

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

From: David Heap & Stephanie Kelly, Forward Ave. N6H1B8

Re: Community and Protective Services Committee meeting, August 15, 2023, PPM, regarding the Fireworks By-law Review

Dear Mayor Morgan and CSPC Members,

We write to you adding our support for the "Option B" bylaw i.e. the ban on sale and use of consumer fireworks in London.

The reasons for such a ban are well-known and compelling: fireworks displays contribute to air pollution, retraumatize some people with PTSD (for example, some Londoners with lived experience in war zones), aggravate many other human health conditions (e.g. respiratory and auditory distress) and cause irreparable damage to wild-life and the environment. Fireworks release CO₂ and many other chemicals, and have also helped spark wildfires in some locations. While not all these risks and harms apply to all people and animals, there are enough individuals and groups that suffer from them to make it worth banning the sale and use of consumer fireworks, and replacing municipal displays with "silent fireworks" or light displays instead. Most importantly, fireworks are unnecessary and provide little appreciable societal benefit, so banning them has few if any real downsides, despite claims of their proponents.

Apart from fireworks industry representatives with an obvious vested interest in the status quo, some proponents may claim that the use of fireworks is "ingrained" in cultural traditions, and therefore cannot be changed. But as you are aware, many municipalities of various sizes in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Québec have fireworks bans of various kinds, and none report a loss of cultural or other traditions. Fireworks bans have also been legislated in some US jurisdictions and the some European cities, without loss of traditions. In China and India, which have long traditions of cultural and religious festivals involving fireworks, there are bans in hundreds of jurisdictions including Beijing and New Delhi: both the Lunar New Year and Diwali festivals have nonetheless thrived and remain intact, despite these bans. Where cultural traditions bring people together to celebrate, communities will find ways to have fun safely, without causing unnecessary harms to the environment, to wildlife and to human health.

The fact is, cultural traditions constantly change, adapt and evolve, so removing one clearly harmful element will not stop people from celebrating: they will just find new ways to do so, as in fact is already happening in communities around the world that have banned fireworks. London will be in good company by other joining forward-thinking communities in valuing human health and the preservation of wildlife and the environment over one single aspect of "traditions".

We urge you to support Option B, the ban on sale and use of consumer fireworks.

Sincerely,
David Heap & Stephanie Kelly