

To: Mayor Josh Morgan & Members of the City Council

From: Becca Amendola
London, ON

Re: Fireworks By-law Review on the Agenda

Hello, Mayor Morgan and City Council members,

The main purpose of my letter is to request that Council members vote for **option B** within the proposed bylaw changes to **ban the sale and use of consumer fireworks** in London.

Please kindly consider reading some of the letters submitted to the CPSC agenda for the public participation meeting addressing the bylaw review on August 15th:

<https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=24ceb707-f2e2-4334-bcae-69dfaab2030f&Agenda=Merged&lang=English>

In this agenda, you will see that there are 8 letters requesting that the council choose option A and **43 letters requesting that the council choose option B**. This is important to note because many constituents who wanted to speak at the PPM to request that the council adopt option B were unable to attend due to work conflicts, childcare issues, and/or mental health struggles.

Please also consider this document of extensive research outlining the various environmental, wildlife, and human harms of fireworks. The document also contains a list of locations that have a consumer ban on fireworks and a list of alternatives for consideration:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hPfhNoEaQeQPgsP9MHY3_01DMNC7VEBRp1F6I_0yrwA/edit?usp=sharing

I bring these environmental concerns to your attention in light of the City's Climate Emergency Declaration and Climate Emergency Action Plan. With this in mind, the council is obligated to look at the issue of fireworks through the lens of its Climate Emergency Screening Tool. We know that traditional fireworks contain harmful chemical components that pollute our environment and that those pollutants accumulate over time in both soil and water. As global temperatures continue to increase, the issue of droughts, wildfires, and poor air quality will also continue to increase. We need to be accountable for every little bit of pollution that we create.

A doctor with the NYU Grossman School of Medicine stated, "*Although people are only exposed to these substances for a short time each year, **they are much more toxic than the pollutants***"

we breathe every day.¹ These pollutants “can remain in the region for **days** after fireworks.”² In terms of wildlife, many mothering birds and animals frequently abandon their young when fleeing from the excessive noise of fireworks and can sometimes get burned and/or killed by fireworks themselves as they flee.

I understand that some councilors believe there are other, larger pollutants and social issues that we should be worried about instead. However, the fact that bigger issues exist, doesn't automatically make it acceptable to ignore the environmental or social harms of issues such as fireworks. And fireworks really aren't that small of an issue anymore when one considers the increasing number of instances where people are using fireworks as weapons.³ Weapons that literally anyone of any age can buy at any time from places like Bob's Fireworks which is a London business that sells fireworks year-round, regardless of whether it's Canada Day, Victoria Day, or the middle of February. That's right, even though the current bylaw states that sales are only allowed around two holidays, I have obtained evidence showing that Bobs Fireworks has been violating the current bylaw by providing online sales and personal deliveries year-round (CPSC council members have emails with this evidence). Choosing option B would remove any misunderstandings these businesses might claim to have regarding their ability to sell fireworks to untrained individuals.

Some councilors believe that a ban won't work because they assume people will just drive outside of the city to buy fireworks. If a consumer ban goes into effect, that may happen. However, impulse purchases will be significantly curbed which would then result in a significant decline in the overall number of fireworks being discharged and thus a reduction in the need for enforcement. Other nearby municipalities such as Caledon have moved forward with a consumer ban and shared evidence that it's working. Please consider this statement from the Mayor of Caledon who recently said, “We received five emails and nine phone calls over the Victoria Day weekend to report personal fireworks activity. That is a marked improvement over previous years.”⁴ By the way, they started discussing a ban on fireworks in 2018, **BEFORE** the pandemic, due to safety and environmental concerns. It's worth noting that Woodstock's city council also passed a ban on the sale and use of consumer fireworks this past July.

I know that some councilors are concerned that a consumer ban on fireworks will not be enforceable due to lack of staff but the reality is the city lacks the staff to enforce the current bylaw and implementing more restrictions as is proposed in option A won't fix that. Violators don't take the time to inform themselves regarding what days fireworks are actually permitted, or that the current bylaw prohibits fireworks in parks, streets, lanes, squares, or any public space without a permit. But by implementing option B there will no longer be any questions. With a complete ban on consumer fireworks, Londoners will then know that **any** backyard show is prohibited, no matter when or where.

1 <https://nyulangone.org/news/common-fireworks-release-lead-copper-other-toxic-metals-air#:~:text=Along%20with%20lead%2C%20titanium%2C%20strontium,Gordon.>

2 <https://www.sustainablebizconsulting.com/blog/toxic-chemicals-in-fireworks-might-want-to-hold-your-breath>

3 <https://london.ctvnews.ca/i-owed-him-drug-money-man-allegedly-breaks-into-london-ont-apartment-shoots-off-fireworks-1.6446042>

4 <https://www.caledon.ca/en/news/fireworks-bylaw-helps-ease-complaints.aspx>

With option B all parties interested in hosting fireworks shows will have to go through the permit system, which would allow fair and equal access. This would help avoid any potential accusations of favoritism that could result from allowing consumer fireworks on Diwali celebrations without consideration for other cultural holidays (such as the Chinese New Year or American Independence Day, etc.), as is suggested in option A. Its worth noting in that regard that implementing option B would not be a violation of the Hindu community's right to religious expression as some purported at the PPM. Option B still allows any community that wants to celebrate with fireworks to do so on a permit basis while respecting the human rights of other constituents who have reported various health and safety concerns regarding the handling of fireworks by untrained individuals.

Some councilors may be concerned that a consumer ban on fireworks will eliminate a legal industry that creates jobs in our city. I'd like to remind Council members that it is not your responsibility to ensure that local businesses keep up with the times. When a smoking ban in restaurants and bars came into effect, people complained that a ban would have a negative impact on businesses and that there would be a loss of revenue. What actually happened? Businesses adapted and thrived as they always do when things change. Some fireworks companies like NorthStar Fireworks and Drones Shows, started adapting to the changing times a number of years ago. Formerly, they were a business that provided fireworks only, but in recent years they have grown their business to include drone shows as well.⁵ In that regard, the threats of lawsuit mentioned by the Canadian National Fireworks Association during the PPM were clearly unfounded because there are no such lawsuits against other municipalities that have implemented bans like Brampton, Caledon, and Woodstock.

For councilors concerned about the increased cost that may be faced by neighborhood groups trying to host professional shows through the proposed permit system, I think that could be easily overcome by simply adding the addendum to option B that neighborhood/community groups should be allowed additional "Neighbourhood Small Events" funding specifically for holiday fireworks events.

We all know that celebrations bring us together as a community. The desire to end consumer fireworks sales isn't about stopping celebrations or even stopping fireworks but rather a call to improve safety standards by leaving fireworks to the professionals and reducing the environmental footprint of the city by cutting out unnecessary private shows.

As a final note, for councilors concerned about alienating constituents who celebrate Diwali by choosing option B, I would like to remind you that the online surveys that were done through [getinvolved.london.ca](https://www.getinvolved.london.ca) showed a relatively even split between Londoners wanting option A and option B. Thus, choosing option A is not without a similar risk of alienating many other Londoners who have been trying to prioritize environmental stewardship and progressive changes that aim to preserve London for future generations.

5

https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/fed-up-with-fireworks-may-be-it-s-time-to-fly-up-the-drones-1.6871034?fbclid=IwAR1Bzme-Q_GuxHkaddu_gQRsBN0wX3O3CRRoXYmH7OZAbezcbPnoilDpmOk

In conclusion, once again, I kindly urge you to adopt **option B** of the proposed fireworks bylaw and **ban all consumer fireworks** in London for both the betterment of London now, as well as for the London we are building for future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kindest Regards,

Becca Amendola

Social Work Student

Co-Founder of Londoner's for Quiet Fireworks