

**The Noise Impact Statement Process
in Toronto**

**C. Andrew/J. Prashad
Department of Public Works
and the Environment
Noise Control Branch
433 Eastern Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M4M 1B7
392-0791**

Noise and the Planning Process

The major objective of the planning process is to minimize the potential for conflict through the effective planning and design of land uses.

Within the planning process all new development or redevelopment of lands within the City of Toronto is strictly regulated through the provisions of the Planning Act (1983) which prescribes general rules for land use planning within the Province of Ontario.

The City provides comments and recommendations with regard to land use planning on all matters relating to its mandate which is; the protection, conservation and management of the natural environment. Other subjects of concern are Noise and Vibration defined in the Environmental Protection Act as being containments.

Noise Impact Statements

The City of Toronto zoning process current policy may request a noise impact analysis of any development in cases requiring an Official Plan Amendment or rezoning. This study is generally referred to as a "Noise Impact Statement" (N.I.S.). It addresses three items as follows:

- (a) Impact of the Development on the Neighbourhood -
This is generally a forecast of the noise impact generated by the development, together with an outline of the methods proposed to control those noises from being projected into the adjacent neighbourhood.
- (b) Impact of the Neighbourhood on the Development -
An analysis which shows the effects of the existing noise environment on the development and the provisions proposed to control any undesirable effects on the development from a standpoint of noise intrusion. As a further precaution, the developer is asked upon completion of the project, to submit a letter from the acoustical consultant or architect certifying that the project has been constructed in accordance with the N.I.S.
- (c) Impact of the Development on Itself -
A detailed proposal for the control of noises generated within the development.

Prior to 1978, all Noise Impact Statement were subject to the same review process. Due to the great volume of development activity under way in the City, ranging from the renovation of a house for professional office use to the building of a huge apartment block, a more streamlined procedure was implemented to reduce the amount of time and data required in dealing with developments having minor noise impacts by dividing the Statements in to three classes:

Class 1

Deals with minimum impacts that can be prepared by the proponent without the need

for engaging the services of an acoustical consultant.

Class 2

Deals with projects sited within a reasonable acoustical environment but where, for example, the impact of noise from an improperly designed air-handling system could generate undesirable noise for the adjacent neighbours. The proponent, with the assistance of his architect, can usually analyze the effects of developments in this class.

Class 3

Deals with developments where a problem with the acoustical environment would most certainly occur unless specific steps are taken to counter the noise-related concerns.

The proponent is usually required to engage the services of an acoustical consultant to work with the project architect; the consultant is required to certify that the plans prepared for the project have incorporated the noise attenuation features as required by the Impact Statement. In some instances, the consultant is further required to certify that the noise attenuation features have been properly incorporated in the completed project.

Procedure

The City's Planning and Development Department circulates, for comments, an application from a developer for a zoning change, to various other Departments concerned within the zoning process. Subsequently, the applicant is informed as to whether a Noise Impact Statement is required.

Noise Impact Statements are reviewed by the Commissioner of Public Works and the Environment who, upon approval, informs the Commissioner of Planning and Development and the Commissioner of Buildings and Inspections Department as well as the City Solicitor. The approval is conditional upon the applicant agreeing to have the proposed development building plans certified by a qualified acoustical consultant and to construct the building in accordance with those recommendations outlined in the Noise Impact Statement, to the satisfaction to the Commissioner of Public Works and the Environment. This condition and others are secured through a collateral agreement which is registered on title following City Council's approval of the proposed development.

A building permit can be issued at this stage. In order to be consistent with the City's policy of "fast tracking" the issuance of building permits, a computer program has been developed. This program can be accessed by the various Departments involved in the process, thus eliminating any errors or delays that might otherwise be crucial in the process.

Noise Attenuation in Buildings

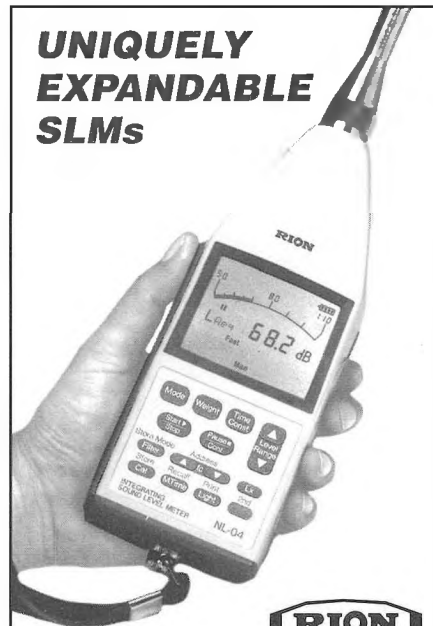
Inherent in the NIS process is the provision for sound transmission between dwellings units, hotels and motels. In the most recent edition of the Ontario Building Code construction of walls requires a Sound Transmission Class rating of 50 and floor a rating of 48. However it is questionable whether these ratings are adequate especially for the floor rating which is not based on impact sound transmission. Proposals for stricter requirements have been submitted however, substantial changes to the Building Code are not expected before the year 2000.

In the case of entertainment establishments and public halls, another potential means of control is through the Metro Licensing Commission. This agency does not presently have jurisdiction to require the setting and meeting of acoustical standards as a condition of issuing a license. In situations where a licensed applicant has had a history of Noise By-law convictions, the Licensing Commission will take this into consideration and may refuse to review a license on that basis. However many of these situations could be prevented by requiring the applicant to provide a suitable building enclosure and by committing to operating the establishment so as to minimize unnecessary noise.

Further Procedural Developments

In an effort to improve the pro-active process in dealing with potential noise impacts it has been proposed that not only Official Plan Amendments and Zoning changes, but also projects subject to Development Review be included. This would allow for the review of smaller scale developments not usually considered in terms of noise impact but where, in a number of cases, a problem occurs which must then be dealt with after the fact under the provisions of the Noise By-law. The additional review process is intended to be streamlined so that there is no added burden to the bureaucracy. A simplified application form is being devised so that for the majority of cases, a simple one page (Class 1) application will suffice.

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