

500 Osgoode Dr, Unit 86
London, Ontario, N6E 2G9

To: Mayor Josh Morgan, Members of the Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Celine Poirier, Westminster, Ward 14

Re: 12th Meeting of Community and Protective Services Committee, August 15, 2023,

Item : PPM, Fireworks By-law Review

Mayor Morgan and CSPC Committee Members,

Thank-you for taking into consideration the effect of fireworks on our city. In the past few years fireworks in Westminster have become an increasingly common occurrence not only on the holidays but on other days. Most fireworks discharged here contravene at least one bylaw. However, these contradictory and confusing bylaws are rarely enforced, which seems to account for increased brazenness among the citizens. Therefore I ask you to vote for **Option B : to ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks.**

Any citizen conscientious enough to read the bylaws can then see that effectively, there are nearly no safe and allowable contexts in which to discharge fireworks. Most fire departments in Ontario say as much. Unfortunately, the preliminary caution promoted on some websites is absent on the city of London Fire department. Here is a quote from Brantford :

The Brantford Fire Department along with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office recommend that citizens attend public firework displays put on by certified technicians that are trained to handle and discharge them safely.

On the other hand, any observer of what is happening in Westminster today would likely come to the conclusion that there is no bylaw contravening the discharge of consumer fireworks anywhere, anytime as long as you can purchase them.

Here is an overview of the bylaws and how they are overlooked in Westminster.

Bylaw PW 11, 5.5

(5) No person shall discharge any consumer fireworks in such a manner as might create danger or constitute a nuisance to any person or property

35 feet are recommended for the low fountain fireworks, and 70 feet for the high ones. Given the modest size of the yards where the single family homes are themselves only 10-30 feet apart, this is well nigh impossible on any one's personal property. Duplexes and townhomes, where adequate distancing from the neighbours is even less possible, constitute a significant percentage of the homes in this area. People who discharge fireworks on their property are within 10 to 25 feet of a house, and even closer to trees and shrubs.

Bylaw PW 11, 5.7

(7) No person shall discharge any consumer fireworks in or on or into any park, highway, street, lane, square or other public place, unless under a display fireworks permit to do so issued by the Fire Chief.

The fireworks in Westminster are most often discharged in the public areas such as the sandbox in the school yard. Thankfully these people have the common sense to stay away from houses, but they are contravening Bylaw 5.7. Others launch firecrackers into the street, over the roofs of the neighbouring houses. How terribly frightening. We were very alarmed at one such display in May 2021 on Woodrow Cres, just behind our complex.

In addition to these most frequent transgressions, I have witnessed an entire fireworks display organized by citizens in Nicholas Wilson park in July 2020 for Canada Day. No permit was obtained from the city for this ad hoc event. This runs contrary to

PW 1.5. (1) No person shall discharge consumer fireworks except: (d) as part of a display of display fireworks for which a permit has been obtained and for which all conditions and requirements of the permit have been met; or at such other times and such other dates as permitted by Council by by-law

Most fireworks discharged in public parks are not cleaned up, but are left to cool in the grass. Citizens typically do not return to remove the refuse once it has cooled. Many also leave the discarded cases. This transgresses the city's dumping bylaw. *PW 2.6 Dumping – prohibited – without lawful authority No person shall throw, place, dump or deposit refuse on private property or City property without lawful authority.* In this day and age when the city is grappling with its garbage problem, when our water ways are increasingly polluted, where wild life is struggling to stay alive in the urban landscape, and where even many of our citizens have no other choice but to sleep outside, allowing consumers to leave fireworks litter in our natural spaces reflects a wonton neglect of the natural areas.

While I was out on a walk in the neighbourhood one year ago, a man set off a firecracker in the middle of the street. The firework being impossible to secure on the pavement, he held it as it discharged. He nearly pointed it at me, but corrected the direction at the very last minute. I am not sure I could have escaped the firework hitting me if he hadn't made that sudden change. It being dusk, he hadn't seen me right away.

Children are the primary audience for fireworks. They are observing fireworks from an unsafe distance at the very least. It is quite impossible, with the numerous locations of fireworks displays, and the absence of enforcement officers, to adequately assure that bylaw PW 11 5.3 is being respected.

Fireworks are being discharged increasingly outside of the mandated times. On Victoria Day Weekend 2021 we heard fireworks on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday evenings. It is not uncommon to hear fireworks in the week leading up or the week following a designated fireworks holiday. This is in violation of PW 11 5. a, b, c. For those suffering from PTSD, for birds, cats, and other animals, and anyone nervous or anxious, this creates an ambiance of continual arousal which can be deleterious to one's health.

Dear Mayor and Council members, Citizens are confused by the precedent that they see : fireworks for sale in obvious places across the city, and fireworks discharged liberally in neighbourhoods, yards and school yards. Allowing citizens to buy fireworks without a permit when most of them do not have the adequate means to deploy them safely sends a confusing message. The nearly complete lack of enforcement creates an aura of permissiveness. The city by-law officers are impossible to find on Canada Day or Victoria day because the by-law office is closed.

I have wandered other parts of the city enough to observe that the licentiousness in Westminster is not isolated to our neighbourhood. It would cost the city a lot of money to police this bylaw properly. Upwards of 90% of the fireworks displayed in the city would be banished if such policing were 100% successful. It is much simpler to banish the sale of consumer fireworks and to fine the retailers who do not comply. This would bring clarity to the situation.

Banning the sale of consumer fireworks sends the message to all of Londoners that the stillness of our natural spaces and the beauty of our wide open fields is respected and honoured. It shows respect also for the firefighters who are valiantly combatting, at great risk to themselves, the record high number of forest fires devastating our country. Let's stand in solidarity with those communities who had to cancel all fireworks displays this season because of the risk of starting another forest fire. Let's not wait for an open fire ban in our city. Let's ban fireworks for the many other reasons that they are deleterious to our community.

Dear Council members, increased conscientiousness on the part of all citizens is needed urgently. I urge you to begin this process by **banning the sale and use of consumer fireworks** in the city of London.

Sincerely,

Celine Poirier