



Clerk and Members of Planning and Housing Committee  
Toronto City Hall  
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Toronto, ON M5H 2N2  
Email: phc@toronto.ca

January 15, 2024

RE: Councillor Saxe's request: Fraternities should NOT be exempt regulation

The Annex – a comparatively small area of Ward 11 – has the largest concentration of fraternity and sorority houses in Toronto. While we are entirely supportive of affordable and safe housing, especially for students, we strongly disagree with these houses being exempt from the multi-tenant housing bylaw. And our concern is for both our own residents and the fraternity and sorority members themselves.

While many of these houses maintain their properties and make good neighbours, there is a long history of conflict between occupants of some of these houses and other Annex residents.

In the last decade or so, we have been made aware of drug busts, fires, sexual assaults, and at least two deaths, in addition to regular rowdy drunken parties in which alcohol is served to crowds so large the occupants often spill out onto the sidewalks. There are no proper liquor licenses issued, even when there is a cover charge, and some of the attendees appear to be minors. Time after time residents call 311 to report multiple infractions, but these never seem to get addressed.

Moreover, while Annex residents are regularly disturbed and inconvenienced by such behaviour, there is no doubt that those who actually live in these houses are also at risk. Surely the occupants deserve the same protections afforded others living in multi-tenant housing. Are there operational fire detectors and smoke alarms? Should there be a functional sprinkler system? Are exits sufficient, free, and clear? Is accumulated debris and garbage posing a fire hazard? These are legitimate concerns that can only be properly assessed and monitored by municipal inspectors.

Fraternity members argue that they are like a family and should continue to operate without oversight. Yet these “family” members change yearly while often there does not appear to be a responsible grown-up in the house. The argument is spurious. And the fear of regulation of any kind frankly suspect. What aspect of municipal regulation is of such concern that the fraternity members lobby so vigorously to avoid it?

Currently these houses operate in a regulatory vacuum. This must change. We ask you to support our Councillor's request and remove their exemption from the multi-tenant housing by-laws.

Yours sincerely,

Rita Bilerman  
Chair, Annex Residents' Association

Cc: Mayor Chow  
FoNTRA  
FoSTRA  
Councillor Saxe