



POST PANDA GAME REPORT

November 4, 2021.

While post-game festivities – and the problems it causes – have been well known to our community, this year’s escalation coupled with the City of Ottawa, the University of Ottawa, and the Ottawa Police’s collective failure to predict or react to the mayhem has led us to question the future of the Panda Game. Given ASH’s engagements with the University of Ottawa and other stakeholders through the Town and Gown Committee in the lead-up to the Panda Game, we are particularly disappointed at the outcome and the ineffectiveness of responses to the mob activities.

Following the post-Panda events in Sandy Hill, Action Sandy Hill (ASH) released a [statement](#) condemning the post-Panda celebrations in our neighbourhood. We also engaged in community consultations, including a poll on the future of the Panda Game. In surveying residents, we found that most respondents (77%) favour permanently cancelling the Panda Game.¹ Residents also reported that they felt let down by the lack of police presence and failure to uphold and enforce existing municipal bylaws, including those concerning right-of-way and noise. Residents are equally disappointed with the University for not providing a safe and sanctioned place for post-game festivities. In their testimonies to ASH, residents described the post-Panda party as a “nightmare” and a “trauma.” Others told us that they were threatened by partygoers; assaulted by beer cans and tree branches; and others explained that they were made to feel “intimidated” both during and after the Panda Game. Those who opposed the cancellation of the Panda Game also made it clear that they want an end to “illegal street parties” on residential streets – be it for the Panda Game or for any other occasion, including St. Patrick’s Day and Canada Day.

Let us again be clear: **ASH does not condone illegal street parties and ASH will no longer tolerate such unsanctioned events in our residential streets.** Until or unless the proposed solutions and recommendations outlined below are met or otherwise satisfied, ASH will demand that the Panda Game be permanently cancelled.

Although the community is heartened by the fact that the Ottawa Police had some success in its investigation of those responsible for some of the most egregious acts of the night, our position is that **all who participated in the illegal gathering were complicit in the events that unfolded.** The nearly 2000 students who convened in the illegal assembly on our residential streets showed a complete and flagrant disregard for public safety, health and social distancing guidelines, the

¹ The poll took the form of a single question: whether the Panda Game should be cancelled. Respondents were permitted to provide comments as well. Results are available on request.

law, their neighbours, private property, the environment, and for themselves and each other. These young adults know better, and as students of higher learning, they should be held to high standards.

While those who participated in the illegal assembly are ultimately responsible for their actions, Sandy Hill residents believe that the University of Ottawa, the City of Ottawa, and Ottawa Police are also culpable. To date, every Panda Game has been a catalyst for dangerous, reckless, irresponsible, and even violent behaviour that imperils public safety. Alarming, the destruction wrought by the Panda Game is demonstrably escalating. Ignoring, tolerating, and dismissing the effects of the post-Panda Game mob is only contributing to the permissive environment that allowed for the appalling events that took place following the Panda Game on October 2 and 3, 2021.

How long will the City, University, and Police allow the mob-like partying that occurs with the Panda Game every year to continue?

How long should the residents of Sandy Hill be expected to tolerate such behaviour and destruction?

Unaddressed, this situation cannot but breed conflict.

We offer the following recommendations and solutions.

Recommendations and solutions for the University:

The acts following the Panda Game that took place in our community would never have been allowed to take place on University of Ottawa campus. They should not have been allowed to take place off campus either. The University of Ottawa must recognize Sandy Hill as a “near campus neighbourhood” that deserves the same respect as the University of Ottawa campus.

Solutions

- (1) The University of Ottawa will, in concert with the Town and Gown Committee, develop and socialize a **Good Neighbour Policy** that outlines students’ responsibilities and obligations towards the neighbourhood, regardless of whether they live on or off campus, as well as the consequences (e.g., fines, expulsion, etc.) for non-compliance.
 - (a) Being a good neighbour means not holding a party with 2000 guests. It is about being respectful of your neighbours’ time, property, and considerate of the environment. Good neighbours also act responsibly with respect to noise levels and are responsive to their neighbours’ concerns. Our recommendation is that every student receive a copy of the “Good Neighbour Policy.”
 - (b) During Frosh/Welcome week, all new students should attend a workshop to make them aware that their neighbours include families, young children, as well as seniors, who should be treated with respect and kindness. This workshop should cover issues such as noise, garbage, littering, trespassing, and environmental protection. ASH is prepared to support these efforts.
- (2) The University of Ottawa agrees to develop a **Code of Student Conduct** that explicitly addresses non-academic misconduct. The Code of Student Conduct should outline unacceptable behaviour and state the consequences for non-compliance (up to expulsion). The University must then agree to hold students accountable for their actions under the Code, including for behaviour or offences that take place off-campus.²
- (3) The University of Ottawa (and Carleton University) should recognize that the Panda Game is for the benefit of the University, their students, and alumni – and not for the benefit of the Sandy Hill community nor the City of Ottawa. As such, residents should not bear the responsibility for or consequences of the event.

ASH notes that the pre-Panda Game tailgate party was a success because it was a sanctioned event, properly contained with appropriate safeguards and mitigation measures in place and with minimal impact on the residential community. This should serve as a starting model for future planning.

²At present, there is no such code – or its equivalent – that deals with non-academic misconduct, and certainly nothing that holds students accountable for off-campus behaviours.

Should the Panda Game continue, ASH recommends that:

- (a) the University or Universities will agree to host both pre- and post-game activities in a non-residential area, such as on University grounds;
- (b) the University or Universities will agree to plan for all night activities (24 hrs) partying on the day of the Panda Game;³
- (c) the University or Universities will agree to pay for all associated costs, including for police, emergency responders, and any externalities that may arise.⁴
- (d) the University or Universities will agree to establish a reserve in the event that any of their students are responsible for damage to public or private property (see fn 4);
- (e) future planning will consult the Sandy Hill community, including through the Town and Gown Committee, and will continue to address any concerns raised by those in Sandy Hill.

Recommendations

To build confidence in the community in the interim, ASH asks that the University of Ottawa follow in the steps of the Ottawa Police in investigating those students who participated in the unlawful assembly in Sandy Hill.

We also request that the University consider making real gestures of contrition and restitution to Sandy Hill, including but not limited to having senior University officials walk around the neighbourhood to talk to residents and hear firsthand accounts of their concerns. Officials can also speak with students who live here to demonstrate leadership and reinforce a Good Neighbour Policy. Further, the Head Coach of the Gee Gees, as well as players, should be encouraged to get out into the neighbourhoods to engage residents and students to help build bridges.

Lastly, the University, particularly the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa, should encourage students to repair and rebuild bridges with the community with clean-ups, volunteering, and other positive contributions.

³ The University of Ottawa should also consider either hiring off-duty police or retaining the services of private security for the event to ensure that officers cannot be called to respond to another location and so that security is maintained for the duration of the event.

⁴ The University of Ottawa may wish to introduce a Panda Game charge to the registration and tuition fees of all undergraduate students to help offset the costs associated with the Panda Game.

Recommendations and solutions for the City of Ottawa:

Ottawa continues to grapple with recurring unsanctioned street parties that draw thousands to Sandy Hill as well as other residential communities. Unsafe, illegal, and disruptive behaviours often accompany these parties. These create risks because they increase the pressures on emergency services and police, create dangerous situations when they block roads, traffic, and other public rights of way. They also put a strain on property owners, whose taxes are ultimately responsible for covering the costs of claims because of damage to public and private property. It is the opinion of ASH and Sandy Hill residents that the City's Bylaw and Regulatory missed opportunities to enforce existing bylaws. It also failed to act in response to the contraventions to the Reopening Ontario Act. In the future, the City should be more proactive in ticketing those who fail to comply with municipal rules and legislation.

In an effort to curb these behaviours and their effects, the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police in collaboration with the University of Ottawa must adopt those measures used in Kingston to control unsafe and disruptive behaviour in the near campus neighbourhood of Queen's University.

Such an initiative has three main components: changes to how people will be charged for committing specific offences at certain times of the year and for any contravention of the Bylaw occurring at any time; information-sharing between the City, Ottawa Police, and the Universities; and potential university-related non-academic consequences for any University student issued a summons through the initiative.

We ask the following of the City.

(1) Strictly Enforce the existing Noise Bylaw

- (a) Regularly monitoring residential streets for noise infractions and violations and increasing these patrols on known "party" days, such as: Homecoming, Frosh/Welcome Week, Panda Game, St. Patrick's Day, and Canada Day;
- (b) Putting up signage that indicates the bylaw in student-dense residential streets to increase awareness about fines;
- (c) Increase the fine for a first offence;
- (d) Increase fines to properties/individuals for repeat offences.

(2) Additional Garbage Collection Days/Street Sweeping

- (a) Garbage should be collected at the start and end of the academic year throughout the entirety of the Sandy Hill community. This pickup should also include the collection of large items, such as mattresses, sofas, etc.;

- (b) The City should collect garbage and debris following known major “party” days, including Panda, St. Patrick’s Day, Canada Day, Homecoming, and should also commit to street sweeping.
- (3) Adopt a “Nuisance Party Bylaw” that addresses the negative impacts of large and loud social gathering within “near campus neighbourhoods.”
 - (a) Anyone found guilty of contravening the “Nuisance Party Bylaw” should be fined or charged, AND summoned to court, and their names should be publicly disclosed on request.
 - (b) The property owner and/or tenants should be held responsible for any “Nuisance Party Bylaw” tickets.
 - (c) A violation of the proposed “Nuisance Party Bylaw” should result in the offending address and/or offenders from being prohibited from hosting future parties (i.e., exceeding 10 occupants) for a period of three years.
 - (d) The “Nuisance Party Bylaw” should be broad enough to include unsanctioned outdoor party, including those that take place or spill over onto public right of way.

ASH recommends public consultations with the Sandy Hill community, particularly through Town and Gown, to help formulate appropriate bylaws and measures.

Recommendations and solutions for the Ottawa Police:

In consulting and engaging Sandy Hill residents who were impacted by the post-Panda Game, ASH found that residents were displeased with the Ottawa Police's lack of presence, and their perceived unwillingness to intervene to disperse crowds, issue fines, or conduct arrests.

ASH also notes that residents felt that the police lacked readiness and were grossly outnumbered. Residents have also called into question the decision by the OPS to close off Russell Avenue to vehicular traffic. The decision to do so had the effect of appearing to endorse the partying and only further encouraged students and others to take over the street. Streets and sidewalks belong to the public and should not be encroached upon by individuals or groups. ASH strongly opposes the closing of right of way.

We ask that the Ottawa Police undertake the following:

- (1) Significantly increase police presence in anticipation of large gatherings or parties, including but not limited to: Panda Game, St. Patricks' Day, and Canada Day;
- (2) Be prepared to ticket, detain (e.g., overnight drunk tanks), and when necessary, arrest those who are found in breach of the criminal code, provincial law (e.g., The Safe Streets Act against those who break and discard beer bottles on our streets; The Liquor License Act for those who are publicly intoxicated or are found underage drinking), or municipal bylaws;
- (3) The police must be empowered to disperse crowds or declare any gathering a "Nuisance Party" and otherwise enforce and execute laws.

ASH requests a copy of the OPS report concerning the Panda investigations. We also request representation at any meeting or discussion to help with future planning surrounding large-scale parties such as Panda in Sandy Hill.

Additional Recommendations for the University of Ottawa and the City of Ottawa:

For years, ASH has warned City planners and other City officials that their policies and planning decisions have created an imbalance in the type of housing that was being approved. Today, we see the results with an overabundance of student housing in Sandy Hill.

ASH also notes that part of the problem with student behaviour more generally in our community is that the University of Ottawa has insufficient housing and rules that deter students from engaging in precisely the same behaviours that are adversely impacting the Sandy Hill community.

The City should put a moratorium on the approval of buildings specifically designed for students, including rooming houses that are not on the University of Ottawa property. It should also prohibit short-term rentals in the absence of certain criteria (e.g., the property owner or representative of the management company lives on site). The City should look for ways to incentivize developers to build to attract other demographics.

The University should also consider working with the Town and Gown Committee and other relevant stakeholders including the provincial Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) to develop an off-campus residence community standard and a landlord program. This will help bring oversight to off-campus housing, provide students with clean and safe housing, and ensure that tenants and landlords respect each other and the welfare of the community in which they are located.

The University of Ottawa can lead by developing a clear set of standards similar to those that students living on campus would be compelled to sign (see footnote).⁵ The University and landlords wishing to rent in the Sandy Hill community should be asked to provide educational material concerning landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities at the time a lease is signed. Students, many of whom are living away from home for the very first time, may not know that they could be evicted for noise complaints.

Developing standards for off-campus housing benefits students, property owners, and the community.

⁵ This includes actions that have the potential to undermine the safety and security of an individual or the Sandy Hill community; actions that interfere with another individual's peaceful use and enjoyment of residence; actions that have a significant negative impact on another individual within the Sandy Hill community; actions that endanger the safety and security of an individual or others in Sandy Hill; actions that undermine the dignity of another individual or the Sandy Hill community; or actions which result in damage to University property or to private property in the Sandy Hill community and; actions that seriously compromise the safety of and/or have a significant psychological impact on an individual or the Sandy Hill community.

Sandy Hill is a vibrant and diverse community of arts and parks, embassies, families, seniors and of course, students. For our community to remain a welcoming and safe place for all residents, including students, we must all work together.

Before we can begin to contemplate the future of the Panda Game, and in the interest of preserving public safety and recognizing the inadequacy of previous measures to mitigate the effects of the Panda Game, ASH calls on the University of Ottawa, the City of Ottawa, and Ottawa Police to action the solutions and recommendations no later than the end of the Winter academic term in May 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SKhazaeli', written in a cursive style.

Susan Khazaeli, PhD
President, Action Sandy Hill