

Board of Health

From: "Allison Kirk-Montgomery" <civicinput@newmode.org>
Sent: July 5, 2024 11:08 AM
To: Board of Health
Subject: [External Sender] Let's reduce noise pollution in our communities

Categories: Communication

Dear City Division Board of Health,

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the July 8, 2024 Board of Health meeting on item 2024.HL14.1, Toronto Public Health Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

Palmerston Area Residents' Association is asking the Board of Health to direct the Medical Officer of Health to address indoor and outdoor noise health issues as part of Toronto Public Health's Strategic Plan. Noise pollution is on the rise and there are no biological defenses for sound. This reduces the health of people and ecosystems and increases the impacts of climate change – it impacts everyone and everything.

Noise is a serious public health issue.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified Noise as the # 2 urban environmental health hazard (after air pollution which is # 1). Some of the noises that disturb us can be easily eliminated or prevented with proactive actions such as educating residents and elected officials, enforcement of laws, better bylaws and the use of modern technologies in enforcement and materials in construction.
- As Toronto Public Health (TPH) stated in ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE STUDY IN THE CITY OF TORONTO¹, almost 93% of Toronto residents must try to sleep in an environment above the WHO guideline of 45 dBA. Since that report was produced sound levels have increased. Unmitigated, unnecessary noise overburdens healthcare and necessitates medical treatments that would not be needed if noise was regulated properly.
- Indoor noise due to poor construction and maintenance allows noise from other areas and from outside to penetrate our homes, providing no place for rest and recovery.

Noise is also a climate issue.

- Buildings are the # 1 producer of GHG's in the city. Our inability to open our windows to cool ourselves due to the noise outside becomes a health hazard in the summer. And when we turn on our air conditioning, we increase our emission of GHGs even more.
- Transportation is the #2 producer of GHGs. It is also the most ubiquitous source of noise. Of course, all this noise forces us to go inside, and (if we are lucky enough) to turn on our AC (see above!).
- To make matters worse, too many Torontonians modify the exhaust systems of their vehicles (which is illegal). This

reduces or eliminates the emissions controls intended to reduce climate change and creates a lot of unnecessary noise. Enforcement is random at best.

Noise is also a serious equity issue

- As the TPH report noted, those in the lowest income quartile are 11 times more likely to live in loud places.
- Those who are blind, have disabilities and cognitive impairments are also physically and mentally more impacted.

As Toronto Public Health is creating their Strategic Plan for the next 4 years, you have an opportunity to review the 2019 Noise Action Plan². We also encourage you to work with Community groups, such as No More Noise Toronto, to learn about the impacts and find solutions.

We are asking you to give indoor and outdoor noise pollution the attention that it deserves

Sources:

1: ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE STUDY IN THE CITY OF TORONTO: <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/8f4d-tpH-Environmental-Noise-Study-2017.pdf>

2: 2019 TPH Noise Action Plan: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2019/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-138868.pdf>

Sincerely,
Allison Kirk-Montgomery
Palmerston Area Residents' Association