



RIGHT TO QUIET SOCIETY for Soundscape Awareness and Protection

NOISELETTER - Summer 2019

Canada Charitable Registration BN: 11915 4680 RR 0001



Right to Quiet Society President Hans Schmid recognized as Hidden Hero

On June 22, 2019, Joyce Murray, Member of Parliament (Vancouver Quadra) recognized President Hans Schmid as a Hidden Hero: an outstanding, dedicated volunteer. For almost four decades, Schmid has helped people understand and combat unnecessary noise in their homes, workplaces, leisure activities, and habitats. Saturday, September 28, 2019, is Hans' last Annual General Meeting as President. Please join us and wish Hans well on his retirement.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: Saturday, September 28, 2019

Time: 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Location: Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, ground floor Vancity Room
2305 West 7th Ave (at Pine), Vancouver, B.C.

Agenda includes: Report on new initiatives and election of new Board officers

Members & Public Welcome!

Noise Questions & Answers with Hans Schmid

What is your favourite sound?

Nature's unspoiled "voice" far too seldom to be heard anymore in urban places.

What is your proudest achievement over the years you've volunteered with Right to Quiet Society?

If I wanted to be really proud of anything, which I am not, it would be the lucky fact that, with the great help and support of members and friends of quiet, the Right to Quiet Society managed to "pull through" doing its important work for 37 years, for 31 of which I was actively involved.

Some people say it's rude to measure sound levels in public. What do you think?

If people think it's rude to silently take readings of the sound levels with your gadget, I suggest telling them that it's a lot ruder to yak loudly on their cellphones and impose that noise on everyone within earshot. Those who don't talk should be complimented for that and explained that they have nothing to fear from sound-scrutiny. This could be part of educating people about measuring soundscape levels.

What do you think is the best form of noise control?

A combination of education and legislation.

In your view what noise interventions around the world have been most successful? Any examples?

Education combined with legislation and the positive application of ever advancing technology. Motor vehicles and machinery could be very well muffled, buildings well insulated, and good hearing protection produced.

What actions do you recommend people with noise concerns take to help persuade politicians, policy makers, decision makers, and the public to take noise seriously?

Tirelessly work to get more good, pertinent research done, on the findings of which to base persuasive arguments for the need of public education, prevention, and abatement of all detrimental human-made noise.



UK: Tube workers and commuters at risk of hearing loss, Eave study suggests

(*Health & Safety at Work, April 29, 2019*). Using their company's new technology combining hearing protection and sound level monitors, Eave measured noise levels on the London Underground transit system in only one day of data collection. Results showed commuter exposure exceeded the recommended limit of 70 dB throughout the transit system. Editor's Note: The 70 dB World Health Organization average daily limit is to prevent risk of permanent noise-induced hearing loss and/or tinnitus. Noise levels also exceeded speech interference limits for normal hearing populations and are a communication access problem for people with hearing disabilities or quiet communication needs.

Canada: Children who say hand dryers "hurt my ears" are correct



Photo by David Keegan

(*CBC News, June 21, 2019*). Nora Keegan of Calgary studied hearing health risk from 44 hand dryer models at arenas, restaurants, libraries, schools, and shopping malls. At age 13, *Paediatrics & Child Health (June 17, 2019)* published her findings.

- Sound levels were much louder at children's ear heights than adult heights.
- Sound levels were greater than Health Canada recommended peak limit of 100 dB.
- Dyson and XCelerator were the loudest models operating at about 110 dB.

Keegan looked for a solution. She experimented with different materials, creating a sound wave absorbing synthetic air filter that cuts sound levels by 11 dB. Worldwide reports of her achievement included CTV, CBC, CNN, NY Times, Huffington Post, and the British Tinnitus Association.

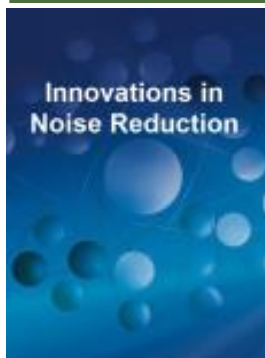
Note: the Right to Quiet Society Board of Directors personally congratulated Keegan.

US: Quiet Communities Act of 2019 pending federal funding

(*By J. Mayes*). This type of national noise control legislation could be a model for countries like Canada to consider. The Quiet Communities Act of 2019 (H.R.3001) requires US senate-approved funding of \$21,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023. This Act would reestablish the Office of Noise Abatement and Control (ONAC) in the Environmental Protection Agency. Before it was defunded in 1982, ONAC was responsible for:

- Regulations and noise emission standards for major noise sources, e.g. trucks, locomotives and railcars, air compressors, motorcycles, truck-mounted waste compactors, and buses.
- Coordination with FAA regarding airport noise regulation based on scientific and technical data.
- Labelling for products that emit noise including low noise emission products.
- Oversight of federal noise reduction programs and assist regional and local noise control efforts.
- Developing and promoting noise education, e.g. teaching materials for schools and unions.
- Sponsored research on noise health effects and noise abatement methods.

In an article on the *EPA and Noise Abatement*, Shapiro (1992, p. 20-21) suggested the main reasons for loss of EPA funding included a belief that "state and local governments could engage in noise control even in the absence of a federal program...[ONAC] lacked strong political allies" and a 1979 regulation limiting garbage truck noise emissions met strong objections from the regulated industry, local noise administrators, and White House staff.



(Research & Markets) This May 2019 *Innovations in Noise Reduction* research report by Frost and Sullivan describes futuristic processes and materials to control industrial, transportation, and building noise.

US: Drones to deliver incessant buzzing noise and packages

(*The Conversation*, May 3, 2019). The US approved commercial drone delivery including by Amazon. This article identifies shockingly unhealthy commercial drone sound levels.

80 dB = recreational drone

96 dB = commercial drone

Public Health General Noise Limits (dB LAeq)

Prepared by J. Mayes (2019)



EU: Laws requiring noisy electric cars ignore public health guidelines

(By J. Mayes). Coming to Canada too? An article titled *Dawn of the noisy electric car* (*New Atlas*, June 6, 2019) reports on new European Union laws requiring:

external warning audio systems for electric vehicles, to make driving sounds that rise and fall in pitch with the vehicle's speed to give pedestrians an audible signal if the car is going 20 km/h (12 mph) or slower...From July 1, any electric vehicle with four or more wheels that wants to be approved for road use in the European Union must have an Acoustic Vehicle Alert System, **making a continuous noise from at least 56 dB up to 75 dB** [emphasis added].

Manufacturer branded sounds include “a ‘weird’ [sic] spaceship sound (Jaguar) and jet airliner (Nissan).” Laws will impact noise levels everywhere cars go slowly, e.g. city streets, residential neighbourhoods, school and hospital zones, parking lots.

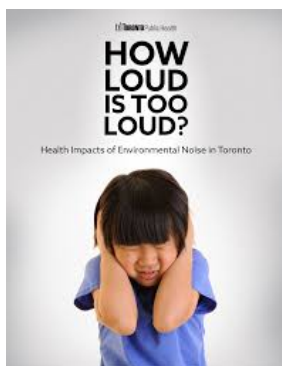
These sound levels are high enough to cause significant public access discrimination against people with quiet communication needs, e.g. hearing loss, tinnitus, hyperacusis, autism, babies, children, elders.

This loudness of acoustic vehicle alert system makes it impossible for road traffic noise to meet *World Health Organization Environmental Noise Guidelines (2018)* to prevent speech interference, adverse health effects, and adverse sleep effects: recommended road traffic daily limit <53 dB and night limit <45 dB.

Another article titled *Electric cars: New vehicles to emit noise to aid safety* (*BBC News*, June 30, 2019) reports the rationale for noisy electric cars is safety concerns for blind pedestrians. Laws ignore safety for deaf-blind and hearing-impaired-blind pedestrians who can't hear audible alerts from cars driven by people who don't stop to avoid hitting pedestrians.

Quieter options to protect all pedestrians (on top of existing driver training, driving laws, crosswalks, and controlled intersections) could include vehicle optical and/or heat sensing automatic collision avoidance systems, homogenous audible alerts across manufacturers, e.g. neutral sound like white noise, or a max audible alert limit of 45 dB. Electric vehicles will still create additional noise, e.g. from tires against road surfaces, stereo systems, occupants.

Canada: Toronto residents, business owners gather to voice noise-level concerns



(*The Globe & Mail*, Feb. 5, 2019) Toronto began reviewing its noise bylaw in 2015. In 2018 the city received over 10,000 noise complaints. It can take up to five business days for a by-law officer to respond. A 2017 Public Health noise monitoring study on *How Loud is too Loud? Health Impacts of Environmental Noise in Toronto* revealed that nearly 89% of residents are exposed to unhealthy daytime noise and 43% are exposed to unhealthy night noise mainly from city approved construction noise exemption permits. Co-author Dr. Oiamo suggested the city adopt a proactive approach aimed at bettering public health by setting a goal to decrease noise by a certain percentage over a specific number of years.

(Global issue) UK: Cities are louder than ever—and it's the poor who suffer most

(*The Guardian*, April 25, 2019) Poorer urban neighbourhoods are nearly two dB or almost twice as loud as affluent areas. Developments in sound engineering help deal with the noise of densification. For example, the design of the Mint Street Estate in London built right next to the trains includes double-glazed indoor balconies full of potted plants and air ducts facing courtyards which together buffer noise to nothingness. However, silence remains “a premium commodity.”

Reporter McMullan describes the Meyer Sound’s sophisticated Constellation electroacoustic system which can change the reverberation of spaces, as well as pick up and isolate voices in vast, busy rooms. The *New Yorker* describes this system as “the sonic equivalent of Photoshop”. The company describes it as “invisible architecture” which will eventually allow digital editing of the soundscapes in homes, schools, and restaurants.

Canada: Toronto-based Envision SQ attempts to tackle the pollution problem with barriers

(*The Globe & Mail*, May 24, 2019) Scott Shayko, along with his business partner Xin Qiu, one of North America’s leading scientists on regional air quality, started by working with researchers at the University of Guelph on a new aerodynamic design for noise barriers that also sucks up or “ingests” air pollution emissions as vehicles drive by. The product is called SmogStop. Industrial facilities can also use it lower their air and noise pollution emissions.

Last February, the company announced an agreement with Britain-based Gramm Barrier Systems Ltd. to market and sell these anti-pollution barriers. The company is developing partnerships in Europe, China, Mexico, the US, and in Canada to reduce emissions at Toyota Motor Manufacturing assembly plants, starting in Cambridge, Ontario.

Canada: Data centre noise still an issue in Labrador City, Newfoundland

(*Southern Gazette*, June 3, 2019) People living over a kilometre away from Great North Data centre are complaining because of constant noise from large numbers of fans. James Goodwin, CEO of GND, said, “Currently there’s low frequency fans in there and we’re swapping them out with high frequency.” He said when they set up the business they weren’t aware of the difference the low frequency fans would create, in terms of ambient noise, and chalks it up to inexperience.

Canada: How fireworks can affect your health and the ecosystem

(CBC News, July 20, 2019) Environmentalists are questioning whether minutes-long sparkling spectacles are worth fireworks' long-term air and noise pollution effects on human health and wildlife from anxiety, stress, and fear. Over the last year, Banff and Canmore have both scaled back traditional firework displays due to environmental concerns with Banff reporting “no diminished spectator experience.” In contrast, Calgary events like the Stampede and Globalfest continue to use fireworks in nightly shows.

The article *Ka-boom: Fireworks are Awful* by J. Scott-Reid (*The Globe & Mail*, June 29, 2019) describes how concerns regarding the harm fireworks can cause—to vulnerable people, to animals, and the environment—are now too glaring to ignore and make them no longer justifiable.

Canadian cities and municipalities should consider available alternatives so everyone can join in on the celebration, while minimizing harm to the animals and environment around us. Options include quiet fireworks and concert style or low noise special effects pyrotechnic displays.

“Fireworks hurt people, animals, and the environment in ways that render them no longer justifiable.” J. Scott-Reid

Letter to Editor: Where is the leadership on air show noise pollution?

(From Ontario member L. Briskin) Since 1949, every Labour Day weekend in Toronto is ruined by the Air Show at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE). Between 12 and 3 pm for four days—Friday to Monday—the entire city of Toronto is bombarded by the piercing sound of planes. The noise is paralyzing, ear-shattering, terrifying, deafening, even inside. Anyone who has been in a war zone likely finds it very traumatic.

The CNE responds to complaints with a form letter which admits that noise “can be disruptive for people in the vicinity.” *In the vicinity* seems to be code language for the several million people who live in the City of Toronto. In their claim that the air show is a “business generator for the local economy,” the CNE also trots out the tired argument that environmental concerns need to take a back seat to commercial interests. Building a tourist base via pollution is not the route to a sustainable economic future. In a touch of irony, the email from the CNE requests that readers be environmentally friendly and not print out the email.

I have tried repeatedly to find someone who will take responsibility for this noise. It was impossible! I was just sent from one person to another, wasting my time. I eventually gave up which is likely what was intended.

Only silence from Mayor’s office, and from the City Councillors on the CNE Committee in response to my letter of complaint. Adam Vaughan’s office did reply: “The City of Toronto has no jurisdiction over air traffic or noise emanating from flights.” His office suggested that I contact Federal Transport and Pearson airport myself. Toronto’s information service (311@toronto.ca) informed me that the Air Show complies with all regulations.

However, the reason we have a City Council is to act on our collective behalf. Instead of passing the buck and asking us to make individual complaints, the City Council and the Mayor’s office should take some leadership to advocate on behalf of the city. Testing and publishing the decibel levels of the air show would highlight the environmental and health arguments for stopping the air show. In another small irony, Toronto’s ZeroFootprint website states that it “is committed to working with residents and businesses to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050.” But where is the leadership on other forms of pollution?



(Global) Hush City Sound Walk Sundays happening in September 2019

Visit www.antonellaradicchi.it/portfolio/hush-city-4-sws2019/ for the *Global Program of Hush City Soundwalks* cities and dates happening in September 2019. Right to Quiet Society acting Board member and volunteer Jeanine Botta is leading a Sound Walk Sunday in Brooklyn, NY (US) on September 8, 2019. Soundwalks are also being led in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Singapore, UK, and other cities in US.



What can you do for quiet society?

- Make copies and share this newsletter in your local community where allowed, e.g. libraries, coffee shops, break rooms, schools.
- Follow our twitter @RightToQuiet and join Right to Quiet Society if you're not a member yet.
- Join a September 2019 Sound Walk Sunday or try the easy to use HushCity app to soundwalk locally.
- Support quiet environmentally responsible changes to traditional events, e.g. no noisy fireworks.
- Support public health-based noise policies and noise control action plans at local, regional, and federal levels, e.g. in US, Cosponsor the Quiet Communities Act of 2019.
- Join our growing pool of volunteers. No experience needed. Contact education@quiet.org.
- Represent your geographic region by sharing important quiet or noise news links with the News Editor.
- Write or email a letter to the Editor or submit suggestions for future newsletters, campaigns, or projects.

Contact Right to Quiet Society



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General questions email: info@quiet.org

Mailing address (temporary): 1985 Wallace St #359, Vancouver, BC, V6R 4H4, Canada

Noiseletter-Summer 2019 Sources

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