



College neighbours not in a party mood

Councillor calls on police chief to act

By JOE BELANGER

Fanshawe College officials discussed measures to quell unruly parties and police went door to door yesterday warning that the city's noise bylaw will be "strictly enforced" after a weekend of student rowdiness.

The city sent a contractor to clean up debris at 10 properties in the Fleming Drive area near the college where incoming students during the weekend had tossed out furniture and other items left behind by former tenants.

The cleanup bill will be sent to the owners of the homes, not the tenants.

Meanwhile, students strolled through the northeast London neighbourhood, stepping around debris from the rowdiness, including large patches of broken glass from tossed beer bottles still on the road.

In one spot, pavement had to be replaced after old furniture was used to fuel fires on the street.

"It's a disgrace," said Ward 3 Coun. Bernie MacDonald, who has long pushed for a permanent police presence in the area with a satellite station Chief Murray Faulkner has long resisted in favour of stepped-up patrols during the fall and spring.

"It's unreal. You don't know how to approach this problem anymore," MacDonald said. "That (police) approach hasn't achieved anything but a few arrests and slaps on the wrist.

"How long are the residents in the area going to have to put up with this? It's not fair.

"They're taxpayers, too. What's it going to take?"

One elderly homeowner, who refused to give her name, said she and her husband have lived on Fleming for 10 years and have no intention of moving, despite the fact only a few homeowners remain on the street.

"When the students come back in the fall it seems to get a little wild, but then they calm down," she said.

Fanshawe spokesperson Emily Marcoccia said college officials have held a few informal meetings, in addition to discussions with the city and police, but were also busy with the influx of 12,000 students (including 7,000 in first year) for the first day of classes.

"We really still need to do more work, but it is a huge priority for us," said Marcoccia, adding she hopes additional strategies are developed before the weekend.

Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, chairperson of the city's town and gown committee, which was formed to handle student-related issues, said "everybody's trying to find solutions" and last weekend's antics are "just unacceptable.

"It gets so frustrating because we're doing so many initiatives," she said. "The vast majority of students are good, law-abiding residents, but you always have a very small minority tarnishing the reputations of the good students."

The letter police distributed targets areas where noise complaints are common. It warns the noise bylaw will be strictly enforced and points out it is in effect around the clock.

Fanshawe student union president Jonathan Hillis said the group will work with police and have reached out to students, delivering garbage and recycling bins.

"Unfortunately, with the fires, that's a crime and I think someone is going to have to be made an example of for students to understand the severity of these actions," Willis said. "We totally support the police and what they're trying to do and we'll do whatever we have to to ensure student safety."

