

# Implementation Review of the Noise Bylaw: General Noise

September 19, 2023  
Virtual Meeting



# Overview and Purpose of Consultation

- City Council approved amendments to the Noise Bylaw in 2019 after a multi-year review
- As per direction from City Council, an implementation review is now being conducted to assess the successes and challenges with the 2019 amendments and consider potential refinements
- **Purpose of consultation** - gather information regarding experiences with the Bylaw and present and seek feedback on draft potential refinements
- **Timeline** - Staff intend to report to the Economic and Community Development Committee in **November 2023**
- **Note** - The City does not intend to pursue wide-ranging changes to the categories or to completely reframe definitions in the Bylaw at this time

# Toronto's Noise Bylaw

- [Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 591, Noise](#) ("Noise Bylaw") provides standards for noise and applies to all properties in Toronto
- Certain levels of noise are reasonable and reflect life in a densely populated city and the Bylaw aims to strike a balance between setting reasonable standards for certain types of noise and addressing the needs of residents and visitors
- The Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) Division responds to persistent and recurring noise using a priority response model
  - MLS is not resourced on an emergency basis

# What types of noise can be regulated under the Noise Bylaw?



## Municipal response available

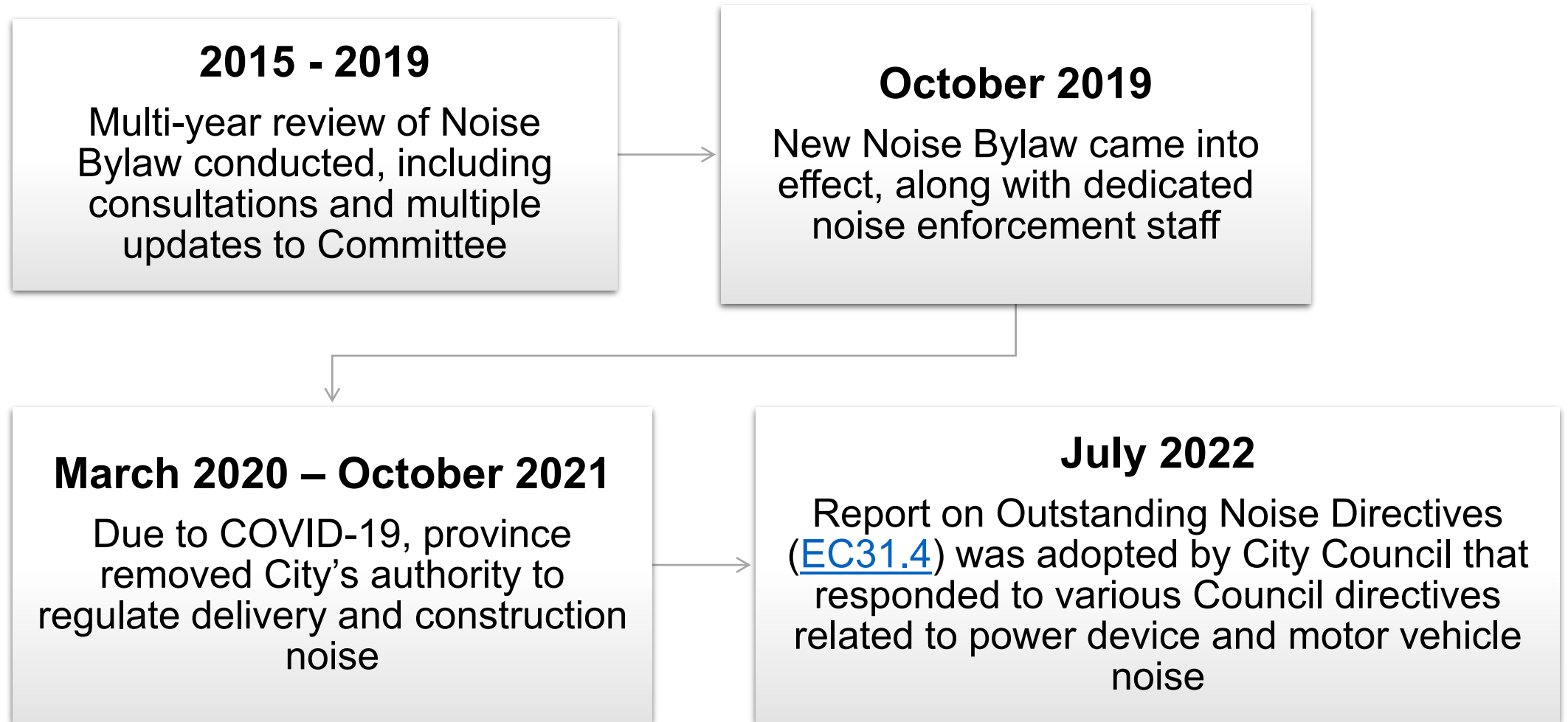
- Animal Noise
- Amplified Sound (such as music)
- Auditory Signalling Devices (such as bells, horns and gongs)
- Construction Noise
- Domestic Tools & Power Equipment
- Residential Air Conditioners
- Stationary Sources (such as generators and fans)
- Stationary Motor Vehicle Noise



## Outside of City's jurisdiction







- Moving Motor Vehicle Noise
- Airport/Aircraft Noise
- Noise from Provincial or Federal Infrastructure Projects
- Railway Noise
- Wind Turbines

# Noise Bylaw Developments



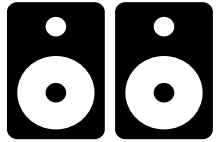
# Criteria for Considering Bylaw Amendments

## Criteria

<b>Jurisdiction/Legal Authority</b>		Falls within the legal and jurisdictional authority of the City of Toronto and more specifically, the Noise Bylaw
<b>Reduces Impact on Residents</b>		Responds to the expectation that residents should be able to live without undue noise
<b>Reasonable</b>		Reflects the reality of a growing and vibrant city; such as, densification, infrastructure improvements and the promotion of culture and music
<b>Enforceable</b>		Promotes compliance as a first step and considers the City's resources available to reasonably enforce and prosecute the bylaw
<b>Administratively Feasible</b>		Administrative effort is worth the return (e.g. it may be costly and staff intensive, but it is an effective deterrent)
<b>Objective</b>		Reduces the subjective nature of the bylaw, providing more certainty to residents, businesses and MLS

# 2019 Noise Bylaw Review

## Key Amendments (1)



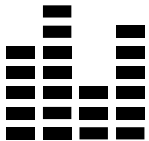
Introduced daytime and nighttime numerical limits (decibels) to measure amplified sound from a point of reception



Added a decibel limit and test procedure for motorcycles at idle (92 db(A))



Time prohibition on all construction noise (7 p.m. – 7 a.m. weekdays, 7 p.m. to 9 a.m. on Saturdays)



Continuous concrete pouring and large crane work exemption replaced by a streamlined exemption permit process

# 2019 Noise Bylaw Review

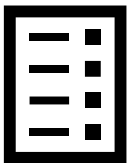
## Key Amendments (2)



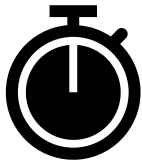
Introduced an online 311 reporting system and a Dedicated Noise Enforcement Team, which currently has 27 staff and late night-coverage (to 2 a.m.)



Replaced the general prohibition with a provision for "unreasonable and persistent noise"



Introduced a more streamlined exemption permit process with the ability to revoke permits and impose conditions, like a noise mitigation plan, when necessary



Removed quiet zones and harmonized time constraints across all specific prohibitions



# Implementation Update

# What Has Happened Since 2019

## Impacts of pandemic:

- Enforcement staff were redirected to enforce public health orders
- Province limited the City's authority, affecting data trends and the City's ability to respond to certain noise concerns

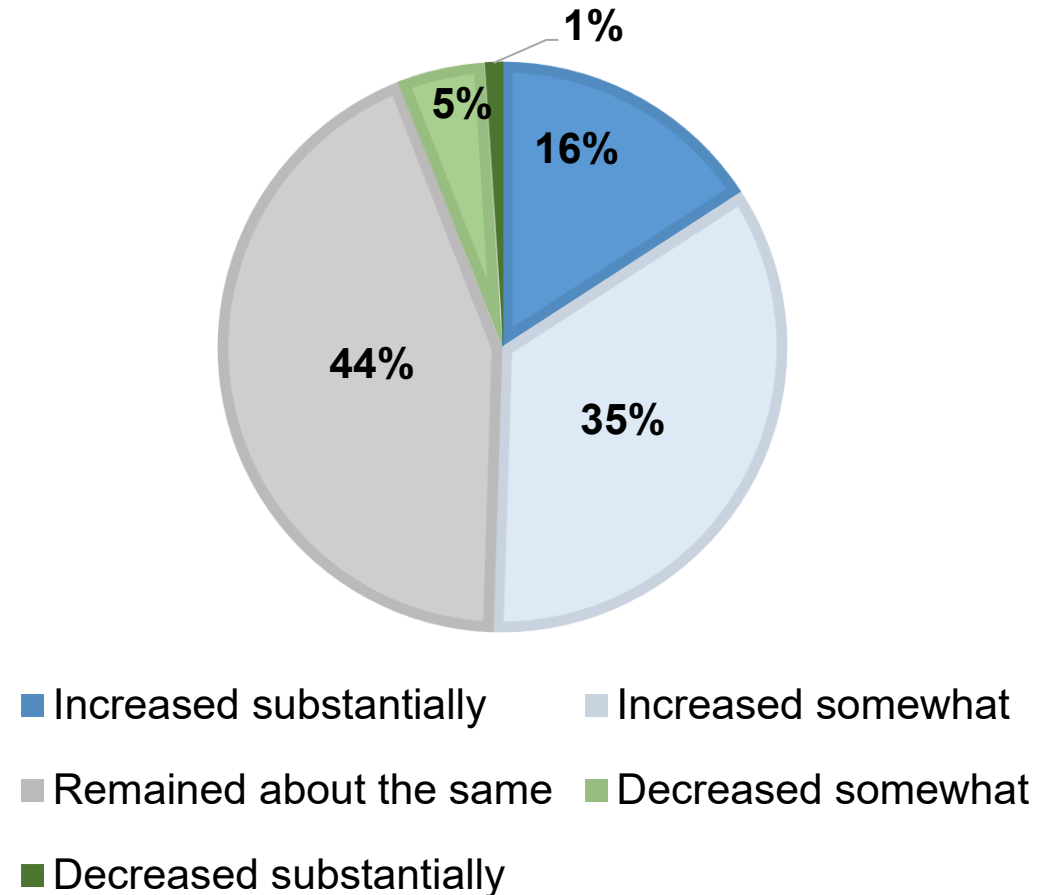
## Implementation concerns:

- Increase in construction projects and use of outdoor patios
- Research shows that conflict related to sound and noise remain top of mind for residents
- High volume of noise complaints has strained enforcement resources, with 811 case files per officer (2022 average)

# 2023 Public Opinion Research

- Conducted by a third-party firm, with a sample size of approx. 1000
- Full analysis will be included in the staff report
- Majority agree with using sound level limits to enforce the Noise Bylaw, with **70%** agreeing that they should be used to measure how loud an event or object is, and **68%** agreeing they should be measured from the location of the complainant

**OVER THE PAST YEAR, I FEEL THAT NOISE LEVELS IN THE CITY HAVE...**

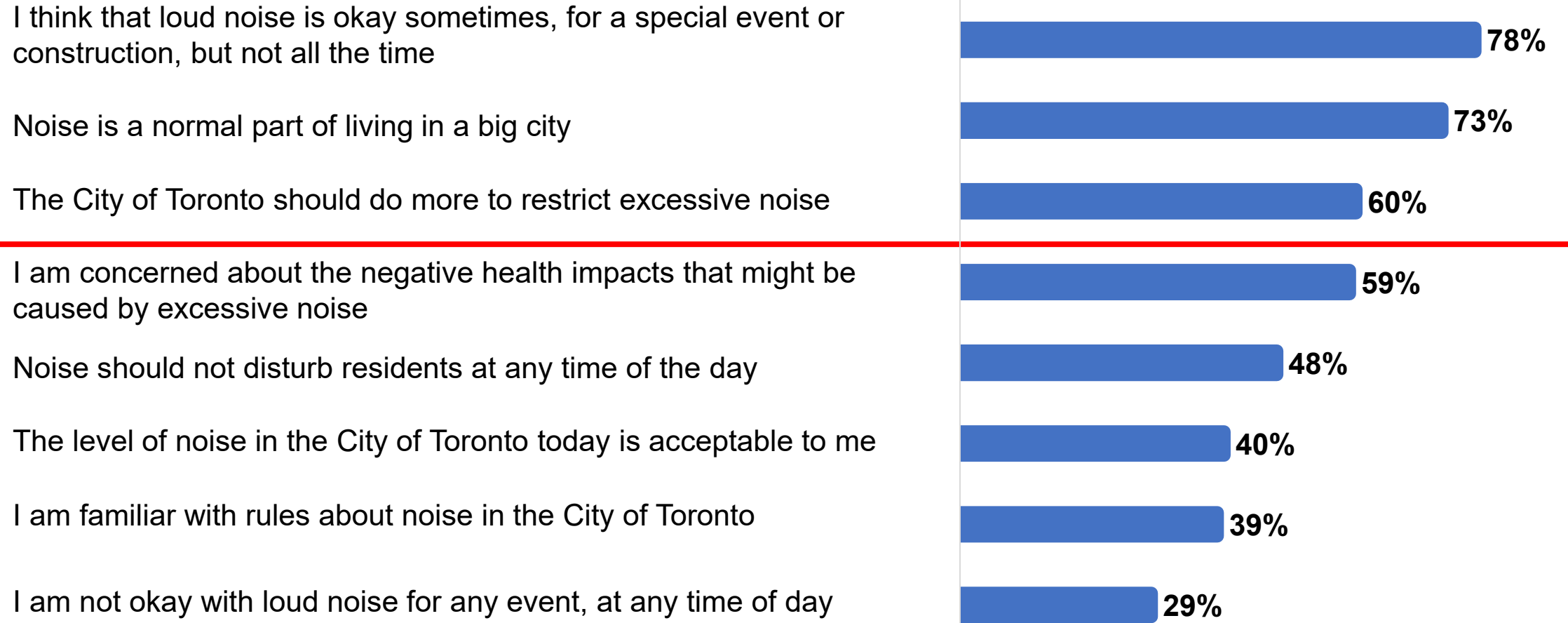


# Public Opinion Research

## General Attitudes Towards Noise

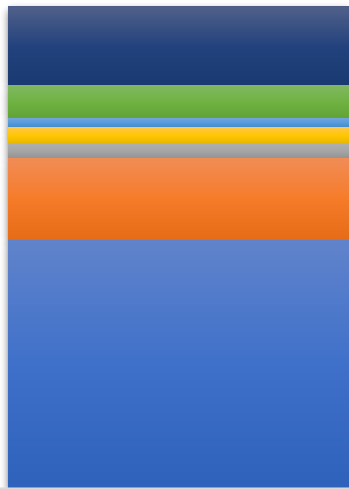
Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (n = 1003)

% of respondents who strongly or somewhat agree with the following statements:



# 311 Noise Complaints

13,201



2020

17,323



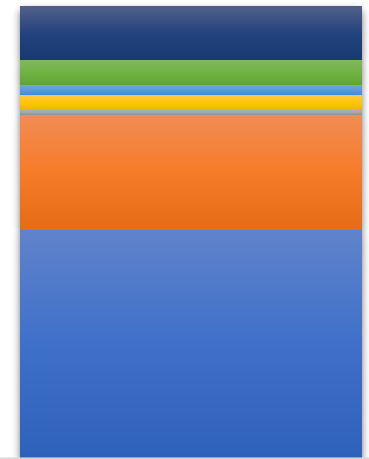
2021

19,467



2022

12,381  
(As of Aug 31 2023)



2023

■ Amplified Sound  
■ Loading and Unloading Noise  
■ Power Device Noise  
■ Unreasonable and Persistent Noise

■ Construction Noise  
■ Motor Vehicle Noise  
■ Stationary Source Noise

# Table of Noise Complaints

Noise Service Type	2020	2021	2022	2023 (as of Aug 31)	Total	% Total
Amplified Sound	6,821	9,822	9,890	6,283	32,816	73%
Construction Noise	2,238	2,795	4,855	3,156	13,044	29%
Loading and Unloading Noise	404	447	457	125	1,433	3%
Motor Vehicle Noise	449	565	677	401	2,092	5%
Power Device Noise	255	345	326	286	1,212	3%
Stationary Source Noise	905	1,372	1,125	689	4,091	9%
Unreasonable and Persistent Noise	2,129	1,977	2,137	1,441	7,684	17%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13,201</b>	<b>17,323</b>	<b>19,467</b>	<b>12,381</b>	<b>45,049</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Potential Refinements

# How were the potential refinements created?

- ✓ July 2023 public opinion research
- ✓ Feedback from residents, stakeholders, and enforcement staff since 2019 (including 311 complaints and enforcement data)
- ✓ Draft technical assessments from acoustic engineering firm
- ✓ Jurisdictional scan of noise regulations from other municipalities

**Note:** Potential refinements are in draft form, may not be fully detailed, and are subject to approval by City Council. For discussion purposes only.



# Unreasonable and Persistent Noise

CURRENT BYLAW	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT
§ 591-2.9. Unreasonable and persistent noise	Permit category to be used when there are multiple noise sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Category introduced in 2019, replacing a general prohibition on noise “likely to disturb”</li><li>– Prohibits noise at any time if it is unreasonable, persistent and not captured by a specific prohibition (for example, amplified sound or construction)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Consider additional language that the section can be used when multiple noise sources are causing a disturbance</li><li>– In some cases, the presence of multiple sources could reduce the effectiveness of a specific prohibition</li></ul>

***Considering refinement to strengthen and clarify use of this provision***

# Waste Collection Noise

CURRENT BYLAW	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT
Waste collection noise is exempt from the Bylaw	Remove exemption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- As a result of a motion at City Council in 2022 (<a href="#">EC31.4</a>), all waste collection was made exempt from the Bylaw<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Consultation was not conducted before the exemption was passed</li></ul></li><li>- Before this change, waste collection noise was prohibited overnight<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Public opinion research: 67% feel that is acceptable to continue to allow noise from waste collection at all hours</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Private waste collection could be required to meet the time prohibition for Loading and Unloading, as it was before (11 p.m. to 7 a.m. on weekdays, 11 p.m. to 9 a.m. on weekends and statutory holidays)</li></ul>

# Power Device Noise

**NOTE:** In July 2023, City Council expressed support for a ban on the use of two-stroke small engine equipment as a precaution against adverse impacts to human health and climate

CURRENT BYLAW	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT 1	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT 2	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT 3
§ 591-2.6. Power devices	Consider appropriateness of status quo time constraints	Amend definition	Amend definition + Add decibel limits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sound from a power device prohibited from 7 p.m. until 8 a.m. the next day, except until 9 a.m. on Saturdays, Sundays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any amendment to the time constraints should ensure flexibility for the reasonable use of power devices, while balancing resident concerns about excessive noise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider minor amendment to capture additional property tools, including pressure/power washers used for maintenance of private property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acoustical consultant to support on assessment of reasonable decibel levels (clearly audible from a point of reception) as well as practical limitations</li> </ul>

# Exemption Permits

**Note:** In 2022, MLS issued 865 exemption permits, and in 2023 MLS has already issued 980 permits (as of Aug 31)

CURRENT BYLAW	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT 1	POTENTIAL REFINEMENT 2
§ 591-3.2. Exemption permits.	Update provisions	Update provisions + consider graduated exemption permits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Permits are subject to Councillor approval</li><li>- Limited to 85 dBA 20 metres from the source</li><li>- MLS has the authority to request a noise mitigation plan and/or sound level monitoring by City staff and can revoke a permit if operator is non-compliant</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- dBC limit in addition to dBA</li><li>- Set application deadline of 4 weeks prior to event, with an associated late fee</li><li>- Consider setting a limit for how long a permit lasts (3 or 6 months)</li><li>- Clarify Councillor has 14 <u>calendar</u> days to respond and object</li><li>- Consider waiving permit fees for not-for profit organizations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Introduce (1) Low impact or (2) High impact permits</li><li>- Impact to be defined based on number of attendees, type of equipment being used, duration and location</li><li>- High impact events to also provide rationale for exemption, noise mitigation plan, and/or statement from acoustical engineer</li></ul>

# Noise Fees

Changes to exemption permit application and noise monitoring fees will be proposed in the staff report (subject to additional analysis), the report will also include consideration of a late fee for exemption permit applications

	EXEMPTION PERMIT APPLICATION FEE	NOISE MONITORING FEE
SUMMARY	Fee is required for each application	If monitoring is required as a condition of the exemption permit, staff must be made available
CURRENT AMOUNT	\$100 (not adjusted annually)	\$60 per staff per hour (not adjusted annually)
RATIONALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Fees do not differ depending on impact of event</li><li>- Updated analysis is needed to ensure the fee is fully cost recovery per the City's User Fee Policy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Per hour calculation is not reflective of current salaries or staff overtime</li><li>- Updated analysis is needed to ensure full cost recovery per the City's User Fee Policy</li></ul>

# What's Next?

**September 2023**

Public Consultation  
Meetings

**October 15, 2023**

Last day to submit written  
comments to

[MLSfeedback@toronto.ca](mailto:MLSfeedback@toronto.ca)

**November 2023**

Report considered by the  
Economic and Community  
Development Committee

# Appendix

# Outstanding directives

**Introduce a decibel limit for motor vehicles at idle**

**Consider options for decibel limits for power devices**

**Continue to monitor technology developments related to automated noise enforcement / noise radar**

**Review noise from City vehicles and fleets, including waste collection services**

**Consult with Toronto Public Health (TPH) about the health impacts of noise.**

**Review the implementation of 2019 Bylaw changes, including:**

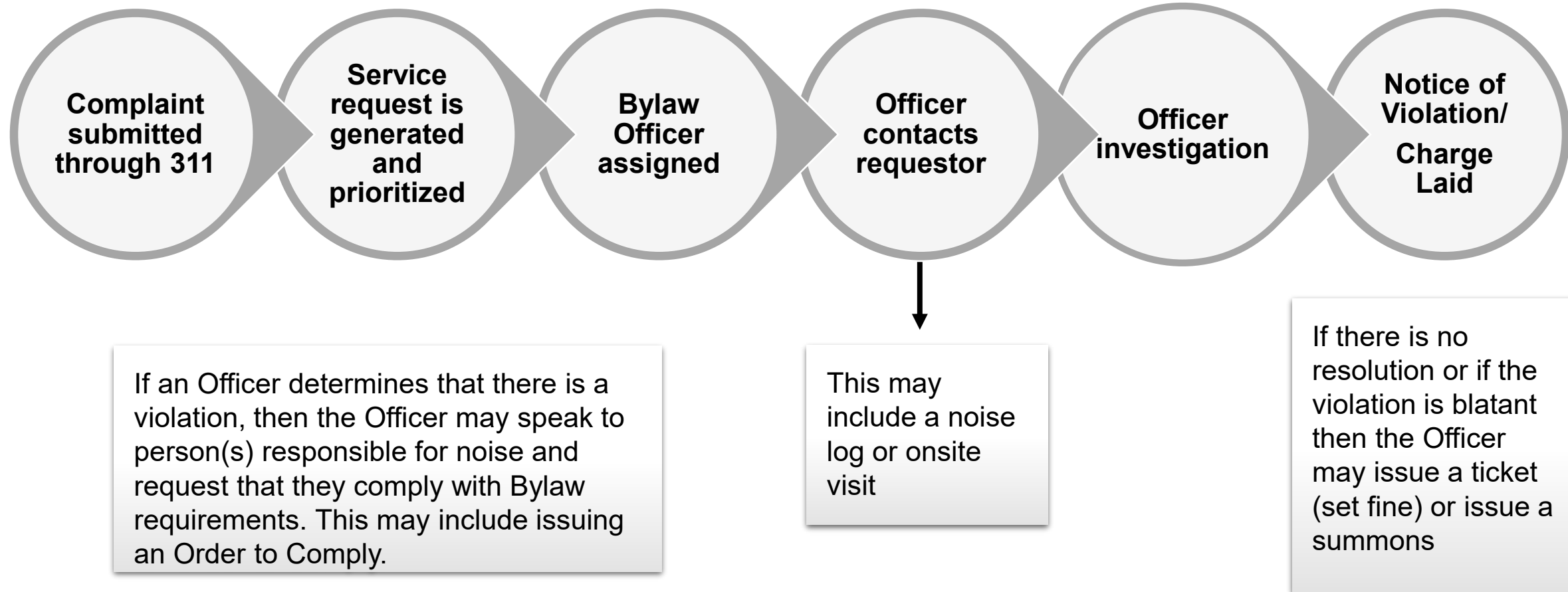
- new measurement standards
- new hierarchy of limitation provisions
- impacts to the construction industry
- patterns and trends in complaints and resolutions;
- issues related to amplified sound within residential areas; and
  - impacts to enforcement.

**Review developments on motor vehicle noise, including:**

- complaint levels and locations
- results of enforcement blitzes, and
- assessing additional options to support a reduction in motor vehicle noise



# Investigating a Noise Complaint



# Offences and Charges

Any person who contravenes any provision of the Bylaw, or fails to comply with an exemption permit or order issued under the Bylaw, is guilty of an offence and upon conviction is liable to a fine of no more than \$100,000

- There is a special fine in an amount equal to any economic gain obtained from non-compliance
- Each offence can be designated as a continuing offence with a maximum daily fine of \$10,000 if the offence continues and a total fine which may exceed \$100,000

Charges include:

- **Set Fines:** There are currently 13 set fines ranging from \$500 - \$700 for the Noise Bylaw. MLS applies for set fines through the Ontario Court of Justice
- **Summons:** The defendant must appear before a Justice of the Peace