

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

From: Julianne K. First

Re: 12th Meeting of Community and Protective Services Committee, August 15, 2023, Item PPM, Fireworks By-law Review on the Agenda

Hello Chair Pelozza, Mayor Morgan and Committee Members:

I am writing this letter today to ask that you please vote for Option B of the proposed Fireworks By-law to ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks.

Fireworks are harmful on so many different levels and they are out of control in the City of London with people very regularly setting them off on random days/nights that are not holidays. This has been very well documented and established. They cause major stress, anxiety and fear for household pets like cats and dogs, they cause wildlife to become disoriented and abandon their nests (and their babies), birds and bees get disoriented and some end up dead.

Fireworks, especially personal backyard fireworks, are incredibly inconsiderate and traumatizing. They sound like bombs/guns going off and all of the neighbours who live within earshot of a particular backyard have absolutely no say in the matter. They are simply forced to endure the extremely loud and stress-inducing sounds for however many hours their neighbour decides to set off their fireworks.

On a personal level, I have two wonderful rescue dogs who experience tremendous stress, fear and panic during fireworks. I have tried everything to mitigate the terrifying situation for them -- "thunder jackets" that are made for dogs, trying to block our windows/doors to muffle the sounds (it doesn't work, fireworks are far too loud to block), herbal "calming" supplements, prescription drugs from our veterinarian and trying to carefully and slowly "desensitize" them to the sound of fireworks. Nothing works! They continue to endure massive stress and panic every time fireworks are detonated. My dogs are family and it's heartbreaking and frustrating to feel helpless and unable to console a terrified family member. I am just one of thousands of London dog owners who feel this way.

Fireworks are a very popular and traditional way of celebrating the holidays, yes, but we need to be willing to change our ways when the cons so drastically outweigh any pros. It's important that we don't get stuck in our ways when so much harm is being done. There are safer and kinder ways to celebrate the holidays (including drone shows and laser light shows, music, dancing, BBQs, etc).

The goal is not to stop celebrations. The goal is to modernize celebrations to be more environmentally friendly and more inclusive.

Bans are not always 100% perfect (please tell me - what is in life?) but bans will stop impulse purchases. And, I believe a consumer ban on sales will greatly reduce impulse purchases and will be easier to enforce than a by-law that allows for several days of fireworks. Bans do work!

It's really important to keep in mind that there are far better alternatives to fireworks, such as laser light shows and drone shows which are being used with great success in Canada and all over the world. Now that we know better, we need to do better. Humans have been evolving, changing and adapting their ways since the beginning of time. We are very capable of progressing and making positive changes!

Again, I ask you to please vote Option B to ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks in the City of London.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,
Julianne K. First