



GUJARATI OF LONDON ONTARIO

Office of Mayor Josh Morgan
City of London,
300 Dufferin Ave., London, ON N6A 4L9

August 12, 2023

Re: Fireworks By-law PW11

Respected Mayor Josh Morgan and Council Members of The City of London,

Namaste from the Gujarati Community of London Ontario.

The Gujarati Mandal (community) represents over 2000 Hindu Gujaratis in London Ontario. Diwali is one of the most celebrated ancient festivals of Hinduism. The festival is also commonly known as the Festival of Lights. For Hindus, Diwali is a sacred occasion that symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil, and most importantly, the return to joyousness and new beginnings. The ritual of putting lamps outside our homes, decorating our homes with lights, and lighting fireworks on Diwali are all part of our spiritual, cultural, and traditional belongingness. Hence, lighting up the dark night has been an integral ritual of Diwali from ancient times.

We have learned that the City of London is considering a ban on backyard fireworks. We went through the two options presented on your website.

We are in favour of Option A (and completely oppose Option B). Our humble request to the City and its esteemed officials is to rally behind Option A.

We find that putting a ban on fireworks in backyards will deprive us of our religious, traditional, and cultural celebration of Diwali. Culture, as well as its heritage, reflect and shape values, beliefs, and aspirations. It is thus the responsibility of the City of London to help preserve Hindu heritage by protecting their cultural activities, festivals and celebrations.

Mutual respect is the bedrock of Hinduism and all we ask is for reciprocation of this to keep our festivals alive on one day of the year for a couple of hours. Option B will undermine the City's commitment to honour and preserve cultural traditions and diversity in London.

We are fully committed to upholding the well-being of our city and its inhabitants and to this end, offer to educate our community about responsible and safe firework usage and participate in the cleanup efforts after the celebrations. Those Londoners who violate rules and create social disturbance during these celebrations need to be dealt with legally on a case-by-case basis. Their action should not adversely impact the WHOLE Hindu community.

To reiterate, the Hindu Community steadfastly opposes the notion of banning backyard fireworks.

Sincerely and with respect,

Gujarati Mandal (on behalf of the Hindu Community)

