

August 12, 2020

RE: Motion to Council - Racing, Stunting, and Excessive Vehicular Noise

Dear Members of City Council,

I am writing in support of the motion "Racing, Stunting, and Excessive Vehicular Noise". I believe noisy vehicles have become increasingly problematic in our city, disturbing residents in their homes, interfering with the ability of residents to sleep, and preventing the peaceful enjoyment of our outdoor spaces, including our own backyards. In the interests of the physical and mental health of all Regina residents, it is my sincerest hope that all city councillors will vote in favour of this motion.

I have been directly impacted by noisy vehicles, both in my own home and while trying to enjoy our City's many outdoor spaces. The noisy vehicles I most frequently observe appear to have been modified to generate substantially more noise, as they are often fitted with what appears to be a non-standard exhaust pipe. Some of these vehicles can be heard from kilometers away, often going down our major roads. While in my own home, these vehicles frequently disrupted my sleep, waking me up either during the night or early morning. I was constantly fatigued at my workplace and unable to focus, costing me considerable productivity. At one point I had been sleep deprived for several weeks, and I developed a chronic (week-long) headache that was unresponsive to ibuprofen, ASA, or acetaminophen. The many noise attenuation strategies I attempted had failed (earplugs, generating white, pink, or brown noise, etc), and eventually the sleep deprivation began to take a toll on my mental health. Family and colleagues noticed that I was easily startled, and had begun exhibiting signs of depression. Improving my outlook was quite the struggle. I eventually decided to try to get resolution through the Noise Abatement Bylaw (6980), which appeared to provide a means for resolution. But, after engaging with my councillor, the Mayor, Regina Police Service, and Bylaw Enforcement, I was disappointed to learn that the bylaw, as written, provides little to no support for the enforcement of vehicle noise. Given the serious impacts of vehicle noise on physical and mental health, it is critical that City Council pass this motion to empower residents and law enforcement to begin making important strides in improving the quality of life of all residents.

There is no debate that noise results in significant negative physiological and psychological health effects. There is a substantive body of individual peer-reviewed research to which I can refer, but most of this work has already been summarized in numerous comprehensive reports by Health Canada and the World Health Organization. There is also a more recent document authored by experts in public health for the City of Toronto entitled "How Loud is Too Loud?" (2017), which provides a synthesis of the latest research on the health impacts of noise. All documents highlight the negative physiological impacts of noise on cardiovascular health and sleep, and the significant mental health effects associated with sleep deprivation and annoyance. The collective evidence indicates unambiguously that environmental noise that exceeds certain thresholds has significant adverse health effects, as I experienced first-hand.

Noisy vehicles disturb our families, children, and the elderly, and disrupt our otherwise peaceful Regina neighbourhoods. Researchers have estimated that a single noisy vehicle disturbs thousands of people per trip, imposing multiple adverse physical and mental health effects on those who are subjected to it. Noisy vehicles make no positive contribution to our city, and are reducing the quality of life of residents who are simply trying to live in their homes or enjoy outdoor time with their families. All Regina residents deserve the right to enjoy the peace and quiet of their own homes without interference from others.

It is my sincerest hope that City Council will pass this motion so that planning for an enforcement strategy (for a bylaw that already exists) can begin. This will be a significant step toward improving the quality of life and well-being of all residents.

Sincerely,

John Stavrinides