

## **Status Update: Sign By-law Enforcement**

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| <b>Date:</b>             | October 30, 2008   |
| <b>To:</b>               | Licensing and Standards Committee  |
| <b>From:</b>             | Chief Building Official/Executive Director, Toronto Building and Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards |
| <b>Wards:</b>            | All  |
| <b>Reference Number:</b> | P:\2008\Cluster B\MLS\LSNovember08StatusUpadateSign Bylaw.doc  |

### **SUMMARY**

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This report provides up-dated information respecting the status of sign by-law complaints, investigations and enforcement actions taken by Toronto Building and Municipal Licensing and Standards pursuant to the City's existing sign by-laws and further addresses the comments of Mr. Rami Tabello in his letter to the Licensing and Standards Committee dated April 8, 2008.

Toronto Building will be reporting to the Planning and Growth Management Committee on the development of a new harmonized by-law for signs on private property. In the process of developing the new by-law, consideration will be given to, amongst other matters, measures that will enhance capacity to ensure compliance and enforcement of the new by-law.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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1. That the Licensing and Standards Committee receive this report for information.

#### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

At its meeting on April 11, 2008, the Licensing and Standards Committee considered a report (March 20, 2008) (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ls/bgrd/backgroundfile-11914.pdf>) from the Chief Building Official/Executive Director, Toronto Building and Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards respecting the status of sign by-law complaints and the investigations and enforcement actions of Toronto Building and Municipal Licensing and Standards Division.

The Committee directed the Chief Building Official/Executive Director, Toronto Building and Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to:

- (i) report back to the Licensing and Standards Committee on the sign by-law enforcement, every six months, with changes specifically highlighted until such time as Members of City Council have on-line access to enforcement, every detailed sign enforcement data, such report to establish time lines for sign permits and yearly renewal fees for those permits;
- (ii) in future reports, add the name of the company that owns the signs;
- (iii) address the comments of Mr. Rami Tabello in his letter of April 8, 2008 in the next sign enforcement report; and
- (iv) report to the Licensing and Standards Committee, at its meeting on July 3, 2008, on the resources and staff dedicated to the enforcement of the sign by-law.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

In the fall of 2006, Toronto Building and Municipal Licensing and Standards (ML&S) began to receive complaints from a group identified as Illegalsigns.ca. This group alleged that many third-party signs had been erected in the City in contravention of the applicable sign by-laws and accordingly were illegal. At that time senior staff of Toronto Building, ML&S and Community Planning met with Mr. Rami Tabello, who represented the interests of the group, to discuss his concerns.

City staff considered the matter to be very serious, and therefore Toronto Building and ML&S actively worked together to develop a protocol for receiving and investigating the complaints and taking appropriate enforcement action on illegally installed signs. The complaints involved deviations from approved permits and signs erected without permit, and signs that had been erected in contravention of the applicable sign by-law.

## COMMENTS

### Harmonized Sign By-law Project

Toronto Building is leading the development of a new consolidated sign by-law to replace the existing six sign by-laws. A final report and draft by-law will be brought forward in early 2009. The development of the new by-law will not be limited simply to the harmonization of regulations. The nature of signs and the sign industry itself have changed considerably since the original by-laws were enacted. The new by-law development project will be driven by the City's public realm objectives, consistent with the City's new Official Plan. It will also address the range of signs enabled by new technologies, the City's environmental goals, and the promotion of energy efficiency.

While ongoing enhancements to sign by-law enforcement are being made as outlined below, the sign by-law review will consider and address issues related to sign approval and enforcement processes, including the required staff resources necessary to ensure by-law compliance and ongoing enforcement.

### Current Status of Enforcement of Sign Complaints

Toronto Building and ML&S continue to implement operational changes to enhance the permit review, inspection and enforcement processes. ML&S has implemented a dedicated Sign Enforcement Team to deliver this enforcement service Citywide. This team will facilitate a more pro-active approach to sign by-law enforcement and will utilize a targeted area approach.

Recent amendments to the temporary sign-by-law will also allow for more effective enforcement of temporary signs and provide for an enhanced cost recovery scheme. In addition, ML&S will also use the service of a contractor to more effectively remove temporary signs and provide storage facilities on a cost recovery basis, where costs are passed on to sign owners.

The attached charts reflect the current status of enforcement action that has been taken by Toronto Building and ML&S, respectively. They include information regarding each sign complaint received from Illegalsigns.ca, as well as signs that have been proactively enforced by staff of ML&S. At the request of the Licensing and Standards Committee, the charts have been revised since the last report by highlighting changes in status and by including the names of the sign company involved (where known) and the property owner, respectively. However, personal information pertaining to an identifiable individual cannot and has not been provided pursuant to the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

With regard to the comments made by Mr. Rami Tabet in his letter dated April 8, 2008 to the Licensing and Standards Committee, every effort has been made to address his

concerns about incomplete reporting. The charts include accurate and factual information about the status of each specific investigation. It is open to any complainant to continue to provide information to ML&S, as the first point of contact, about signs that may have been erected without permits and/or deviate from the approved permits.

## **CONTACTS**

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## **SIGNATURES**

Ann Borooah  
Chief Building Official and  
Executive Director

Jim Hart  
Executive Director  
Municipal Licensing and Standards

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment No. 1a and 1b: Sign Investigations List – Toronto and East York District  
Attachment No. 2a and 2b: Sign Investigations List – North York District  
Attachment No. 3a and 3b: Sign Investigations List – Etobicoke -York District