. The city should also explore requiring the license at the time of adoption.

Steve Yuen

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 All PET owners are responsible for the actions and the behaviors of their dog, cat or any pet they own.
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.	Mildly agree
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Mildly disagree
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
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 responsible for the behavior of their dog on or off. Leash, regardless of the area, they are in.

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)	Policing and enforcement we'll be administered to the bad owner, bad neighbor and more importantly fines and penalties, it will be administered accordingly for the irresponsibility of the pet owner. Including monetary fines, jail time for the owner and removal of the pet for those who break the law.
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?	Licensing is not mandatory but necessary. If your pet is not registered legally and properly, you have 24-48 hours to register your pet, or you will face fines , penalties and potentially losing custody of your pet.

Vanessa Raponi	
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 From meeting with Paws for Parks on July 31, it's clear the actions previously aligned in 2025 for City Council have not been actioned. This must be a priority, as they were well thought out, and already aligned with council.
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 Off leash dogs create risk for animals, children and pedestrians alike. We need to ensure off leash areas are functioning effectively.
3. I believe that education alone can be the solution to the City's off-leash dog challenges.	Mildly disagree It will take more than education, we need more enforcement as well as more off leash dog areas.
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Strongly agree It is clear this has not been effectively implemented yet, we need to ensure people are following this important safety regulation.
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 If bylaw officers cannot enforce bylaws, it is a waste of taxpayer dollars. We need to ensure bylaws can be enforced appropriately.
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?	More infrastructure, more parks, more bylaw enforcement. Follow all the Paws for Parks recommendations.
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	Yes, I would address this discrepancy.

Councillor, how would you address this discrepancy? (City of Toronto, General Manager, Parks and Recreation, 2025)	
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?	We need more benefits and more communication about the dog licensing program. This will encourage more licenses, which will help tracking and funding immensely.

Diana Chan-McNally

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 Fulfilling City Council direction that By-Law Enforcement deliver reporting on enforcement activities is important to improving compliance with dog-leashing rules. This data can inform where there are gaps, both in funding and process, that we can work collaboratively to address in the near term.
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 With High Park and other ecologically significant areas in my ward of Parkdale—High Park, it is imperative that the city ensure that these spaces remain protected — including from off-leash dogs.

3. I believe that education alone can be the solution to the City's off-leash dog challenges.	Mildly disagree Although I strongly support education on responsible dog ownership, I also know that education alone won't change behaviours. However, focusing exclusively on penalizing residents also isn't a solution in-itself. I support a strategic and balanced approach that does prioritize education and actions that socialize responsible dog ownership.
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Mildly agree I do believe that increased ticketing from by-law officers can help to deter illegal off-leash activity. However, I also believe in a positive reinforcement strategy. As City Councillor, I will support the City of Toronto to coordinate with Paws for Parks' to build on the success of their "Bark Ambassadors" social media campaign. I am committed to in-person and online strategies like the "Bark Ambassadors" to socialize responsible dog ownership.
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.	Neither agree nor disagree Augmenting By-Law Enforcement officers with Special Constable status may not be feasible given the City's budgetary constraints. I also have concerns about unintended and disproportionately harmful repercussions that could lead to the over-policing of at-risk communities, including Black and Indigenous people and people experiencing homelessness. I will support exploring and advancing all feasible options to improve the efficacy and response of City staff in enforcing municipal by-laws, including pursuing an active partnerships with Provincial Conservation Officers to support enforcement in ESAs such as High Park.
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?	With an estimated 600,000 dogs across the City of Toronto, Council must make it a priority to ensure that the Off-Leash Strategy is implemented. This means growing the network of OLAs from 8to 9by 2027, but also continuing to ensure the expansion of high-quality OLAs commensurate with neighbourhood need. This, of course, requires ongoing engagement and responsiveness to constituents, which will always be my priority as a Councillor. As well, it entails maintaining current OLAs in a state of good repair, implementing a high-quality standardized design framework for OLAs, and addressing ongoing maintenance concerns and responsible usage.

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)	Unfortunately, with the Provincial government's introduction of Strong Mayor Powers, Toronto City Councillors have a greatly reduced role in shaping what is now the Mayor's Budget. As City Councillor, I will work alongside community organizations to advocate for adequate investment in achieving compliance with our City's dog-leashing rules through a balanced approach that includes more effective enforcement and education.
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?	I believe that licensing provides important information that supports the City's ability to plan and care for the pets in our city. However, there are many residents, including people who are unhoused or facing housing insecurity who do not have the means to participate in the licensing program but whose lives are greatly enriched by pet companionship. As such, I do not support penalizing or criminalizing residents who do not participate in pet licensing. Rather, I believe the City should increase the pet licensing rate by doing a better job of communicating the benefits of participating in the pet licensing program.

Bridget Ogundipe

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 Basic reminders haven't worked, as off-leash complaints keep rising. But that doesn't mean education is a bad idea; we need to do more to build awareness of the negative impacts off-leash dogs have on the environment, safety, and overall well-being. Let's get youth involved through school and summer programs to educate them on why staying on-leash is so important.
4. I believe that increased by-law patrols and ticketing are needed to deter off-leash activity.	Strongly 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.	Strongly agree I could fully support this, as much of the current enforcement issue stems from by-law officers having limited authority to identify offenders. However, this change must come with adequate training, proper oversight, and a commitment to holding ourselves accountable by simultaneously addressing our broader gaps in park infrastructure, public education, and dedicated off-leash access across the city.
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'll start by pushing for stronger enforcement as an immediate solution, including supporting Special Constable status for by-law officers. Alongside that, I will push to upgrade our facilities so they are high quality and welcoming for everyone. That means making sure standard sites are well-lit, clean, well-maintained, and equipped with shade, seating, dedicated small-dog zones, clean water fountains, and paw-friendly surfaces like grass or wood chips instead of harsh pea gravel. In sensitive natural areas like High Park, I will support site-appropriate trail fencing and clear boundary signs that protect the

	forest while keeping dogs safely contained on designated paths. I will also ensure that parkland outside of designated off-leash zones is properly maintained and protected. Additionally, I'll advocate for expanding off-leash options across our ward. Finally, I will push for stronger partnerships with community organizations and local park groups to boost public awareness and ensure they are a central part of the consultation process.
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)	It doesn't make sense to spend $9.million on capital park infrastructure without allocating the operational resources needed to properly manage and protect those spaces. Leaving by-law enforcement underfunded undermines taxpayer investment and leaves sensitive green spaces vulnerable. While the exact budget mechanics will require careful review during council deliberations, my commitment as Councillor is clear: we must ensure adequate funding is allocated directly toward active by-law enforcement and field patrols. I will advocate for Council to follow through on its intent to fund enforcement and explore options, including using ticket revenues and licence fees, to support a visible, proactive presence in our parks.
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?	Licensing is vital because it funds animal services, pet recovery, and public safety mechanisms like dangerous dog tags, so leaving nearly 90% of dogs out of the system is a major missed opportunity. Relying purely on heavy fines as a strategy to get dogs licensed clearly hasn't worked. As Councillor, I want the City to shift toward making compliance practical and effortless. We can do this by modernizing digital registration, partnering with local vets and shelters to sign up pets right during clinic check-ups and adoptions, and offering practical incentives for responsible pet owners.

Debbie King

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.	Strongly 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 I support greater bylaw enforcement as a complement to communication and education. However, I have concerns about the potential impacts of granting special constable status and expanded authority. As councillor, I would seek to understand from City staff what, if any, police powers would improve enforcement in this area, and what safeguards, oversight and accountability measures would be in place to prevent discriminatory practices toward marginalized and historically over-policed communities.
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?	Follow through on Council-approved recommendations, using clear performance measures and ongoing consultation with dog owners, residents and other park users to improve off-leash areas and encourage responsible use.

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)	Ensure Council's direction to provide dedicated funding for off-leash enforcement is reflected in the 2027 and future budgets, strengthen bylaw enforcement, and direct fines collected from violations toward off-leash enforcement and/or maintaining off-leash areas.
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 benefits pet owners, supports responsible pet ownership and helps fund Toronto Animal Shelters. I would support putting more licensing revenue toward animal shelters, improving off-leash areas and strengthening by-law enforcement. To increase licensing rates, we could improve communication and education while making it easier and more affordable to comply by maintaining special rates, and expanding the rewards program.