



HABITATS

STUDENTS IN THEIR
MUNICIPALITIES





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introduction

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) is proud to release the 2018 edition of *Habitats: Students in Their Municipalities*. This annual publication is comprised of a series of case studies on municipal-level topics and issues affecting undergraduate students. Written by students from OUSA's member institutions, these submissions aim to highlight both successes and challenges in municipalities across Ontario, providing insight into how students feel about issues within their communities.

This year's submissions were written by authors from seven of OUSA's eight member institutions. The prevailing themes of these case studies include the promotion of campus-community partnerships, unsanctioned street gatherings, and promoting a relationship between students and the broader municipal communities.

OUSA recognizes that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are integral parts of their respective municipalities. Collaboration and coordination between universities and their local municipalities can help facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship that fosters an environment of trust, growth, respect, and community. This type of healthy, productive environment is ultimately in the best interest of both students and municipalities.

Habitats provides policymakers, politicians, students, and administrators the opportunity to access unfiltered accounts of students' perspectives on issues and topics within their communities. Ultimately, students want the relationship between themselves and their municipality to be more than a temporary arrangement. They want it to be a partnership. It is our hope that these case studies offer insights to our stakeholders as we move towards building partnerships that will allow students to be considered members of their municipal communities.

about ousa

OUSA represents the interests of approximately 150,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight institutions across Ontario. Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.

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Student Neighbourhoods: A Waterloo Story

By: Alexander Wray

Think of university students. Older and more “local” residents often reply with terms like ghetto, slums, noisy, dirty, poorly maintained. While these terms can be true, they also are not representative of only student dominated areas. Housing being poorly maintained, not suitable for its occupants, or having more than one person per room can be symptomatic of areas struggling with poverty, disinvestment, or are in early stages of socioeconomic and demographic change. The Region of Waterloo is no different, particularly having two major universities and one college located within a kilometre of each other. Student housing developments are proposed; neighbours line up to decry the apparent loss of their community and the coming wave of poor quality housing and transient community. However, Waterloo may be embarking on an urban experiment to change those perceptions. To prove that student neighbourhoods can have a community feel. This is the story of Northdale.



Northdale

In the City of Waterloo, students are primarily concentrated in the Northdale neighbourhood – an area bounded by Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) to the south, Conestoga College to the west, and the University of Waterloo (UWaterloo) to the east (Figure 1). The percentage of the population in this area of university age (15-24, as defined by Statistics Canada age groups) is over 55% - with three of the census areas having a distribution exceeding 75% students compared to all other age groups.

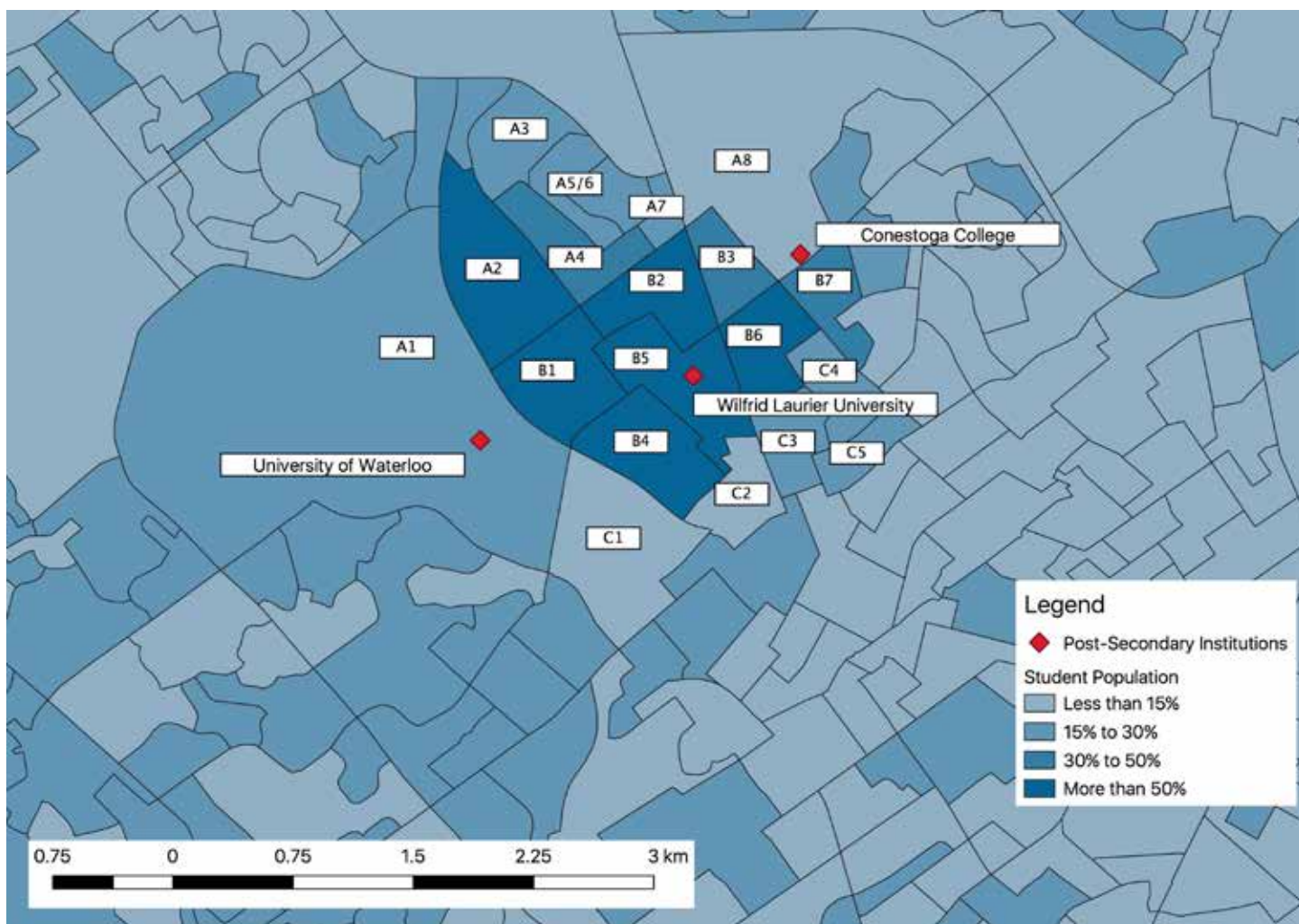


Figure 1: Map of Student Populations

Housing Quality

Statistics Canada provides multiple measures of housing quality through the census program. The dissemination area (DA) is the smallest geographic unit used by Statistics Canada, with data that can be made publicly available. These units often align with neighbourhoods and other identifiable areas. Thus, they are a useful tool to analyse spatial patterns within cities.

Using 2016 census data, the housing quality of the Northdale area is analyzed using three indicators: 1) suitability; 2) crowding; and 3) state of repair. These three indicators constitute a Housing Quality Index. If a DA's indicator exceeds the regional average in the index, the area is considered to have an issue of suitability, crowding, state of repair, or a combination of all three indicators.

The suitability indicator is based on whether the housing unit's bedrooms match the needs of the household's occupants. If there is a mismatch of more than or less than one bedroom to the number of occupants, the unit is considered unsuitable.

The crowding indicator is determined by dividing the number of occupants by the number of rooms in a housing unit. A unit is considered to be crowded if there are fewer rooms than occupants. This calculation is different from suitability, as it measures crowding of the unit based on total rooms – including the kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms, and living spaces.

The state of repair indicator is determined by a self-assessment completed by the occupants of the housing unit. There are three condition ratings: 1) regularly maintained, requiring only painting or cleaning; 2) minor repairs needed, requiring replacement of missing or loose flooring, roofing, or siding; and 3) major repairs, requiring serious work to fix plumbing, electrical, or structural portions of the unit. The indicator

Table 1. Summary of Northdale Dissemination Areas (see Figure 2 for Keyed Areas)

Key	DA Code	Major Streets	% Students	Unsuitable	Crowded	Disrepair
A1	35300040	University	20.0 %			
A2	35300297	Albert	52.9 %			x
A3	35300061	Albert/Weber	18.1 %	x		x
A4	35300064	Hazel	49.2 %		x	x
A5	35300062	Columbia	25.3 %	x	x	x
A6	35300063	Columbia	20.4 %	x	x	x
A7	35300065	King/Columbia	23.2 %			x
A8	35300087	Columbia/Weber	11.7 %	x	x	
B1	35300296	Phillip	83.5 %	x	x	
B2	35300066	King/Columbia	78.7 %	x	x	
B3	35300728	University/Regina	48.9 %	x	x	x
B4	35300719	University/Seagram	80.2 %	x	x	
B5	35300298	King/University	75.8 %	x		x
B6	35300070	King/University	51.6 %	x		
B7	35300071	University/Weber	33.7 %	x		x
C1	35300290	Westmount/Erb/Albert	0.0 %			x
C2	35300121	Uptown	11.3 %			
C3	35300120	King/Bridgeport/Erb	21.8 %			x
C4	35300072	Weber/Bridgeport	16.5 %	x		x
C5	35300119	Weber/Erb	16.9 %			x

for this analysis compares the percentage of homes in a state of major repair, compared to the other two classifications. The Northdale area is characterized by three DA's having major housing quality concerns, one crowded and in disrepair, and many unsuitable and crowded (Table 1). Many of these areas are still predominately low-rise post-war single-family homes, often crowded with more students than officially recognized bedrooms (Figure 2). Students have long inhabited these neighbourhoods, with landlords buying up and converting many formerly single or dual family units into accommodations for five to eight students each. However, the two DAs immediately adjacent to UWaterloo show a much higher housing quality, matching up with recent high-rise purpose-built student housing, and commercial developers renovating existing stock.

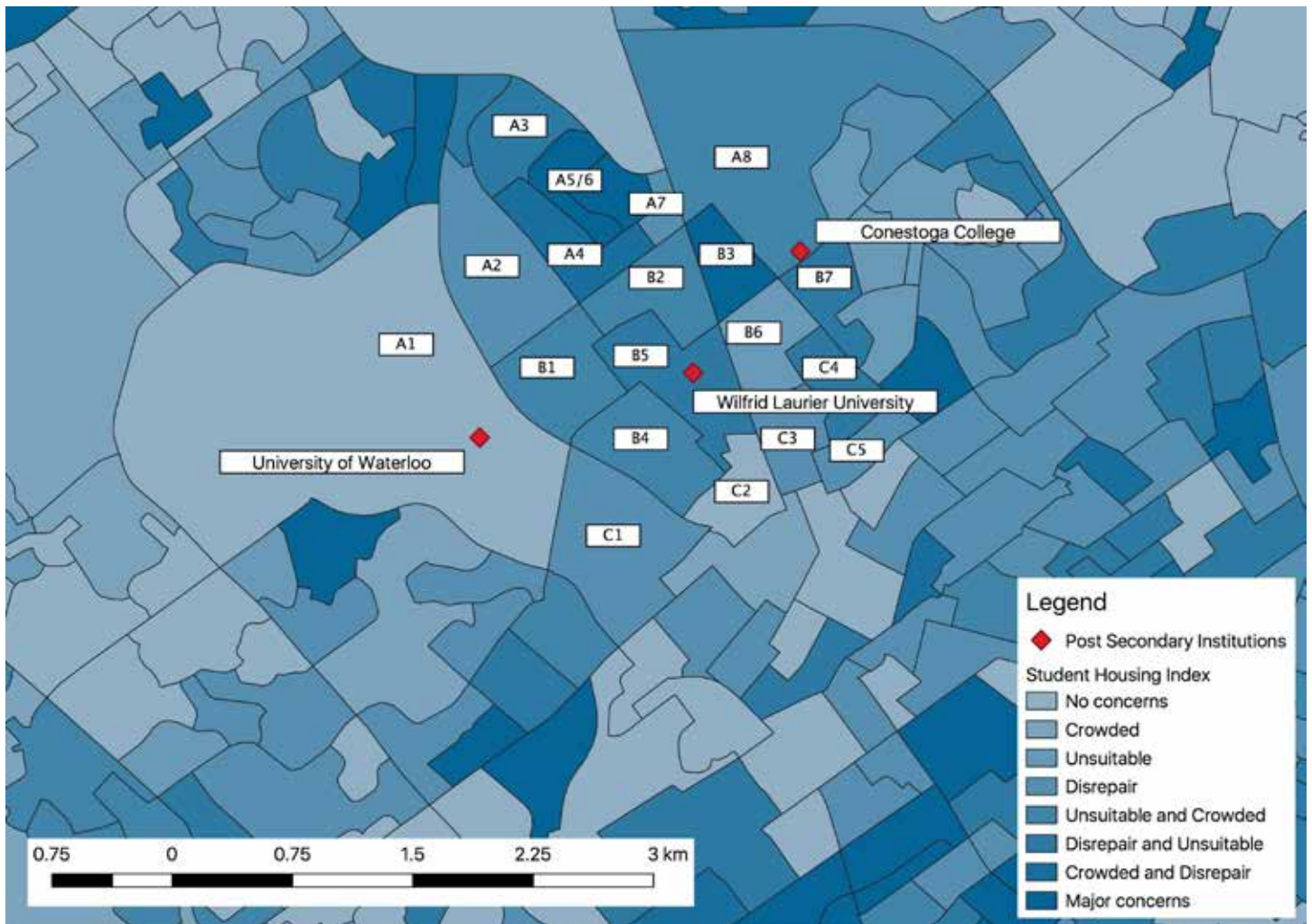


Figure 2: Map of Housing Quality Index in Northdale Area

This area has seen a massive demographic shift from a primarily single-family residential area that catered to families, to an increasingly high-density vibrant student neighbourhood. Icon Waterloo is a prime example of this transition towards luxury student housing in the area – boasting designer kitchens and living rooms, with condo-style living where once bungalows stood occupied by young families (Figure 3). These types of development are healthy for the area, as they attract reinvestment and encourage upkeep of the surrounding areas. A once rough and poorly serviced area of the city, home to thousands of university and college students, is now becoming a benchmark for accommodating students in mid-sized cities.



Figure 3: 330 Icon Waterloo



Figure 4: Regional Map of Housing Quality Index

A Regional Perspective

While many student neighbourhoods in Northdale show poor housing quality, there are many areas of the broader region with low student concentrations and poor housing quality. For example, the areas to the east and south of Downtown Kitchener have student populations of under 15% yet have similar housing quality index scores (Figure 4). This issue is not solely endemic to students, and arguably, the City of Waterloo is doing more to address problems within the Northdale area. Students and local governments are getting their act together to prove that student housing can mean a safe and vibrant community.

The Northdale Plan

The Northdale Plan was a series of studies commissioned by the City of Waterloo in 2005 to improve upon the housing stock and public realm of the neighbourhood. The City envisions by 2029 that “Northdale is revitalized and re-urbanized into a diverse, vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood, [is] integrated with educational, residential, commercial, cultural, heritage and recreational functions and [has] improved open space, pedestrian, cycling and transit networks.” The city imagines a new urban student village, with all the amenities a modern student could need throughout their day and night (Figure 5). This concentration of students into a high-quality urban setting ensures a range of housing options and services that also minimizes conflicts with quieter residential areas.



Figure 5: Proposed Public Realm for Main Streets in Northdale (City of Waterloo)

The city imagines a new urban student village, with all the amenities a modern student could need throughout their day and night (Figure 5). This concentration of students into a high-quality urban setting ensures a range of housing options and services that also minimizes conflicts with quieter residential areas.

Lessons

The Northdale Plan provides an interesting approach for managing large student populations. While centralization could lead to the same student ghettos of the past – strong investments and ownership by local government to maintain and create high-quality public spaces could be the solution to preventing disrepair, and poor-quality housing stock. In 20 years it will be interesting to return to Northdale. To see if it has finally broken the mold of a student neighbourhood or has once again resigned itself to a downtrodden and ugly setting in the middle of the city.

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Campus and Community Collaborations

By: Landon Tulk and Catherine Dunne



Campus-community partnerships have the capacity to leverage institutional and regional resources to address critical issues in local communities as well as at post-secondary institutions. These partnerships are defined as a series of interpersonal relationships between campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students as well as community leaders, agency personnel, and members of the community.¹ Post-secondary institutions are increasingly realizing the value of civic engagement and community involvement for students, faculty and staff, and the valuable impacts these forms of engagement bring to both their institutions and the broader community.² These partnerships can take many diverse forms, and often are developed to address existing needs both on campus and in the city by utilizing the expertise, infrastructure and skills that are available from members of the institution's broader community. At Western University, these partnerships range from community-engaged learning and service learning programs, to community projects and on-campus collaborations that help address various needs facing the London community. Campuses and municipalities should prioritize working together to tackle complex challenges facing their cities.

There are a variety of unmet needs and issues affecting students at post-secondary institutions across Ontario. Most notable, perhaps, is the lack of adequate institutional supports for survivors of sexual violence. Institutions are moving in the direction of providing improved support and care for students' sexual violence prevention and response needs, including educational awareness on campus and support spaces for survivors, though this is largely still insufficient supports for students. One example of this is the creation of the Sexual Violence Prevention Education Coordinator at Western University.³ London has a broad number of supports for survivors of gender-based violence, and as the university continues to prioritize this need, they should turn to campus community partnerships as one option that may help to address this gap in institutional supports in order to collaborate and provide increased support on campus, and create programs on campus that raise awareness about these off-campus supports.

One of the most common forms of campus-community partnerships at Western are community-engaged learning projects. Many of these projects integrate community service with aspects of a course curriculum.⁴ Students may complete a specific project with an organization within the London community, or students may volunteer at that organization for a specific number of hours per week.⁵ In the 2017/2018 academic year, over 30 courses at Western provided students with the opportunity to participate in community-engaged learning across a variety of disciplines. For example, students interested in feminist activism were able to work with Pads for People, an organization that aims to help women in poverty access menstrual products, whereas students interested in ecology were provided with the opportunity to work with Restoration Ecology, helping restore the habitat in the inactive Canada South Railway corridor of Chatham-Kent.⁶ Experiences such as these provide benefits for everyone involved. Students are provided with an opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real-life situations, faculty are able to broaden their connections which, in turn, increases opportunities for future research collaborations, and community partners are able to increase their capacity and build relationships with the post-secondary institution. Overall, community-engaged learning projects help expand the impact that post-secondary institutions make on their municipalities and campuses.

Another community partnership that exists at Western is the Early Outreach (REACH) Conference organized by the University Students' Council (USC) for almost 15 years. REACH is a weekend-long conference for grade eight students, particularly focused on engaging at-risk, low-income youth in the London community. The conference partners with the City of London, Middlesex County, Thames Valley District School Board, and the London District Catholic School Board, as well as multiple non-profit community organizations. This collaboration helps to identify students who may perceive post-secondary education as unattainable, and who could benefit from this conference.⁷ Similarly, other programs exist, such as George Brown College's "School Within a College" program. The goal of this program is to offer secondary students the opportunity to earn secondary school credits and dual credit 'General Education' college credits leading to students completion of their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and transition to post-secondary destinations.

The primary focus of this program is to attract students that are facing challenges completing secondary school and have the potential to succeed at college.⁸ Universities and colleges are well-positioned to take on these forms of community partnerships. Our institutions have sufficient educational resources to implement programs that help secondary students learn, and by organizing volunteer-type programs, such as REACH, little resources are required from the university administration. They demonstrate the mutual benefits these partnerships reap; they help post-secondary students improve leadership skills, and foster strong, and long-standing relationships, with the local community. These long-standing relationships are essential to creating a strong foundation in order to be able to implement innovative solutions in tandem with community partners to the problems students are facing on campus, such as mental health, affordability or sexual violence.

A 14-year study on the impact of campus-community partnerships in Minnesota demonstrated that campus-community interactions that begin as volunteerism-oriented projects have the capacity to change how campus and community partners interact and foster relationships in the long-term.⁹ The broad array of campus-community partnerships demonstrate that they do not exist in solitude, but are strong when there exists a network of partners in the community. These relationships often begin with acts of volunteerism, such as the Early Outreach Conference, and develop into integrating experiential learning into course credits, and faculty beginning to focus their research around the needs of the local community.¹⁰ When it comes to

addressing students needs, having a previously existing meaningful connection to the campus community is ideal in order to encourage civic participation and incentives.

These transformative relations are illustrated by two innovative partnerships within the Western University and London community. Beginning in September 2017, Faculty of Music students at Western had the opportunity to live at Oakcrossing Retirement Home and receive room and board, as well as meals, in exchange for 10-12 hours of quality time with the elderly residents per week. This is an exceptional opportunity to help students with the burden of affordability for university, but more importantly, to foster intergenerational relationships with the elders. The idea developed from the belief that this would help to enrich the quality of life for the elderly residents, as well as the students, and would give students the opportunity to practice music for a non-typical audience.¹¹ This partnership was facilitated by previous cohorts of Music students volunteering in retirement homes in London, and demonstrates the value of campus-community engagement as a stepping stone to these partnerships.

The partnership between the USC and the local Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a second example of a collaboration made possible due to the relationships between the Western and London communities. One of the most critical challenges facing campuses today is the lack of sufficient services and care around mental health for students. In particular, many services that are routinely available on campus, such as mental health counsellors or psychiatrists, often aren't offered on campus after business hours. However, students' mental health issues and illnesses don't stop after business hours. This is why the USC reached out to the local CMHA to explore potential collaborations with the organization to engage with students. As a result of initial conversations to explore ideas to meet students' mental health needs after hours, the USC & CMHA partnered on an initiative to provide mental health crisis counselling support to students in the evening hours of the day. Initially this began as a pilot project during the 2015-2016 Fall term for the month leading up to the final exam period. The Crisis Pilot model was a walk-in, open referral service that allowed students to access professional Crisis staff support with limited barriers, and provided referrals when appropriate to on-campus or off-campus supports. The community-campus partnership was met with increasing exponential success and ultimately was expanded to King's University College and Fanshawe College in London to provide similar offerings to students. Due to the success of the project in helping students cope with stress and other mental health challenges, the London Community Foundation committed a three-year grant of \$236,000 as part of its Community Vitality Grants that support lasting, collaborative transformation.¹² Community partnerships such as these can be replicated in post-secondary communities across the province, so long as students and organizations have a willingness to engage with one another.

Before turning to the university administration at every corner, students should be looking to our communities to collaborate, and innovate, to provide unique service offerings to support different students needs, including that of the mental health and wellbeing of students. It is possible, and it should be encouraged, to connect campuses and communities together to explore opportunities to improve both communities as a whole and students' experiences in those communities. There currently exists missed opportunities in our campus communities. At Western University, we are taking every opportunity we can to meet student needs in the City of London and explore other options to get students out and about into our community that we live in. Student



leaders and campus partners must be including both in their priorities, alongside their strategic plans, an emphasis for establishing and expanding campus-community partnerships. As illustrated, meaningful partnerships do not require large investments from the community or the university. These partnerships take a variety of forms, from community-engaged learning to volunteer-based outreach programs to collaborative programs. The innovative solutions that help address the pressing needs on campuses, such as affordability and mental health, are only made possible by an existing network of campus-community partnerships grounded in respect, meaningful relationships and a history of capacity-sharing that helps to serve both the post-secondary and local communities.

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Increased Proactive By-Law Enforcement in Student Neighbourhoods

By: Stephanie Bertolo, Ryan Deshpande, and
Shemar Hackett



At most of Ontario's universities, students begin their exodus to off-campus housing after first year as they move out of residence. May 1 and September 1 are days of massive turnover of tenants in cities that have a post-secondary institution. Each year, this brings a wave of first time renters moving into homes and apartments, signing their leases, and assuming the responsibilities of a tenant. Caring for our homes is one of the pressures placed on student tenants, and rightly so. But in most cities, "taking care" of our homes goes beyond what might be considered common sense. Tenants are required to know the laws and bylaws that govern the area they live in and abide by them. Bylaws in particular can be complex and difficult to understand. They might be at odds with our leases and they are constantly changing. As we learn from our mistakes – students are bound to violate these bylaws. In addition to this, the problem of absentee landlords only increases the likelihood of bylaw violations, and forces students to take the blame (and sometimes, the fines) that come with these violations. In the City of Hamilton, an enforcement program was created to specifically target the communities around McMaster University. In this article, we will review this program and argue that to increase compliance and build a sense of belonging among students with their communities, a gentler hand must be extended by Ontario's municipalities to their first-time student renters. Problems resulting from absentee landlords should not be dealt with by tenants. We critique the effectiveness of a bylaw enforcement program in terms of its impacts on students. Then, we provide several alternative approaches that could be adopted alongside this program to create a culture of by-law compliance and positive community relations without punitive measures.

Program Description

In 2016, the City of Hamilton approved a motion for staff to review the by-law enforcement services in the McMaster communities. It was believed that the noise and hygiene problems associated with "bad student housing" could not adequately be addressed by the one full-time by-law officer assigned to the area. While by-law infractions were high during April and September, Council believed that the problems with bad student housing in the community continued throughout. As a result, they wanted to find a long-term solution to address these concerns. Hiring an additional by-law officer would be too costly, which lead them to hire two Mohawk College Co-op students for a fraction of the cost. These students would enforce maintenance related by-laws as part of a one-year pilot project. Staff advertised the program to councillors as "cost-recovery" through the charges for non-compliant properties.

The program works by the officers putting a notice of bylaw infraction onto the door of the property. After an unspecified amount of time, if the infraction is not remedied, a notice of the fine is placed onto the door. If the tenant responds to the notice, the City staff will ask them to pay the fine. If the tenant does not respond to the notice, the fine is added to the landlord's property tax bill.

Before the end of the pilot project in October 2017, City Council approved to make permanent and expand the project to four co-op students without an evaluation of the pilot. , Staff reported that program was in fact cost-recovery and received both positive feedback from owners and occupants in the area. When the evaluation report was published in February 2018, it revealed that the co-op students issued 934 orders for compliance. 74% of households voluntarily complied with the orders, meaning that they did not receive a charge. The remain 26% (240) households received a combined total charge of \$62,943 or an average of \$262 per ticket. This profits from the charges more than covered the wages of the co-op students, which totaled \$48,608. Where the additional profits go is still uncertain to McMaster students.

Arguments Against It

The McMaster Student Union actively lobbied against this proactive by-law enforcement program. In delegations and letters to Council as well as individual conversations with councillors and city staff, the MSU

expressed their concerns with the program's financial impact on students and the impact this enforcement will have on student retention. Consultation with students who have been fined have led us to believe that many landlords are downloading the fines onto their tenants. This is done even when the infraction was the landlord's responsibility - for example, cutting grass in the summer when students were not inhabiting their home. Economic principles also suggest that, even if landlords are not directly charging students for their fines, fine increases create greater costs for landlords who will likely pursue rent increases to offset these costs.

Increased punitive enforcement for first-time renters in the absence of education does nothing to address the problem of students' lack of awareness. Even with education, punitive enforcement might correct that specific infraction, but it is antithetical to the City of Hamilton, the MSU, and McMaster University's shared goals of student retention. The fines that students have to pay are often downloaded onto them by the landlord, or mistakenly addressed by them in their dealings with the City. Why should students want to live in a city that fines them for issues that are usually their landlord's responsibility?

As student retention is a priority in Hamilton, it doesn't do well to make students feel as if they are a problem for the city. The introduction of this program was marked with comments referring to student housing as a "hygiene problem." This, unfortunately set the tone of the entire program, painting students as an issue that needs to be solved. Since then, the language to describe the program has expanded to also address the original intention - landlord absenteeism. This problem affects nearly every rental community, but students are particularly affected because we are first time renters, and our academics are our primary focus. In addition, language barriers present with increased international student populations worsens this. Given this, relying on students to be aware of their rights is difficult - the majority of students' learning is focused on their course work, working part time, and obtaining their degrees; keeping up to date on our rights as renters, required bylaws, and finding the time to fight unfair fees and rental agreements is extremely difficult. Punishing students, then, for minor infractions is not conducive to building Ontario's future renters.

One of the most significant concerns of this program is that it was profitable enough to be expanded. In our opinion, a marker of the program's success would be that it was not making enough money because people's behaviours were improving due to the enforcement. If more fines are being incurred, this indicates that the problem is either getting worse or enforcement is increasing - both of which are not favourable to a positive rental experience for students.

Alternative Solutions

There are a number of approaches to creating safer and cleaner communities that recognize the specific conditions associated with student housing. Potential solutions should focus on proactive education for tenants and landlords on their rights and responsibilities as well as commonly infringed by-laws for the area. In the cases where households continue to violate by-laws non-punitive measures should be taken, such as restorative justice approaches. Since the by-law program has been made permanent in the neighbourhoods surrounding McMaster, we recognize it is futile to simply call for it to be rescinded. Rather, we suggest a number of alternative approaches that could work in tandem to the program. The ultimate goal of these

alternatives is to truly be proactive and prevent by-law infractions. When our alternative programs achieve this goal, and the economic value of the City of Hamilton's program no longer exists, it would then be beneficial for the City to end its program.

Starting on April 30th, 2018, a new standard lease agreement will be in effect for all landlords in Ontario. According to the Ministry of Housing, the purpose in creating a standardized lease is "to ensure tenants and landlords understand their individual rights and responsibilities, reduce illegal terms and misunderstandings between parties and to reduce the need for Landlord and Tenant Board hearings to resolve disputes". Students' often report not being aware of household maintenance responsibilities, such as cutting the grass, and end up being fined for a responsibility that was never clearly outlined for them. The creation of this new lease is beneficial to students as it will make it easier to hold the right people accountable for their own actions. With a standard lease, that is not filled with complicated terms, renters can now pinpoint what their landlord is responsible for and can direct any fines they receive to them. When asked why they do not follow bylaws, students frequently report that they did not notice certain clauses in their lease, so the creation of a standardized lease is a step towards holding landlords and tenants accountable for their work.

The City of Hamilton should work to provide residents with educational materials on by-laws, especially those with high infraction rates. The City has argued that they have no legal obligation to provide this form of education. However, they are profiting off of first time renters' ignorance of by-laws that generally do not cause harm, which demonstrates that there is a moral argument to be made for why the City should be working to provide proactive information. One of the best ways to provide this information is by partnering with students. The MSU operates the Student Community Support Network (SCSN), a peer-based service with the aim of "expanding and strengthening positive relationships between students and the local community". Currently, there is a gap between students' knowledge of their responsibilities and the efforts done by the City of Hamilton to disseminate bylaw information. In order to fill this gap, SCSN was formed and they have created strategic campaigns to ensure students are being made aware of all of their responsibilities. This past year, SCSN released an informative video outlining what students are mandated to do for their households; Their campaign was a tremendous success and acquired over 11,000 views online. This is just one example of their success over the past few years and illustrates how important it is to have students spearhead, or be directly involved, with the creation of awareness campaigns directed at them. As an MSU service, SCSN is solely funded by student contributions and has an annual budget of \$11,700 per year. This limits the services' ability to effectively reach all students. Additionally, informing students about their legal rights and responsibilities should not be the responsibility of students alone. Rather, since this is a community issue, the responsibility should be shared with the City of Hamilton. We strongly believe that increasing the funding from the MSU and receiving funding from the City will lead to further creative efforts to ensure students are being made aware of their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

The City of Hamilton also needs to play a larger role in tenant-landlord relationships and disputes by providing adequate mediation services. In London Ontario, Western University, the University Students' Council, the City of London, Fanshawe College, and the Fanshawe College Student Union jointly fund a Housing Mediation Service available to students and the community. The program assists resolving housing and lifestyle disputes between students and landlords, students and long-term residents, and students and students. This can include property appearance, parking, and noise complaints, which are the primary areas in which fines are being distributed by by-law officers in the Westdale area. This would make Hamilton an ideal fit for a similar program. Not only would it be less financially punitive to students, but it would help to facilitate community-student relationships by effectively working out problems between different parties.

When municipal governments deem it necessary to charge individuals as a result of a by-law infraction, they should consider a restorative justice approach that assign community service orders instead of fines. This non-adversarial and non-retributive approach focuses more on providing reparations to those impacted

and allow the perpetrators to take ownership of their actions and their communities. A possible example would be if students failed to shovel their snow, instead of receiving a fine, the student would be required to shovel the snow of their neighbours the next week. Community service orders is a commonly used sanction as an alternative often to incarceration. They were first used in the 1960s in California as an alternative to incarceration for female traffic violators who were unable to pay their fines. Overall, the approach has been found to have slight decreases in repeat offenses as compared to incarceration. There are no documented cases of community service orders being used for by-law infractions at the municipal level. However, the value of repairing harm to victims or the community can easily be transferred to this smaller scale project. The replacement of monetary fines with community service orders has the potential to decrease further infractions and increase satisfaction from those fined and the community at large.

Conclusion

Students, long-term residents, and the City have the same ultimate goal: to build safe, healthy, and livable communities. At the present time, we have different ideas about how to best achieve that goal. Through partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, we should be able to find an ideal way that works for all of us. The current by-law program in the McMaster communities is harming students as a result of the lack of education on rights and responsibilities, which results in fines being passed onto students by their absentee landlords. There are several alternative approaches that promote true collaboration. If implemented, we believe that these programs will not only create more livable communities but foster positive community relations and ownership over our shared neighbourhoods.

endnotes

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Laurentian University: One Road to Solidarity

By: Kathryn Kettle

It was late last September when I sat down in my 10:00am, first year physics class to quickly find that the room was mostly empty and that my professor was not present. After waiting for some time, our class was finally informed that our professor was not able to make it and that class was cancelled. I had later learned that about an hour prior to this, a hydro pole-caused fire had occurred on Ramsey Lake road, blocking traffic coming from both directions. Ramsey Lake Road is the only route that can be used to access Laurentian University in Sudbury, and this blockage prevented vehicles from accessing campus for close to an hour. After the fire was finally put out, local traffic could only pass through using one lane, which allowed a slow trickle of vehicles to access the road. My professor and over half of my peers were caught in this blockage, which led to the cancellation of my physics class, along with several other morning classes on our campus. Unfortunately, this was not the first time that Ramsey Lake road had prevented people from reaching campus; on multiple occasions pothole filling and car accidents caused terrible traffic build-ups, making our campus inaccessible and reaffirming how isolated Laurentian is from the rest of our Sudbury community.

The isolation of Laurentian's campus from the rest of the city sparks debates that have been happening for years. Across the province, in cases where a main street near campus is closed off, students can still access their campus using another street and entry way. This is not the case at Laurentian. Our campus is different than most schools in that it is surrounded by five lakes and a high amount of biodiversity, with only one road connecting our campus to the rest of the city. This leaves students and wildlife (read: bears) to share the same habitat. The commonly feared black bears in Northern Ontario are not typically known for aggression towards humans, but they are still none the less wild animals. The fact that students are sharing their campus with wildlife like black bears really illustrates just how isolated our campus is.

While the isolation of Laurentian is an issue, being surrounded by nature and having access to so much green space is also a major benefit to students. In the warmer months of the year, students can enjoy swimming or canoeing at the nearby beach or access the trails behind campus where they can spend time hiking, running, and biking. In the winter time, Laurentian's students can use the trails to snowshoe or cross-country ski. Additionally, they can skate on Ramsey Lake's 1.5 kilometre skating path located just a few minutes from campus. Having an abundance of outdoor activities like this is only possible because of the unique location that Laurentian is in, and this adds to the overall Northern experience that students choosing to attend Laurentian will get.

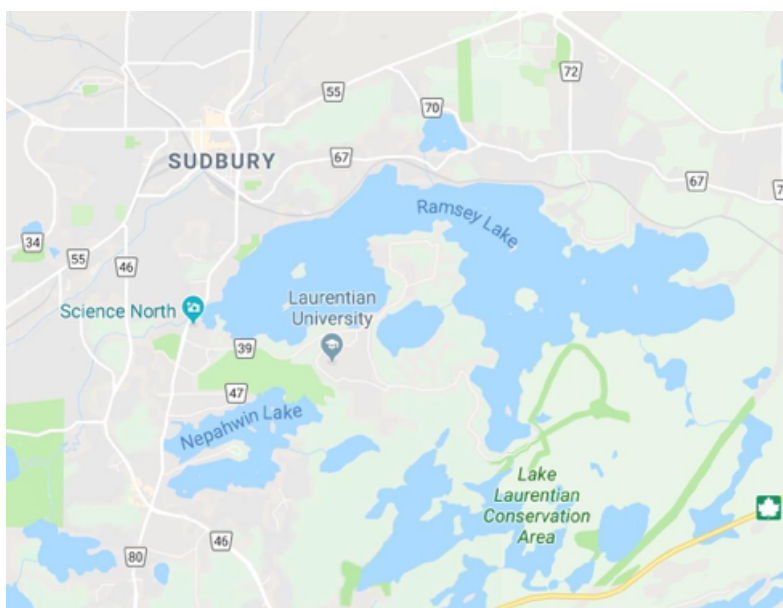


Figure 1: Map of Sudbury Area¹

There are several central areas in the city of Sudbury, including the south end, the New Sudbury area, the west end, the downtown area, and the smaller urban areas surrounding the city, to name a few. These areas, spread out around Sudbury with Laurentian located in the middle, are all several kilometres away from each other. Additionally, each separate area provides services, shops, and entertainment, for local residents. Unfortunately, these populated centres in Sudbury are located far from Laurentian's remote campus. The areas closest to Laurentian are the south end and the downtown area, but neither are considered to be in walking distance of campus, which creates an additional barrier for students without access to vehicles and

transit. As such, the remoteness of Laurentian's campus makes accessing affordable food, student housing, health services, shopping, and entertainment difficult for students, with the university only sometimes offering minor (and expensive!) fixes to the issues. For students living in residence without vehicles, the campus's remote location has been especially problematic. One solution implemented by Laurentian's student associations was to provide express bussing from the residences to the nearest grocery stores, which is located 6 kilometres away from campus, on Fridays and Saturdays.

The distance from Laurentian to the rest of the city of Sudbury also greatly impacts students who commute. For many students born and raised in Sudbury, they will travel to campus for the minimum amount of hours that they must spend in class, and in majority of cases will leave campus immediately after classes are finished. The university and campus groups have much more difficulty connecting off-campus students to resources, events and, services. It is difficult, due to both distance and time, for commuter students to travel to attend events or receive the services they need on days when they do not have classes scheduled. In addition to this, students may be restricted by their schedules and transportation methods, which can also prevent them from participating in on-campus activities and receiving services.

Additionally, having a robust population of students who have easy access to the services provided by the city would also greatly benefit the Sudbury economy and support local business. However, currently students living on campus have limited access to the city.

In 2015, a Draft Transportation Master Plan was implemented with aims to better service pedestrians, bikers, and vehicles in Sudbury until 2031.² One of the recommendations in this draft was to build a road extension through the protected conservation area, connecting the university to the southern region of Sudbury. This would create a second access route to campus as well as reduce the high volume of traffic on Ramsey Lake Road.³ While there is a significant amount of support fully for this recommendation, a large portion of Sudbury's citizens are also against the proposal due to the potential consequences that this road would have on the environment. In response, opposing citizens created a petition against the proposal in the weeks leading up to the final passing of the draft. The petition expressed the importance of the conservation area for Sudbury's recreation and tourism industries, as well as concern over environmental impact, and received nearly 1,500 signatures. In 2016, the President of Laurentian University spoke against the proposed expansion and gave his support for the petition. In 2007 the Laurentian Board of Governors also spoke against such plans, stating that there would be no advantage to a road extension.

Additionally, those against the expansion argued that it would be detrimental to students as it would reduce the possibility of participating in physical activities that encourage healthy student living, such as hiking and canoeing.

In December 2016, after the city council's final review, the plan to build the extension into Laurentian's campus was removed from the Draft Transportation Master Plan.⁵ As a result, students today can continue to enjoy and benefit from having such close access to green space, including using the conservation area for research purposes as well as leisure. While the unique location of Laurentian's campus is an attractive feature for many students, the student population continues to face challenges as a result of this as well. Solutions to transportation, housing, and the overall accessibility issues must consider environmental and other impacts that road, transit, and infrastructure expansion can have for students and the community; the two goals do not have to be mutually exclusive...



Figure 2: South Bay Road Extension Recommendation⁴

There are plans to improve Sudbury transit in the future by streamlining the bus routes most frequently used. Sudbury transit wishes to make services easier to understand and increase the frequency of Sunday bus routes, which would improve its students' overall experiences with transit and travelling about the city.⁶ Public input sessions were held across Sudbury in early 2018, allowing residents to listen and comment on the transit action plan, with one of the sessions being held at Laurentian University.⁷ These sessions allowed for public revision and commentary on the Sudbury Transit Action Plan. In March 2018, the Greater Sudbury mayor announced an investment of 99 million dollars into public transit over a ten-year period to improve Sudbury's transit services.⁸ Transit continues to be an issue affecting many Laurentian students in Sudbury, but with recent lobbying efforts, small changes have already been noted, and hopefully will continue to be made.

endnotes

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St Paddy's Politics: Problems, Players and Solutions in Community-Student Relations

By: Mickey Calder and Melanie Davis



The growing student body population at Brock University has led to near-campus neighbourhoods experiencing larger volumes of student residents within their communities. This vibrant dynamic has the potential to foster a strong relationship between students and non-student residents, or it could cause tensions to rise. Initiatives taken by the institution, the Brock University Students' Union (BUSU), and the municipal government have the ability to bridge these diverse community members' differences and create a unified community in the face of conflicts that may arise due to undesirable behaviour in the neighbourhood. Festivities surrounding St. Patrick's Day appear to attract the most attention in St. Catharines and Thorold, as students gather in large groups and have left non-student residents feeling disrupted and frustrated with students and the community at-large. After St. Patrick's Day events got out of control in 2017, the university and BUSU worked together to create a robust, proactive plan to mitigate any disturbances to ensure students enjoyed themselves safely with minimal impact on their non-student neighbours. For a deeper understanding of community relations between students, the university, and the municipalities, it is critical to look back to what happened on St. Patrick's Day of 2017, the response that followed, how stakeholders prepared for St. Patrick's Day 2018, and what's to come for future community initiatives to bring students and non-students together.

The events that unfolded on St. Patrick's Day in 2017 were unlike any other year of celebrations in St. Catharines and Thorold. The student population had grown, but parties on St. Patrick's day are to be expected; the police, Brock University, and other community members are aware of this and prepared to control the crowd and protect the safety of residents in the community. The preparation for last year's event was mostly reactionary, a clean-up crew was assembled the morning after and complaints that were brought forward were used as a measure to determine what issues needed to be handled.¹ Being reactive to residential concerns is critical in these scenarios, but it does not need to be the only method of recourse when trying to mitigate the damage done to landowners' property and town and gown relations. This was coupled with an attempt to ensure that there was adequate levels of police enforcement in near-campus neighbourhoods like Jacobson Ave. to enforce by-law regulations and maintain the safety of students and other community members.

Unfortunately, no levels of planning or preparation could account for the day that unfolded for the Niagara Regional Police. With a hunt ensuing for a man who stabbed a bank teller and ended the life of his 7-year-old step-son, officers on duty had no choice but to allocate their manpower accordingly to prioritize this high-risk situation.² With limited officers available to remain stationed at Jacobson Avenue, their most effective option was crowd control and mitigating any aggressive behaviour in the neighbourhood.³ Without a strong enforcement presence as planned, approximately 3,500 people gathered outdoors on Jacobson Ave. to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.⁴ Though the Niagara Regional Police were doing their due diligence by allocating their resources to an urgent, dangerous scenario, community members were enraged by the low police presence in near-campus neighbourhoods, particularly on Jacobson Avenue. This resulted in significant unrest among community members, which set the tone for municipal policy initiatives for the rest of the year.



Post - St. Paddy's Response

Immediately following the events of St. Patrick's day, a litany of community stakeholders weighed in on what went wrong, and what ought to be done to fix this in the future. The university released a statement the day after, condemning the "deplorable" actions by "a small portion of its student population".⁵ The framing of the issue by the university represents several truths about the events that unfolded. First, it revealed damage was inflicted to the property of landowners, in some instances due to the pelting of passerby vehicles with snowballs, there was substantial noise, profanities shouted, and public intoxication.⁶ The second truth however is that, insofar as we can ascertain that all 3,500 of the alleged attendees were students—which we cannot—nearly 85% of Brock students did not participate in the events that unfolded. The university's statement reflects their position as not only a place of learning for approximately 19,000 students, but also as a community stakeholder, concerned simultaneously with their status as an institution, and the reputation of their students.

In Niagara's surrounding municipalities however, the response from landowners and non-students overwhelmed the voices of a majority of the student population who chose to enjoy their St. Patrick's Day well within the confines of the law. Bookending the drama of St. Patrick's Day 2017 was another large party during Brock's homecoming weekend in September 2017, just as students were settling in to begin what for many was their first semester in post-secondary school.⁷ A group of citizens manifested themselves on social media under the name "Thorold: A City Being Destroyed by Students, who, despite claiming to oppose generalizations about the whole of the student population, presented a set of zero-sum policy objectives.⁸ The group mounted a campaign to get as many non-student residents as possible to bring their concerns directly to city hall. Many of these concerns would manifest in debates at Thorold City hall about a litany of topics, from policing, to housing by-laws rental regulations, to the presence of 'student' services, like buses, in 'single family neighbourhoods'. For the group, who have over 700 members, the goal was clear: students, and their associated services like transportation, belong exclusively in student neighbourhoods. A post that sought to gather residents to speak at city hall on the removal of a bus route from Winterberry Blvd, a street with numerous student rentals, read: "We need to outnumber any students that might show up to this

meeting to support BUSU. We need to stand together as a community and ensure this bus vote does not get overturned". While groups like this do represent legitimate concerns from non-student residents, the framing is an obvious otherization, wherein being a student is not coterminous with being a citizen of a particular municipality. The language is cut and dry: student residents are excluded from the "we" or community that is Thorold, despite the thousands of students who live in, spend their dollars in, and, hopefully, choose to stay in the municipality after graduation.

When the bus was inevitably removed from Winterberry after the social media-led campaign received support from a number of councillors, the group celebrated the victory, noting that "Winterberry will go back to its single family home status".⁹ Despite significant efforts from BUSU and the university alike, the legitimate accessibility concerns raised regarding removal of the route went unanswered at council. The grievance toward students in Thorold elevated from one single concern regarding a specific group of student actions at a particular time and place, to a sweeping anti-student campaign. These grievances polarized citizens of all stripes in Thorold along the basis of student or non-student identity, targeting everything from zoning and residential housing by-laws, to transit. Some common sense initiatives were rightfully passed by both Thorold and St. Catharines. Brewfing, or the practice of consuming alcohol on a roof, was targeted in amendments to the nuisance by-laws of both Thorold, and St. Catharines.^{10 11} Both by-laws included similar language which gave authorities the right to fine anyone who takes part in a social gathering that results in "disorderly conduct, public drunkenness, littering, property damage, fights, unreasonable noise, open burning or fireworks and blocks the flow of pedestrians or traffic".¹²

The most significant policy change came from the passage of Thorold's new rental licensing by-law, which St. Catharines was looking to implement an equivalent version of at the time of this paper's authoring. The by-law neither specifically targets students, nor does it claim to stop parties occurring in residential neighborhoods.¹³ The by-law instead focuses on ensuring public safety, and aims to tackle problems of absentee landlords, by registering rental units, which will allow city staff to conduct inspections to check compliance with city by-laws and provincial regulations.¹⁴ Legitimate concerns over student safety were made by municipal and University officials, citing a fire a few years back wherein a student only nearly escaped from a basement window of a converted 6 room bungalow.¹⁵ The licensing of rental properties serves a dual purpose. While there are obvious benefits to oversight and accountability of all rentals, the by-law also seeks to clamp down on absentee landlords, which is to have the indirect benefit of reminding students of their obligations as community members. The reality of many of the issues raised by residents—of noise, littering, public intoxication, etc—is that they already constitute violations of existing by-laws. There was quite literally no legislative tool, outside those that would be deemed discriminatory by the Ontario Human Rights Code, that could tackle issues of enforcement raised by residents.

Outside of the brewfing by-laws enacted by Thorold and St. Catharines, there is little additional legislation that can be implemented by city hall. This gap between legislation and student behaviour is where the university and BUSU recognized a need to promote responsible student conduct beyond what is mandatory by law. To prepare for St. Patrick's Day festivities in 2018, the university and BUSU met with municipalities regularly in order to implement an effective plan that would promote the safety of everyone in the community while minimizing disturbances in near-campus neighbourhoods. The efforts put forward by both parties contributed to notable differences compared to last year that can largely be attributed to the strong proactive approach.

The University took a strong stance by paying for seven NRP officers wages for St. Patrick's day to ensure adequate staffing was available, as well as reaching an agreement with municipalities to provide Campus Security patrol services in near-campus neighbourhoods.¹⁶ This was coupled with a wide range of initiatives from President Gervan Fearon sending out a letter to students promoting respectful behaviour, neighbourhood visits, communicating with landlords, administrative staff working special shifts to monitor e-mails and social

media for any issues that need to be addressed, social media campaigns and the distribution of “good neighbour kits” that students could use to clean up the next day.¹⁷ This all-encompassing approach left no stone unturned when communicating with students about the importance of by-law compliance and respectful behaviour when engaging in St. Patrick’s Day festivities. While this initiative was predominantly taken to promote respectful behaviour that community members felt was lacking last year, the President sought to recognize the hard work and diligence of many students who continue to dedicate their time to engage with the greater community.¹⁸ It appears that, in terms of pre-St. Patrick’s Day planning, the university exhausted all possible options to them. It was even applauded as a well-rounded effort in editorials that promotes the otherization of students in Niagara and University towns in general.¹⁹ Though there are still community members that are upset with the events on Jacobson Avenue, the proactive approach taken by the university in 2018 has been applauded by most, and these methods will continue to strengthen community-campus relations in the Niagara Region.

Alongside the university, BUSU took initiative to promote mindful community behaviour during and after St. Patrick’s Day, along with on-campus events to entice students to celebrate responsibly on campus.. According to BUSU’s Vice President of Student Services, Maddy Wassink, one of the more-successful initiatives was the university’s effort to encourage student involvement in clean-up early on.²⁰ This was successfully completed by reaching out to students via social media in the weeks leading up to St. Patrick’s Day to promote the opportunities for students to contribute their time and get involved in the community. For the first time BUSU paid these students for their time, however most of them were unaware of this prior to the day and were happy to volunteer their time regardless.²¹ This speaks to the value Brock students place on the university’s relationship with the community, as students who participated in the clean-up were often not Jacobson residents or participants. Students understand the importance of community engagement and the value of fostering a strong relationship between students and non-student residents within Niagara Region.

BUSU also hosted a free pancake breakfast in Isaacs, the on-campus bar operated by BUSU, to decrease the effects of binge drinking and encourage students to celebrate the holiday in a licensed establishment.²² Throughout the rest of the day, students could continue to refuel at Isaacs where free pizza, gatorade, and water were available to attendees until 5pm.²³ Providing this space and service for students moved them out of near-campus neighbourhoods and allowed them to gather in large groups in a safe, licensed establishment where any unsafe situations can be monitored and addressed accordingly. The notion of incentivizing students to leave near-campus neighbourhoods and celebrate St. Patrick’s Day in regulated spaces allows for students to enjoy themselves without fear of repercussions while the community-at-large can enjoy their day as they choose. Increasing these events and services provided to students has the chance of creating a space where students can celebrate alongside non-student residents outside of their residential community without the risk of landowners facing property damage.

While this year’s St. Patrick’s Day was not without its fair share of tickets, nor was it without justified concerns expressed by various citizens, there was a clear consensus amongst stakeholders that this year was handled noticeably better than previous years. Students were grateful for the police presence, which allowed for a much more controlled event compared to last year.²⁴ Students coordinated with police to help control crowds



forming on lawns, and the presence helped de-escalate situations that may have spiraled out of control, in part due to the help of Brock's campus security.²⁵ The university credited the police presence and the information campaigns led by the plethora of stakeholders, which sought to communicate students' by-law obligations and the need to show respect for our fellow non-student community members.²⁶

St. Catharines City Councillor and Brock University professor Joe Kushner noted this year's event was managed far better than last year.²⁷ In particular, the councillor noted how impressed he was with the speed and volume of clean up initiatives organized the morning after, again noticing the improvement from last year.²⁸ Students were noticeably more aware of their code of conduct obligations, and while the code of conduct does not necessarily apply to off campus activities, students internalized principles of respect, and were conscious that their actions would impact public perceptions of the university and students alike.²⁹ While this year's event was far from perfect, and there is more work to be done to improve the experience of community residents and students, the impact of the initiatives taken by the plethora of engaged stakeholders was noted by municipal officials, the police, as well as students themselves. Looking forward to next year, having a space downtown to provide an integrated student and non-student event could be useful in both bringing members of the community together, providing a more effectively controlled space, and help redirect

student activity away from residential neighborhoods, and toward the downtown core. St. Catharines hosts an annual Niagara Grape and Wine Festival, which sees countless adults pour into an enclosed Montebello park to participate in a festival that is similarly catered around alcohol consumption. BUSU has engaged in dialogue with municipal officials about modeling a future event on the festival model to help move students to an environment more suitable for St. Patrick's Day than a residential neighborhood, and only time will tell if such an event will be instituted. Regardless, the impact of the initiatives undertaken by BUSU, Brock University, and various municipal stakeholders, in addition to the police presence, had a made a significant, clear improvement on this years St. Patrick's Day. While there is still ground to cover, this shows how universities, students, and governing bodies can work together to help address the concerns of residents and students, which is integral to maintaining a healthy community relationship in the future.

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Studentification in Kingston's Near-Campus Neighbourhoods

By: Stefano Hollands

The City of Kingston and Queen's University harbour a special relationship. Queen's plays a major role in stimulating Kingston's economic growth (in particular, its consumer market), which has unlocked new developmental opportunities that the city otherwise may not have ever reached. In the same light, Queen's University is situated in the heart of Kingston's urban core, which has provided students with a unique occupation of certain residential neighbourhoods located in the city's historic downtown area. As such, having the student experience of living in a student-dominated neighbourhood has been a considerable "pull factor" for prospective applicants.

Queen's students have traditionally lived in the areas between Lake Ontario and Princess Street (Kingston's major commercial street). For over one hundred years, major student-dominated areas were confined to small residential pockets, as Queen's enrolment gradually increased from 2,000 to 13,000 between the 1950s and the 1990s.¹ In 2017, the most updated enrolment sat 23,696, which is an increase of 10,000 students in approximately twenty years.² With such a major spike in students living in Kingston's urban core, there has been a corresponding process of improper infill, community displacement, and a student "ghettoization" of a once vibrant, mixed-demographic community.

The Process of "Studentification": Community Displacement in Kingston's Urban Core

Before I recall the story of student intensification in Kingston's near-campus neighbourhoods, I must preface my comments by noting an important, underlying fact. A recent 2017 study from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has revealed that at 0.7%, Kingston has the lowest rental housing vacancy rate in Ontario. That means, that for every hundred rental units, there is less than unit that is unoccupied. In accordance to this low vacancy rate, there are major supply-side economic issues. A low supply of any product that experiences a constantly increasing demand will result in higher prices. Under such conditions, landlords have the power to charge exorbitantly high prices for their rental properties in a market that is characterized by scarcity, rather than choice.

The vast majority of Kingston's downtown residential core is comprised of Victorian and post-war homes. When the enrolment at Queen's rested between 2,000 and 13,000 (this complete increase was spread over a forty-year period) there was enough housing stock to accommodate a healthy mix of students, families, young couples, and mature professionals (such as Queen's professors) in the area. However, with an equal influx of approximately 10,000 students in half the amount of time as the previous increase of 10,000, there has been a mass-horizontal dispersion of students living farther and farther out into the wider Kingston community. The consequences for the surrounding communities have been vast, which has led to an almost complete displacement of families in Kingston's once-vibrant urban core.

With an absence of residential colleges and viable on-campus housing options for upper year students, student housing at Queen's University has been offset to the private sector. Accordingly, the following scenario has dominated Kingston's near-campus neighbourhoods over the past few decades. A family living just outside of the artificial "student ghetto" boundary (which has been a problematic term that

the Alma Mater Society and City of Kingston have addressed by officially renaming a designated area the "University District") lists their house for sale. Seeing this, a prospective landlord, developer, or management company purchases this house for the purpose of renting the dwelling out to an expanding student body. In order to maximize rental earnings, this landlord will construct an addition to the home, convert most amenity spaces into bedrooms, and then virtually slice the house in half and make the home a multi-unit dwelling. As such, a once three or four-bedroom single-family home will be converted into a multi-unit dwelling with, for an example, six bedrooms per unit, leaving the entire occupancy of the dwelling to twelve new students. Additionally, to accommodate any potential parking needs, the landlord will add a gravel parking space in the backyard, much to the dismay of neighbouring residents.

This process has been accompanied by a wave inappropriate infill projects, whereby dozens of students would infiltrate a single property next to families, couples, and retired Kingstonians, who were once enjoying life in the city's urban residential core. With this student infill, there has a substantial trail of noise, litter, and a devaluation of property standards that has been left behind. Slowly, over time, more and more non-student residents would either purposely leave Kingston's downtown core to avoid living on student-dominated streets or they simply could not afford to purchase a home in the area any longer. In areas where students began to outnumber non-student residents, the cost each of property grew substantially. Properties that would have been valued at an affordable price (especially when scaled to Kingston's cost of living) for a family to purchase would then become artificially inflated by the speculation of its earning potential for Queen's student housing.

Within this context, the term "Studentification" refers to a process similar to "gentrification", and can be defined as, "the process by which specific neighbourhoods become dominated by student residential occupation".³ The displaced non-student residents who have been forced to abandon their downtown homes in favour of a more liveable residential neighbourhood (usually at the expense of further suburbanization) are not the only victims in this process. I will present two other groups that have suffered from Studentification.

The first of which includes low-income Kingstonians living within inner-city Kingston. Areas that were traditionally reserved for low-income housing have been swept up by student housing. As Queen's enrolment has expanded, there are simply not enough homes in Kingston's historic urban core to house over 23,000 students. Therefore, students have had to expand even past these formerly stable family streets and into these lower socio-economic areas. Seeing a new demand and market potential, landlords have been slowly purchasing properties in these neighbourhoods, and with a low rental housing vacancy rate, along with a perceived wealthy Queen's student demographic, the cost of rent has risen significantly.⁴ Low-income housing north of Princess Street has therefore become unaffordable, in many cases, for low-income renters. This presents a significant equity problem of Studentification in Kingston's near-campus neighbourhoods.

The second group that suffers are families. A street that is characterized by low property standards compliance, unfettered litter, and hazardous amounts of broken glass is hardly a suitable destination



to raise young children. With the major process of Studentification in Kingston's near-campus neighbourhoods, twelve of Kingston's downtown public schools have closed, and as of September 2018, only three will remain.⁵ Dr. David Gordon, the Director of the Queen's School of Urban and Regional Planning, notes that the closure of public schools signals that Kingston's urban residential core is not a friendly environment to raise children, which has tremendous implications on attracting talented labour and families to both Kingston and Queen's.⁶

In previous decades, living in Kingston's downtown core was one of the city's largest pull factors. With a majority of Kingston's largest employers being situated in Central Kingston, a major pull factor has been the historic qualities of the architecture in the urban core, and more importantly, the high quality of life. Queen's has been able to attract world-leading faculty with the prospect of having strong nearby public schools, in addition to a workplace that is within a short walking distance from home. For other public employees, such as those travelling to Kingston's downtown hospital, or to work at various positions with the municipality, they were able to raise their families and live within a short walking distance to work. With the tidal wave of school closures, rising costs of family homes, and other obvious consequence of expansive, horizontal Studentification, Kingston's downtown core is losing its ability to attain and retain talented labour. Studentification could, then, have indirect negative effects on Kingston's economic development and production.

The Solution: Shared Goals with Contested Pathways

In early-2017, a tipping point was reached, and new legislation was being proposed to help deal with these "monster home" conversions, which have been the leading enabler of Studentification on any given near-campus street. A local City Councillor proposed an "interim control by-law", which would have effectively banned, for one year, all development in the three electoral districts surrounding Queen's and St. Lawrence College. The Councillor's motion was defeated, with City staff instead recommending a robust list of nine major policy recommendations.⁷

To assist with the problems with monster home conversions, the City eliminated provisions in its Zoning By-law that allowed any landlord to create an addition and or convert their property into a multi-unit dwelling “as-of-right”, as long as it met certain technical criteria. These criteria were eliminated, meaning that all dwelling conversions would have to go through a more stringent consultative process before having their project approved by the City.⁸

More importantly, however, the City of Kingston is completely overhauling its entire city-wide Zoning By-law to identify certain nodes and corridors for residential intensification in Kingston. This will allow the City to identify very specific areas that will be suitable for new development projects.

The Alma Mater Society (AMS), along with most other stakeholders, firmly believe that the clearest solution to restore Kingston’s urban core for mixed-demographic living is through new development projects. By dramatically increasing the supply of rental housing in the area, there can be a greater, vertical centralization of student living close to campus. With an increased housing stock, there would be more competition in the rental housing marketplace, which would make homes in the periphery of the University District and beyond (which have typically never been desirable for students until recently) less competitive, and therefore cheaper. Hopefully, students would be more inclined to live in brand-new, shiny apartment complexes (with excellent hospitality and shared amenities), which would make these once-stable streets suitable for families again. With lower speculative prospect of renting these homes out to students, the property values would then return to an affordable price for families or young professionals and couples.

However, there are major polarizing issues that plague decision-making around these solutions. Most serious stakeholders understand the need for further residential intensification close to campus, in order to increase the housing stock and free up space for mixed-demographic usage. However, there is a normative disagreement on how much intensification is needed and where these development projects should be located.

Although a revitalized housing stock is needed, there have been fierce oppositional challenges to many proposed development projects in the University District and (slightly) beyond at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). The location of these projects has been partially responsible for these OMB appeals, as many of these proposed sites are located at the periphery of the University District (on Princess Street, which is the University District’s northern border). Many non-student residents fear that this will solidify the process of Studentification by centralizing students in some of the remaining (and vocal) residents’ backyards.

However, much of the discussion revolves around scale. With a robust heritage association in Kingston, any high-rise project is vehemently opposed and appealed by citizen groups. They argue that these “towers” will destroy Kingston’s scenic landscape and will further lead to a degradation of the City’s downtown core.

Developers, on the other hand, cite the incredibly high cost of land in the near-campus neighbourhoods (which is inflated based on the probable earning potential of rental income). In order to expropriate land for development, they argue that it would only be financially viable for any investor or developer to construct student-purpose intensification projects if “X” (10+) amount of storeys are built, which is often met with the dismay of non-student residents. They also note that Kingston needs thousands of new beds to remedy the process of Studentification, in which small-scale, low-rise development would not suffice. The AMS has been a strong proponent of development, however, it is unclear which direction is most appropriate. On the one hand, large-scale high rises are financially viable for developers and would certainly lead to a desperately needed increase of the rental housing supply. However, at the same time, there are other, more modest development packages that, although would be more difficult to facilitate in

terms of land expropriation, would be more in scale with Kingston's urban character.

In April 2018, I organized the AMS Community Development Summit. Being a multi-stakeholder event, we had 105 registrants, comprised of students, non-student residents, landlords, developers, City of Kingston representatives, and Queen's Administration and faculty. Two of the workshops focused on urban planning in the University District. Each workshop was led and preceded by presentations from Dr. David Gordon, the Director of the Queen's School of Urban & Regional Planning, two former-students and now-planners from Dr. Gordon's program, and a local developer who is a major advocate of these aforementioned high-rise developments. The most notable activity was a mapping exercise, whereby participants at each table (there was an even distribution of stakeholders in each group) had to map out where they wanted residential intensification projects and specify the type of development that would be placed there. The synergy among different stakeholders who traditionally opposed each others' views was eye-opening. We saw pro-development advocates think more critically about their desired locations for development, and we also had anti-development community members consider the financial cost of development projects and the associated requirements that need to be met for investment.

In closing, it would be unwise for the student government to jump into the debate with a dogmatic, absolutist position on what type of development is needed in Kingston's near-campus neighbourhoods. Instead, it can take a leading role in bringing stakeholders together to discuss these issues in a controlled, facilitated environment. The written report that will be published as a result of the Summit will be used by municipal stakeholders as comprehensive public opinion data comprised of a wide, diverse range of stakeholders. This is not to say that student government does not have an imperative to take public stances on certain issues. However, it is of fundamental importance that, strategically, student governments take a moderate, balanced stance on complex issues that affect many people in many different ways. In adopting this approach, the AMS has positioned itself as community leaders in addressing the overdue issue of urban residential Studentification.

endnotes

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⁴David Gordon, "Town and Gown: Residential Intensification in Kingston's Near-University Neighbourhoods," AMS Community Development Summit, Kingston, April 7, 2018.

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⁸Ibid.



Unsanctioned Street Gatherings

By: Shannon Kelly

Recently, Waterloo has become the “go to” destination for St. Patrick’s Day for many young adults. This is mainly due to the street gathering that occurs on Ezra Street which is of close proximity to Wilfrid Laurier University’s Waterloo campus. The concept behind this gathering is simple, several people gather on a street, bring alcohol with them, and socialize with the people who come to the street.

This gathering on Ezra Street has been rapidly growing in popularity reaching approximately 15,000 attendees in 2017 and 22,400 attendees this year. This led to a total of 619 charges laid throughout the day in Waterloo which more than tripled the 197 charges laid in 2017.¹

While this day at the outset looks and sounds like fun, there are many implications that are harmful to not only students but also community members. First off, this event puts strain on the community resources in terms of emergency response, posing the risk that community members beyond those on Ezra will not get the emergency care they need, raising concerns about the spending their tax payer dollars on this. Furthermore, there is significant waste not only on Ezra Street but also in the community including on our neighbour’s, who choose to celebrate in their own way, properties. Furthermore, community members do not feel comfortable or safe with the crowd of intoxicated people around their homes and additionally their family.



This also, of course, poses risks to students and liability towards Wilfrid Laurier University in particular. Students are extremely pressured to drink on St. Patrick's Day with crowds outside many houses and on the streets, many students can't make it to class without seeing this. Furthermore, students are influenced by their peers to skip classes, putting students in potentially uncomfortable situations. As mentioned above, there are a large number of charges laid and people admitted to hospital on St. Patrick's Day in Waterloo.

This year there was a considerable amount of planning and effort put into St. Patrick's Day between Wilfrid Laurier University, the City of Waterloo as well as the Waterloo Region Police Services (WRPS). With St. Patrick's Day falling on a Saturday, strategic planning for this was critical. On March 7th 2018, a St. Patrick's Day doorknocker campaign was ran. The combination of student leaders/athletes, emergency personal and By-Law officials knocked on 750 doors spreading the message "Be Smart, Stay Safe and Be Respectful" for those choosing to participate in St. Patrick's Day festivities.²

Another large movement was the change in Laurier's residence buildings enforcing a no guest policy during the St. Patrick's Day weekend, as well as the Ezra Bricker property management, (owned by Wilfrid Laurier University), enforcing a one guest policy to limit the number of people coming to Waterloo on that weekend. This led another large property in Waterloo called Centurion Property Associates Inc. trying to enforce a 35 guest policy per each of their properties. This received backlash from many tenants which included a tenant hiring a lawyer and spreading a petition with everyone living in these buildings which resulted in the housing company expanding their guest policy to one guest per tenant even though it surpassed the fire code of 240 people per building.³

One of the most drastic measures taken was WRPS outsourcing officers from Peel Region in order to better respond to emergency response needs of the community. This made headlines claiming that this measure was put in place to end the street party on Ezra, that, while not the intention garnered much attention and got a rise out of several young adults.⁴

An initiative ran by the Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union was a garbage clean up the day after St. Patrick's Day. This has been spearheaded by the Eco-Hawks committee whose mandate focuses on sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.⁵ This shows an understanding of the implications St. Patrick's Day has on the community as well as what steps can be taken with the University.

While completely recognizing that young adults will rebel if you tell them they cannot do something, it was pinpointed that changing this unsanctioned street gathering requires a shift in binge drinking culture which

is something that takes time. While increased police enforcement as well as additional sanctioned events can help re-route traffic away from this gathering on Ezra Street, there is something to be said for harm reduction methods. One of the charges that is seen during these unsanctioned street gatherings is public urination, this could be reduced by putting a portable toilet close to this gathering. Another large fine that is seen is public intoxication, in terms of harm reduction, giving out free or low cost water or food to help those at this gathering sober up will reduce the amount of irresponsible actions.

Digging deeper, there is much to be done in the way of reducing binge drinking behaviour and understanding the student and young adult mindset. What is driving this need to binge drink? Is it stressors from daily life, or is it pressure from other students? This is something that takes a collaborative community approach to look at the well being of students in schools. Is there something more productive the community can do to help students cope? In order to solve the problem at hand we need to understand the underlying cause. In many cases this goes beyond just students from Waterloo attending this event. It has been said that busses come up to Waterloo just for St. Patrick's Day from as far as New York⁶.

Another underlying cause of this could be the lack of community cohesion that is felt by students as well as community members. In many cases, students are seen in a negative light and stereotyped as binge drinkers who can be destructive and for this reason are seen as a threat to the community. Furthermore, as a student it is easy to forget the life of community members outside of the school bubble. In Waterloo specifically many apartment buildings have amenities such as a gym or convenience store as well as shuttles to the school, limiting student interaction with community members. If a greater sense of understanding of community cohesion was understood between both students and community members, a greater understanding of the implications of these large unsanctioned gatherings instead of untrue stereotypes of many students would be achieved.



One of the largest things in terms of these processes is that changing this culture and these potentially dangerous events takes time. While many would feel that this year's efforts surrounding St. Patrick's Day was a failure due to the increased number of students on Ezra Street, there were many small wins that can be taken from this process. The City and Region of Waterloo have been progressive in the amount of planning that has been done in preparation for St. Patrick's Day as well as Wilfrid Laurier University. In order to change the culture and shift these events, working together is absolutely key. It is important to recognize that while a large part of the people that come to these gathering are students, there are also many people that are not students or even from the Waterloo community, so seeking collaborative efforts from Universities, the City and the Region are incredibly important.

Some small wins that were also taken from the day was the behaviour of many people going to Ezra Street. The promotion that was done to explain what charges could be laid on students in the case of these unsanctioned street gatherings led to many people choosing not to bring alcohol with them to Ezra Street. Furthermore, in many cases police officers were not taken seriously and many people on the streets saw them in more of a friendly matter as opposed to an authoritative figure. This year, officers were giving more tickets and fines and those at the street seemed to genuinely understand the power of their enforcement and understand when something was wrong.

Changing culture and changing tradition is a long ongoing processes that, in many cases, is extremely difficult. While unsanctioned street gatherings are not limited to Waterloo on St. Patrick's Day, it is crucial that other Universities as well as municipalities focus on strategic planning as well as risk mitigation going forward.

endnotes

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