



Submission re item 31.4, July 6 Economic & Community Development Committee

Dear Chair and councillors,

ClimateFast supports Councillor Shelley
Carroll's petition <https://shelleycarroll.ca/leafblowers>

As stated in Councillor Carroll's petition, one hour of leaf blowing equals a 1800-kilometre drive. 18-hour drive from Toronto to Halifax.

The harmful effects of gas-powered leaf blowers go beyond noise. These machines are heavily polluters, releasing dangerous and toxic emissions into the air. This results in higher carbon emissions, poorer air quality, disruption of local ecosystems, and increased health risks. However, while opting to use electric-powered leaf blowers could reduce the amount of carbon emissions, there is still significant noise. In addition, with the use of both types, given the prevalence of micro-plastics in our environment, it is highly likely that these particulates are also disturbed, become airborne and are inhaled by all within range of the dust. So there remains a noise and health risk with both types of blowers. In addition, there is disruption in the habitat that pollinators need.

We need to ask ourselves this – is it worth the environmental and health risk when there are plenty of alternatives available?

At the September 30th, 2020 Council, Councillor Carroll asked staff to report back on the environmental impacts of gas-powered leaf blowers, as well as the feasibility of a seasonal/year-round ban.

We are still waiting for this much delayed report.

But we don't need to look far for successful examples. California is outlawing the use and sale of new equipment by 2024. A noise bylaw forbids its use in Vancouver's West End. Municipalities such as Portland and Oak Bay are asking city departments to look at transition plans to phase out gas-powered leaf blowers and other small engine equipment.

In October 2021, the Infrastructure and Environment Committee approved Councillor Carroll's motion asking staff to look at phasing out gas-powered leaf blowers for city workers and residents want to know what has been done since then.

In a CBC report on July 5th, we learned that one Toronto resident, frustrated by the City's failure to regulate persistent unwanted noise, took it upon herself to buy noise measuring equipment worth \$8,000 in order to prove the intolerable level of noise to which she's been subjected [<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/excessive-vehicle-noise-residents-call-for-action-city-1.6508817>]. That a resident has to resort to such measures to prove the level of unwanted vehicular noise she experiences seems unconscionable. Most residents can't afford this type of recourse -- nor should they have to. Noise is an issue for the City to address as other jurisdictions have done. With the enormous gift of additional funding to Toronto Police Services, it's time that "serve and protect" also means turning up to investigate noise complaints, parties, loud music, etc., as and when they occur. To be inundated by unwanted noise at any time is a situation that needs to be addressed as it comes with physiological impacts that can trigger ill health if not reduced or halted depending on when it occurs.

The communities in Toronto listed below have already requested a ban on leaf blowers and other sources of unwanted noise. There is simply no excuse to accept intolerable noise simply because we can manufacture equipment that can generate it and that residents should then be required to endure it.

As the fourth largest city in North America with an ambitious carbon reduction plan, we need to take action now on leaf blower use.

Sincerely

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