

The City Clerk
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RE: EWCA comments for 2024.EC16.4 on October 23, 2024, Economic and Community Development Committee

To the Esteemed Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

As the City Council prepares to address the pressing issue of noise pollution through the "Update on Outstanding Directives Related to the Noise By-law," we implore this committee to reconsider the significant repercussions of the 2022 decision to exempt waste collection from nighttime noise restrictions. This decision, made without public consultation, has had a detrimental impact on the health and well-being of Toronto residents, some of whom are children attending local schools, TTC drivers, airline pilots, and drivers in general, whose performance depends on an uninterrupted night's sleep.

The East Waterfront Community Association (EWCA) was forged from sound and light as it became a City of Toronto Stakeholder for the Gardiner Expressway Rehabilitation – Jarvis to Cherry Street in 2019 - 2020, a 24/7 construction project in our community. The founders of EWCA worked diligently with Councillor Joe Cressy, Toronto City Staff, Chief Engineer and Executive Director, the contractor's Project Manager and representatives of the area communities from St Lawrence, Distillery District, Monde Condominium and Cooperative Housing to resolve this community noise issue. We collaborated with the city and the contractor to reduce nighttime noise while keeping the project moving forward. Actions taken by the city and the contractor included the placement of sound-level recording equipment on Monde Condominium and the establishment of a special complaint management system.

The staff report acknowledges the need to "reduce noise from waste collection" yet proposes maintaining the exemption, citing "limited data" and the "benefits of mitigating waste buildup." While we appreciate the need to manage waste effectively, we firmly believe that the current approach prioritizes expediency over residents' fundamental right to be consulted.

The pervasive noise generated by waste collection activities throughout the night disrupts sleep patterns, leading to chronic fatigue, heightened stress levels, and diminished cognitive function. The World Health Organization recognizes noise pollution as a severe environmental threat linked to cardiovascular disease, mental health disorders, and impaired learning abilities. Garbage trucks range from 85 to 100 decibels as they're compacting trash. Recommendations for garbage truck workers include hearing protection. In terms of occupational hearing hazards, exposure to sounds at 85 decibels for more than 8 hours a day could seriously damage hearing. Our residents have no such protection from the noise generated by garbage trucks at night.

The report suggests "programmatic changes" and "community mediation" as solutions. However, these measures are time-consuming for residents and staff, reactive, and insufficient to address the root cause of the problem: the unrestricted operation of excessively noisy waste collection equipment at all hours. Our residents live in condos and disagree that it is acceptable to continue allowing noise from waste collection trucks at all hours. This differs from those living in other housing types, particularly single-family detached houses in other areas of Toronto.

We urge the committee to reconsider the following:

Revoke the exemption: Suspend the exemption for waste collection noise until a comprehensive community consultation process and plan to move forward are implemented to mitigate its impact.

Mandate noise reduction technologies: Require quieter waste collection vehicles and equipment, including implementing "industrial bumpers on bins" and modified broadband backup beepers, and training for drivers to understand their part and to use quieter waste collection methods.

Enforce noise limits: Implement sound level monitors and video cameras in areas with nighttime collection to ensure compliance with noise regulations. Instruct Municipal Licensing and Standards staff to visit the sites to observe and record the procedures firsthand.

Establish accountability: Introduce a system to track noise complaints from garbage collection and impose fines on waste collection companies and drivers who violate noise limits.

Collaborate with EWCA and other resident associations: Develop and publish online guidance documents on best practices for mitigating noise from waste collection operations for waste collectors, property managers, and residents.

There are several positive and forward-thinking ideas in the staff report which we support. Proceeding without community consultation is not one of them. The current approach places the onus on residents to report excessive noise and engage in mediation. This places an unacceptable burden on individuals already suffering the consequences of a policy enacted without their input.

We implore the committee to prioritize the health and well-being of Toronto residents. Through collaboration with stakeholders like EWCA and by taking decisive action to curb nighttime noise pollution from waste collection, you can demonstrate a commitment to creating an enjoyable, livable and healthy city for all.

Sincerely,



Michael Bethke

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