

Board of Health

From: Sharon Johnson <civicinput@newmode.org>
Sent: July 7, 2024 11:12 AM
To: Board of Health
Subject: [External Sender] Reducing noise pollution benefits everyone

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:

We are asking for 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.

Among issues outlined later in this letter, of grave concern is noise caused by neighbours living in Bayview Village. It has been brought to the attention of the Bayview Village Association that disruptive, disrespectful, arrogant neighbours are causing many residents health issues including mental and physical health issues, lack of sleep, neighbours unable to enjoy the comfort of their own homes due to their neighbours outside late at night and early morning using loud voices, having parties, cars coming and going at all hours, congregating on their property and on the streets drinking and smoking cannabis, littering, and causing mischief.

There is currently no by-law for loud voices and parties. This does not involve loud music which there is a by-law, only voices, mischief, and parties. This needs to be addressed as the BVA has noted an increase of this type of disruptive behaviour and has received many complaints from residents.

In addition to the noise, garbage is left on the streets, and on neighbours property. This type of behaviour is causing many residents to feel unsafe, especially seniors. The noise pollution is connected with trash and littering and all are detrimental to the environment, humans, pets, vegetation, and wildlife, and the aesthetics of the neighbourhood. The BVA considers loud voices and parties that cause noise no different from other noise pollution such as air conditioners, idling cars, construction, etc., especially when the noise pollution from loud voices, parties, and mischief occurs mainly between 11pm-6am. Many neighbours have complained to Police and 311. However, because of the lack of a by-law controlling this type of noise pollution (loud voices, parties, mischief) there is very little Police and the City can do to address this. Therefore, the BVA is requesting a by-law is implemented to control and enforce noise pollution of loud

voices, parties and mischief in our neighbourhood and in all of Toronto.

- 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, better bylaws and using modern technologies in enforcement and materials in construction.
- As Toronto Public Health (TPH) mentioned, in their own 2017 report 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.

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, cognitive impairments, and sensory sensitivities are also physically and mentally more affected. They are hurt or excluded. Loneliness may indeed be a by product of excessive noise.
- The public spaces of our streets and sidewalks are hostile and loud, impacting those not in/on vehicles. Loud streets are not safe streets.

As Toronto Public Health is creating their Strategic Plan for the next 4 years, you have a new opportunity to dust off the 2019 Noise Action Plan². From this document, objectives could be developed and workplans implemented with results evaluated for effectiveness. 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.

Sincerely,

Sharon Johnson,
Chair, Environment Committee, Bayview Village Association.

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,
Sharon Johnson
Chair, Environment Committee, Bayview Village Association