



Committee of the Whole

April 14, 2026

Staff Report: #COR-2026-62

REPORT BY: Nicole Guthrie, Clerk

REPORT SUBJECT: Noise By-law Review

DEPARTMENT: Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION(S):

“THAT, report COR- 2026-62 be received as information.”

1. BACKGROUND

The Township’s current [Noise By-law \(By-Law 2000-113\)](#), attached as Appendix B came into force in 2000. The current by-law relies on the affected individual engaging the Ontario Provincial Police and laying a private information through the Provincial Offences Act. This places a significant burden on residents and relies on police resources that are already addressing higher-priority matters. As a result, the by-law is rarely used in practice and provides limited support for resolving ongoing concerns. The by-law has likely remained unchanged in part due to the practical challenges of regulating and enforcing noise in a rural municipality.

The geographic size of the Township, limited enforcement resources, and the transient nature of many noise complaints all impact the Municipality’s ability to respond in a timely and effective manner. In many cases, by the time a By-law Enforcement Officer is able to attend a complaint, the noise has ceased, making evidence collection difficult and limiting the ability to take enforcement action.

Noise is also inherently subjective. What is considered disruptive or unreasonable to one resident may be viewed as a normal rural activity by another. This is particularly relevant in a community where agricultural operations, resource-based activities, and rural lifestyles are common and expected.

As a result, the effectiveness of any Noise By-law is not solely dependent on the wording of the by-law itself, but also on the approach Council wishes to take with respect to tolerance, education, and enforcement.

Through the [By-law Enforcement Survey conducted in 2025](#), noise was identified as an area of concern and one of the by-laws the community would like to see reviewed. In response, staff undertook a focused community survey to gather additional input and have prepared a draft Noise By-law.

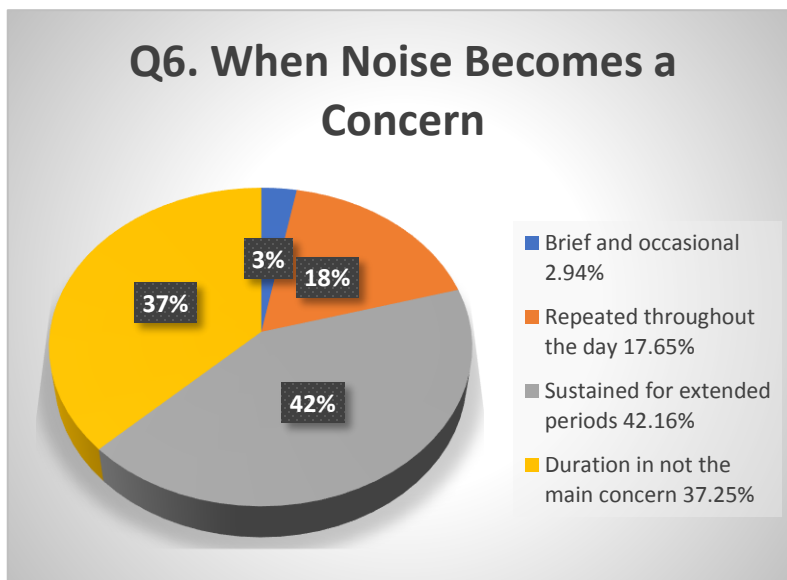
The purpose of this report is to seek Council's direction on the overall approach and level of regulation the Municipality wishes to pursue.

2. DISCUSSION

Survey Results

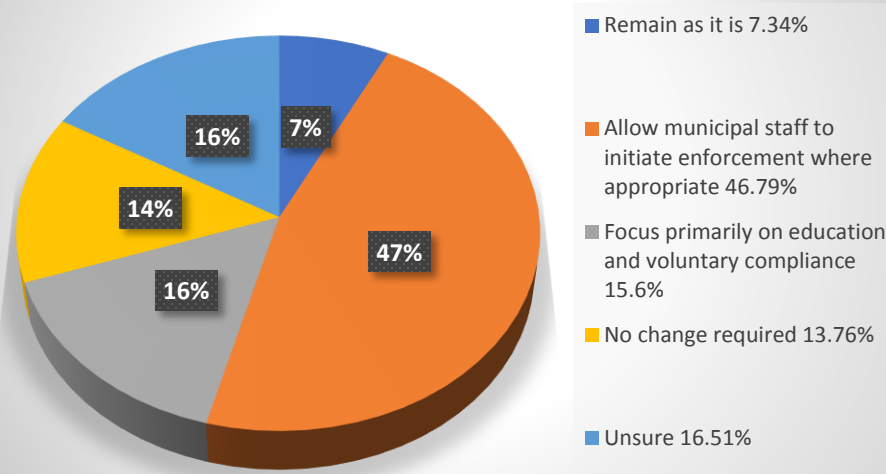
A community survey was conducted from 27 February to 27 March 2026, with 111 responses received from residents across the Township. The survey offered both a village and a rural perspective. The results indicate that while noise is not a concern for all residents, there are specific and recurring issues that support the need for a modernized and more flexible by-law. The complete dataset from all responses is attached as Appendix A.

Survey responses for question six indicate that noise is not generally a concern when it is brief or occasional, but becomes problematic when it is repeated or sustained over time. This suggests that the by-law should consider duration, frequency, and time of day.



Survey responses for question 8, indicate a clear preference for a balanced approach to noise enforcement, with an emphasis on education and voluntary compliance, supported by the ability for municipal staff to initiate enforcement where appropriate.

Q8. Preferred Approach to Noise Enforcement



Survey responses to Question 10 suggest that while there is support for addressing specific nuisance issues, a portion of respondents favour maintaining the status quo, consistent with an approach that emphasizes education and a good-neighbour philosophy.

Theme	Approx. # of Responses	% of Responses	Summary of Feedback
No concern / no change preferred	~20	~37%	Noise not viewed as an issue; preference to maintain current approach; concern about over-regulation and protecting rural lifestyle
Concern with excessive or prolonged noise	~18	~33%	Issues related to repeated, sustained, or long-duration noise impacting the enjoyment of property
Specific nuisance behaviours	~15	~28%	Concerns with engine revving, racing, modified exhaust, ATVs/snowmobiles, truck engine braking, and localized commercial/mechanical activity
Firearms / impulsive noise	~6–8	~11–15%	Concerns related to repetitive gunfire and other impulsive noises, particularly where prolonged or occurring outside typical expectations
Enforcement concerns	~8–10	~15–18%	Perception that current by-law is difficult to enforce; reliance

			on OPP/courts; desire for municipal enforcement tools
Support for balanced approach (education + enforcement)	~5–7	~10–13%	Preference for education and voluntary compliance first, with enforcement available where necessary

Draft Noise By-Law

The Township of Lanark Highlands is characterized by its geography, size, and mix of villages, hamlets, rural areas, businesses, tourism, and aggregate operations. This makes the issue of noise more complex than in a typical urban or town setting. Rural communities are often valued for the flexibility they provide and the variety of activities that take place, many of which are generally accepted as part of rural living. As a result, noise regulation in this context must strike a careful balance between recognizing these realities and addressing impacts where noise becomes excessive or disruptive.

In developing a draft Noise By-law, attached as Appendix C, staff reviewed several municipal noise by-laws and prepared a draft that may meet the Township's needs, should Council determine to proceed in this direction. As a next step, staff would facilitate a review of the draft document by the Township's legal counsel.

The draft includes several key definitions, highlighted below and in the document, that directly support the assessment and management of noise in practice. These provisions establish a framework for determining when noise becomes unreasonable, how long it must persist to warrant investigation, and where its impact is measured. Together, they are intended to reduce subjectivity, reflect the Township's rural context, and support a more consistent and practical approach to enforcement.

Unreasonable Noise - This definition recognizes that noise can be assessed in context, rather than through a strict prohibition. For the community, this means that every day, rural and permitted activities are recognized, and not all noise will be considered a violation. For enforcement officers and staff, it provides flexibility to consider factors such as location, zoning, and the nature of the activity when determining whether a complaint is valid. This supports a balanced approach that distinguishes between normal rural activity and noise that may be excessive or disruptive.

Persistent Noise - This definition introduces a duration threshold for when noise may warrant investigation. For the community, this helps clarify that brief or occasional noise is generally tolerated, while noise that continues over time or repeatedly occurs may be subject to enforcement. For enforcement officers and staff, it provides a practical benchmark to support consistent decision-making and helps focus resources on ongoing complaints that are more likely to impact neighbouring properties.

Point of Reception - This definition clarifies where noise is measured from—specifically at the location where it is received, rather than where it originates. For the community, this reinforces that the impact of noise on neighbouring properties is the

key consideration. For enforcement officers and staff, it provides a clear and defensible basis for assessing complaints, ensuring that enforcement decisions are grounded in how noise is experienced by others rather than solely on the activity itself.

It should be noted that noise bylaws are not intended to prohibit lawful activities that are permitted under zoning or regulated by other levels of government. They are tools that provide the community with clarity and staff and enforcement officers with a framework for assessing and responding to noise when its impact becomes unreasonable, having regard to the surrounding area and the nature of the activity.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be costs associated with legal review of the draft Noise By-law, which have been included in the 2026 budget.

With the proposed changes, there may be increased expectations for service and investigation, which could result in additional enforcement-related costs. Frontenac Municipal Law Enforcement provides services on an hourly basis, plus associated mileage, and it is reasonable to anticipate an increase in calls for service and staff support in the administration and enforcement of the by-law.

The potential future implementation of an Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS) may provide an opportunity to support cost recovery and offset some of these increased demands.

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

This report is intended to support Council discussion and obtain direction. The following options may be considered by Council:

Option 1 – Update and Modernize

THAT, Council direct staff to proceed with updates to the Noise By-Law, incorporating alignment with the Municipal By-law Enforcement Policy and Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPs) framework;

Option 2 – Maintain Status Quo

THAT, Council direct staff to maintain the current Noise By-law with no amendments at this time.

Option 3 – Repeal the Current By-law

THAT, Council repeal the current Noise By-law and rely on existing legislation and enforcement mechanisms to address noise-related concerns.

5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

6. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

[Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25](#)

7. OTHERS CONSULTED

Chief Building Official
Chief Administrative Officer

8. ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Survey Monkey Data
Appendix B – Current Noise By-Law
Appendix C – Draft Noise By-Law

Prepared By: Nicole Guthrie, Clerk

Approved By: Suzanne Charbonneau-Dent, CAO