

# Implementation Review of the Noise By-law

Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) Division

Economic and Community Development Committee

January 11, 2024



# Report Summary

- Toronto's [Noise By-law](#) (Chapter 591) provides time restrictions and sound level limits for various types of noise in the City and aims to balance the City's cultural vibrancy with a safe and healthy quality of life.
- As directed by Council, the purpose of this report is to evaluate the successes and challenges of comprehensive amendments made to the By-law in 2019, and to recommend several enhancements.
- Proposed enhancements clarify definitions to improve compliance and enforcement and modernize the noise exemption permit process.

# Regulating Noise

Noise is managed and regulated at the municipal, provincial, and federal level



## **Municipal response available**

- Animal noise
- Amplified sound (such as music)
- Auditory signalling devices (such as bells, horns and gongs)
- Construction noise
- Domestic tools & power equipment
- Residential air conditioners
- Stationary sources (such as generators and fans) not regulated by the province
- Stationary motor vehicle noise



## **Outside of City's jurisdiction**

- Moving motor vehicle noise
- Airport / aircraft noise
- Noise from provincial or federal infrastructure projects
- Stationary sources subject to the Environmental Protection Act
- Railway noise
- Wind turbines

# Regulating Noise (continued)

- Managing and regulating noise is a complex undertaking that must balance multiple competing interests.
- The Noise By-law aims to maintain a livable and peaceful atmosphere in Toronto, while recognizing that certain levels of noise reflect life in a vibrant and densely populated city.
- By-law Enforcement Officers are not emergency responders and do not respond to noise complaints on an emergency basis, nor do they have the authority to immediately stop a noise event or pull over moving vehicles.
- MLS' goal is to ensure compliance with the By-law through education first, and to escalate further as needed.

# Changes Made in 2019

Multi-year By-law review conducted from 2015 to 2019  
New Noise By-law came into effect October 1, 2019

- ✓ Introduced a **Dedicated Noise Enforcement Team**, which currently has 28 staff and late night-coverage (to 2 a.m.)
- ✓ Introduced daytime and nighttime numerical limits (decibels) to measure amplified sound from a **point of reception** (where the disturbance is experienced)
- ✓ Replaced a general prohibition on noise with a provision for **"unreasonable and persistent noise"**
- ✓ Implemented Council direction to add a **decibel limit for motorcycles** into the By-law, measured at idle
- ✓ Enabled new **case management system** to investigate noise service requests



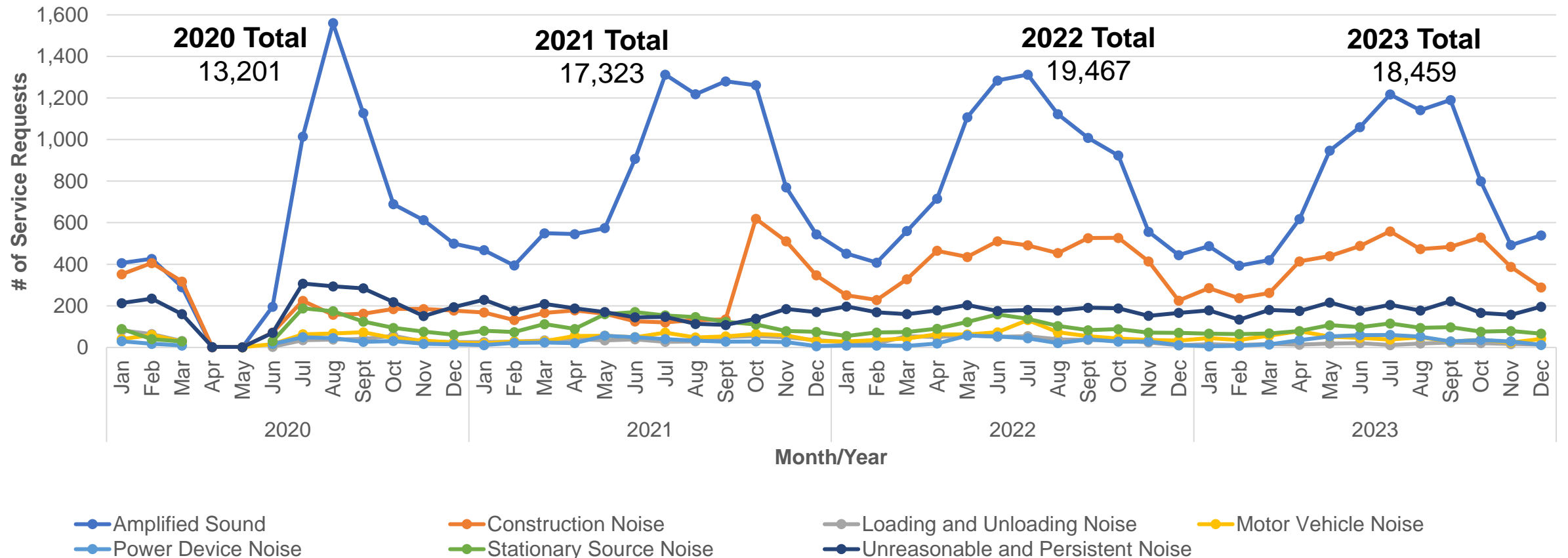
# What Has Happened Since 2019



- Pandemic introduced new noise and sound sensitives
- Increase in construction projects and use of outdoor patios
- Average of approximately **18,900 noise service requests** (complaints) received in 2022 and 2023
- **Noise exemption permit volumes increased by 40% in 2023** compared to 2022

# 311 Noise Service Requests

## 311 Noise Service Requests (2020-2023)



# 2023 Report: Public Engagement

**750** participants attended  
6 public consultation meetings

**1,003** people surveyed through  
third-party public opinion research

**2,200+** emails received

Dedicated industry meetings

## What did we hear?

- **Split in public opinion:** 51% respondents considered noise levels in Toronto to be reasonable, while 49% wanted additional restrictions
- **Many consultation participants** were residents wanting stricter provisions and increased enforcement of the By-law
- **94% of e-mails** expressed support for live music/outdoor events and concerns about any additional restrictions



# 2023 Report: Proposed Enhancements

Lower **nighttime** (11 p.m. to 7 a.m.) **indoor** decibel limits for amplified sound (measured from a point of reception)

Adding a **motor vehicle noise decibel limit** + commitment from TPS to support enforcement

Incorporate **sound-induced vibration** into the prohibition on “unreasonable and persistent” noise

Maintain exemption for **waste collection noise**; collect additional data

**Amendments to Bylaw definitions** e.g., broadening “point of reception” and capturing instruments in the amplified sound section

**Enable adjustments for sound level measurements**, such as a penalty for tonal elements such as a hiss, hum, or buzz

# 2023 Report: Proposed Enhancements (continued)

Make **technical amendments to noise from stationary sources / residential air conditioners** to align with provincial noise guidelines

Introduce **activity-based noise exemption permits** that differentiate higher and lower impact activities

**Updates to 311 intake process** to capture additional noise service requests

**Update user fees for noise exemption permits and noise monitoring** to ensure cost recovery and align with proposed permit framework

## Financial impact

- Proposed addition of a Coordinator to support administration of noise exemption permits
- Fully offset by additional projected revenue from proposed fees (updated and new)

# Additional Proposed Actions

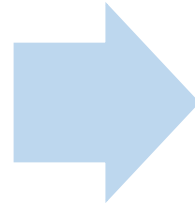
- **Power devices:** In July 2023, Council expressed support for a ban on two-stroke engine equipment. If dedicated resources are provided in the 2024 budget process, staff from various Divisions have been directed to initiate this work and report back in 2024 ([2023.IE5.1](#))
  - A decibel limit for power devices is not recommended due to challenges in enforcement and determining appropriate limits, as well as duplication if a two-stroke engine equipment ban is pursued
- **Public education:** Conducting a City-wide public education campaign to support awareness and compliance
- **Automated noise radar:** Equipment is not yet automated and still requires manual review; report re-iterates request to the provincial government to amend legislation to allow for the City's use of the equipment when the technology is ready
- **Enforcement:** As part of implementation, staff will update operating procedures, technical noise enforcement manuals, and officer training

# Proposed Implementation Timing

**June 1, 2024**

Phase 1

Proposed in-effect date for by-law amendments related to definition and prohibition changes



**September 1, 2024**

Phase 2

Proposed in-effect date for by-law amendments specific to noise exemption permits, including permit application fees