



June 27, 2023

Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Ellen Devlin
iec@toronto.ca

RE: IE5.1 Two-Stroke Engine Small Equipment: Steps to Pursue a Ban

Dear Chair McKelvie and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

The report proposes two options – “leading by example” and “pursuing a ban on two-stroke engine equipment”. Given that the major issue is the excessive noise levels of leaf blowers, FoNTRA instead recommends a third option - to “ban” gas powered leaf blowers as soon as possible. We believe this is a simple and faster way to reduce that leading noise irritant.

Contrary to the report, there IS support for a ban. We believe the report is incorrect in stating that “It was determined that banning leaf blowers, due to noise, is overly restrictive based on the low volume of complaints, low public support, practicality of enforcing the ban, and unintended effects on the City, industry and consumers.”

As has been noted previously, the low volume of complaints about leaf blowers is due to the fact that 311 will not accept complaints during the time the leaf blowers are allowed to operate and that is when they normally would be in operation! The Gasbusters group has shown that there is public support for banning noisy gas powered leaf blowers. Also, a new tool that people can use to report excessive noise is now being developed.

Given the main issue that affects most residents is the noise from leaf blowers, not all two-stroke engines, this option represents the priority item that can and should be implemented ASAP. Create a special category of two-stroke engine equipment – leaf blower – and create a new noise bylaw provision for this use and set a decibel limit for it.

The report states that “New equipment being sold today tends to be quieter, with electric models being quieter than gas-powered models. However, the market now includes "low noise" gas-powered leaf blowers, which are rated at a sound level of 65 dB. Comparatively, typical speech is about 60 dB and a washing machine is 75 dB (2022.EC31.4).” This kind of change was anticipated in Recommendation 15. of the EC31.4 report which states that “City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to report back during the Noise Bylaw Review in 2023 regarding options for setting decibel limits for power devices.”

Therefore we recommend:

- that the Noise Bylaw be amended to establish 65 decibels as the maximum allowed for leaf blowers and require development of a transition plan.

Geoff Kettel
Co Chair FoNTRA

Cathie Macdonald
Co-Chair FoNTRA

CC: Carlton Grant, Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards
Cecilia Fernandes, Acting Manager, Policy & Research, Environment & Energy Division

The Federation of North Toronto Residents' Associations (FoNTRA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization comprised of over 30 member organizations. Its members, all residents' associations, include at least 170,000 Toronto residents within their boundaries. The residents' associations that make up FoNTRA believe that Ontario and Toronto can and should achieve better development. Its central issue is not *whether* Toronto will grow, but *how*. FoNTRA believes that sustainable urban regions are characterized by environmental balance, fiscal viability, infrastructure investment and social renewal.