



Planning and Housing Committee,
City of Toronto,
Attn. Nancy Martins,
100 Queen Street West,
Toronto,
M5H 2N2

10th October 2019

PH9.3. Temporary Signs By-law Review

I write on behalf of the St Lawrence Neighbourhood Association, we represent the approximately 30,000 residents in the area bounded by Yonge and University and Queen to the rail berm.

Firstly, we would like to congratulate City staff on having written a clear, concise and very useful Report on the updating of the City's by-laws on temporary signage. This Report makes useful recommendations that will allow and regulate signage and at the same time ensure that our sidewalks are not 'obstacle courses' which are virtually impossible to navigate for pedestrians and those with mobility or vision problems.

It is also good to see that Staff took advantage of the recent work to improve the Boulevard Café by-law and that this Report uses many of the same definitions and limits. This Report is the result of a careful consultation process and an example of clear thinking and clear writing that not only makes the rules clear to applicants and citizens but will also make enforcement much easier. These are qualities that should be emulated in other City Reports!

We are particularly concerned with accessibility and the avoidance of 'sidewalk clutter' and thus we particularly applaud the definitive and clear wording regarding sidewalk obstructions and the necessity of retaining or creating fairly standard 'pedestrian clearways. "A-frame" signs have created major problems for sidewalk users and ensuring that all of them on the public right-of-way are licenced and restricted to the curbside Tree and Furnishing Zone is very welcome.

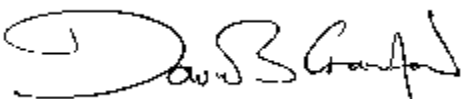
We join with our colleagues in the Harbord Village Residents' Association in suggesting that the Staff Recommendations be amended to better protect the Edge Zone and that the size of proposed Advocacy Signs be reduced to 0.25 square metres. The Staff suggestion of 1.2 square metres seems unnecessarily large for signs that may be posted for months or years – election signs are only posted for short periods so we suggest that they could remain larger.

We also join with our colleagues in the York Quay Neighbourhood Association and suggest that the by-law should include some provision to ensure that A-frames are weighed down or constructed in a way that will reduce the the number of them that get blown or knocked over. To encourage this, we suggest that the by-law should be slightly amended to state that licenced signs must be maintained in good condition and that those which are lying flat on the sidewalk will be deemed to be damaged or illegal and thus liable to immediate removal. Fallen and flattened A-frame signs are a serious trip hazard.

Though we certainly welcome the clarity of this Report and applaud its recommendations, we caution that no by-law (however clear) will create and maintain clear and unobstructed sidewalks without firm and proactive enforcement. The Report recommends that all A-frames have visible "Sign Permit Identifiers" attached to them and we hope that this will be rigorously enforced and that MLS and other City staff will remove and dispose of any signs not displaying valid permit information just as they would remove and dispose of other 'junk' or obstructions from the City's streets and sidewalks. We note that, at least in this area, the weekends see a sudden increase in A-frame signs advertising new development projects – enforcement must be done 7-days a week.

The information given in the Staff Report notes that, over the last few years, the number of temporary sign permits issued averaged 470 per year (with 24% of these for A-frames); a walk around even one commercial street downtown will clearly demonstrate that this is only a tiny fraction of the number of temporary signs currently on the public right of way - there is MUCH work to do!

In the past, most sidewalk-related by-law infractions have been investigated only on a complaint-driven basis. This is neither effective nor an efficient use of staff resources and has clearly not worked; we strongly suggest that Council instructs Municipal Licencing & Standards (MLS) to allocate resources so that all sidewalk-related bylaws are enforced 7-days a week in a far more proactive way; if necessary, permit fees should be increased to make this possible.



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cc. Board, SLNA