

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

From: Chelseay Helka

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

Item: Fireworks By-law Review

Hello Chair Pelozza, Mayor Morgan and CSPC Committee Members. I normally do not express my concerns, and often keep things to myself. However, this is a case where I do not want to be silent. I am asking that you vote for option B, and ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks.

On May 18th, around the time school began, students from Saunders High School began lighting fireworks inside Westmount Mall. The first one was lit only feet away from my two-year-old daughter and me, so we quickly left the mall. There were some students laughing and some screaming for them to stop, because “there was a baby nearby”.

As I went into the parking lot, the hoard of students followed and continued lighting them in the front vestibule to the mall, the parking lot, and the parking garage. This created loud booms throughout the building. Not only was this scary for me, but I couldn’t imagine how everyone in the parking lot and the parking garage felt. There are many seniors who seek services in that mall, and are not able-bodied enough to quickly remove themselves from a situation, such as this.

I heard that these events continued on for some time after I left. I called the mall security twice to report my concerns. I went home that day absolutely shaking, and it took me a couple weeks to build up the courage to go back to the mall and when I did I went with someone. I can’t believe that explosives are able to get into the hands of minors. After a few weeks passed, I was at White Oaks Mall, only to have fireworks lit in the parking garage near me. I instantly spiraled into a panic attack because of what I went through previously.

I often dread holidays, because the fireworks are never contained to the times stated in the bylaw. I work early shifts, and wake up at 4 A.M.. Some nights, they go off all night long—some even directly in the parking lot outside my complex. I often get told to “mentally prepare” or “get over it”, because it’s only on holidays. Not once, since living in London, have fireworks ever been contained to the bylaw times.

My daughter, as an infant, would be woken up and cry uncontrollably, because of fireworks set off directly beside our house. My cat and dog would both wander with worry when they heard the loud bangs.

My household has two people who are on the autism spectrum, including myself. Not every person who is autistic is bothered by fireworks, but I always have been startled by them. After the incident in May, I am no longer able to tolerate them in the slightest. Earplugs and white

noise machines don't help me. I am on a waitlist to talk to a therapist, but in the meantime, I am dealing with the repercussions of fireworks on my own.

Fireworks may be beautiful to the eye but they often end up in the wrong hands. They are continuously used without regard for others' sleep, mental well being, and without the proper safety precautions in place. This is terrifying! Please vote for option B, and ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks.

Thank you for your time,  
Chelsey Helka