

City of Vaughan
Committee of Adjustment

FILE No A055/22

DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2022, 6:00 pm

Re: Relief from the Zoning By Law to permit the construction of a proposed accessory structure in the rear yard which is proposed to function as a sauna

Presented by: Irina Tkatcheva, 19 Wallenberg Drive, Maple, ON, L6A 4M1

SUBMISSION TO OPOSE THE APPLICATION

BACKGROUND AND FACTS:

A non residential structure was constructed on the backyard of the house located at 15 Wallenberg Drive, Maple Ontario. I am an owner of the house neighboring to the above property. Structure was designed to be a big sauna house. Structure is not adjacent to the house, located on the property.

The structure looks very large for the backyard (big enough to be a commercial one). Together with the deck and jacuzzi located on the same back yard it definitely covers over 60% of the property. According to By Law Regulations at least 60% of the ground should be soft, unless the proper relief is requested and granted.

Backyard looks very overwhelmed by the structure, which dominates not only in the above backyard, but over the neighboring properties.

The structure was built without proper permission received from the City of Vaughan – City was not even notified about this construction.

Construction was completed rather fast, most likely, without properly drafted and approved plans, needed engineering survey of the land and with violation of several By Laws. If this sauna house would be built by the professional company, By Law requirements would be observed or proper permission would be obtained. Hopefully, the electrical part and plumbing (if any) were done by licensed specialists. Big and heavy structure located on a soft ground, which is, most likely, not properly rolled, pressed, levelled and prepared for the construction. The concrete base of the structure looks rather thin and weak, especially for the land with a lot of ground water. I am not sure that proper drainage system has been placed and that base of the structure is sufficient for the such oversized structure.

According to the Notice received from the Committee of Adjustment recently, I noticed that six (!) Zoning Regulations have been violated, including requirements for minimum distances from rear yard and interior side, as well as building heights.

MY OPINION AND POSITION

Violation of the minimum distances should not be permitted. Very close location to the interior side makes maintaining of the backyard rather difficult, creates dark and hidden areas where wild animals, birds, mice and snakes might be hiding and living. They can also occupy space under the roof of the structure.

Size of the structure should be decreased to comply with the requirements. There are few reasons why this I am stressing out on this point:

Structure is rather heavy, therefore spot should be specially prepared for the constructions, rolled, pressed and levelled. Presently structure is based on a gravel covered by a rather thin concrete layer, and might soon become unsteady and unstable, especially with a lot of water in the ground and snow around and on the roof.

The 60% soft coverage of the backyard should be observed.

Structure is planned to be used as a sauna house. Therefore, there is a heating involved. I would like to make sure that structure is safe enough and it will not end up with fire. For fire safety the distance between structure and interior sides and the height should be changed according to the rules. Such a big sauna requires a lot of preheating prior to usage, and very powerful heating elements should be installed to generate enough heat, therefore it will be pre heated unsupervised for a long time, especially in winter or in cold and windy weather. This is very dangerous, if it will ignite and fire started – our houses will be destroyed before any fire crew will be able to arrive, reach backyard and start extinguishing the fire. I also would like to remind that according to provincial regulation, sauna house must have covered heating elements and limited to 90° C. I would like to make sure that the heater and the thermostat cannot not be illegally adjusted to higher temperature, since there is no control is possible. And this makes the danger of fire even more real. If it a decision would be made that, despite all the violations and potential danger, the structure should be permitted to stay, it must be very carefully inspected by the professional engineering company – internally, externally, structurally and operationally, so residents of our neighborhood can consider safe. Incorrectly built or improperly placed and installed sauna could lead to serious safety hazard.

There is a good selection of premade sauna houses on the market that can be easily and safely installed on the back yard without violating the rules and putting neighborhood in danger.

That's why we have rules and by laws and that's why we need to obey and follow.