

LS25.2.10

From: [Annemarie Brissenden](#)
To: [Mayor Tory; Clerk](#)
Subject: LS25.2 - letter from sorority women
Date: Wednesday, May 23, 2018 9:38:52 AM
Attachments: [LS25.2 response.May22.pdf](#)

Hello,

I am submitting a letter on behalf of several sorority women requesting that you vote NO to item LS25.2. In our letter, we respond specifically to allegations made about the connection between licensing fraternities and sororities and anti-gender based violence.

Please add it to the communications for LS25.2, and distribute it to members.

Thank you for your consideration,
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May 22, 2018

Mayor John Tory
City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mayor John Tory,

We are writing to respond specifically to allegations of anti-gender based violence that have been made in regards to fraternities and sororities as it relates to the proposed elimination of the exception for fraternities and sororities under Chapter 285 (aka *The Rooming House Act*). We would like your support to **vote NO** to LS25.2, and present some facts for your consideration.

There is no connection between licensing and reduced incidents of sexual assault. To suggest that licensing would prevent sexual assault would imply that there has never been a sexual assault at any rooming house licensed by the city, or indeed in a residence owned and operated by the University of Toronto or Ryerson University. In fact, a group of students from the University of Toronto are suing the university for its handling of sexual assault on campus, particularly in its residences. As to the 160 complaints since 2013 related to 15 of 19 fraternity and sorority houses in Ward 20, **NONE of these complaints were related to sexual assault.**

In a letter to the Mayor on this issue, several studies were cited in support of licensing. However, those same studies show that the type of programming offered by fraternities and sororities may go a long way toward changing attitudes and preventing sexual assault. The *NASPA Journal* of 2008, which includes "Behaviour Differences Seven Months Later: Effects of a Rape Prevention Program," also includes studies that show:

- Programs presented to all-male audiences are much more likely to change men's attitudes and behavioral intent to rape than those presented to coeducational audiences (Brecklin & Forde, 2001).
- as men increase their empathy with survivors, understand rape trauma, and have more aversion to rape, they report less likelihood of raping (Schewe, 2002).

Our organizations – male and female – have made this type of programming part of every member's mandatory education. **We hold our members to high standards, and actively working to prevent sexual assault is something that we take very seriously.** Each of our organizations has a mandatory risk management program that must be completed by every member that includes educational programming on sexual assault prevention and awareness, and once a year, every member reviews and signs a commitment to prevent hazing.

This should demonstrate the ways that we have incorporated the prevention of sexual assault into our ongoing programming, as well as address the concern our organizations are "not governed by regulations". **In fact, sorority housing is regulated more extensively than most other housing and operates under strict guidelines as mandated by our international organization and insurance company.** Our houses receive regular visits by representatives from our headquarters, monthly and sometimes weekly visits by alumnae and advisers, and are required to have security or chaperones at our events.

While we appreciate the concern some organizations have shown for women's welfare, we're perplexed as to why they are speaking on behalf of sorority women without engaging the people this would directly affect. **How unfortunate that they didn't ask us – sorority women – whether licensing fraternities and sororities would in fact make university life safer for all women.**

We're disappointed that an issue as serious as sexual assault is being politicized in this way. It is hard enough for sexual assault survivors to receive justice as it is; why are we making it worse?

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

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Marisa Larsen, Alpha Omicron Pi
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Asia Pineau, Delta Delta Delta
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cc: Toronto City Council