
August 23, 2023

To: Mayor Josh Morgan & Members of the City Council

Subject: Fireworks Have No Place in Backyards

The "Your Thoughts on Fireworks" survey yielded a clear majority of 56.6% support among residents to the question "Would you support a ban on fireworks other than displays on permitted dates at organized public events?"; and the clear majority 63.9% who responded affirmatively to the question "Do you feel permits issued by the City should be required to discharge fireworks?" **This result demonstrates an obvious majority in favour of the key tenets of Option B, i.e. no backyard fireworks; display fireworks only with a permit; and "permitted" displays only on the specific days decided by council.** Only Option B can move us towards the stated objective of "safe, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods and communities".

Option A, even with the last minute amendment by Councillor Peloza cannot ensure responsible control, safety and enforcement because the online sale of fireworks by businesses beyond municipal boundaries cannot be controlled by safety education or pamphleting. Access to fireworks through online sales or black marketing will continue to increase as will the number of delinquent users. This will continue to increase the risk not only in residential neighbourhoods but also to the City's parks, Tree Protection Areas and the ESA's that are vulnerable to after-hours abuse.

Our current by-law states: "consumer fireworks means low hazard fireworks generally used for recreation, which may be classified as type F.1 explosives under the Act, including: showers, golden rain, lawn lights, pinwheels, roman candles, and volcanoes." Anyone who does a quick inspection of online websites can find roman candles containing multiple shots that shoot up to 35 metres into the air. **The general safety instructions state that a ratio of 2 to 1 be maintained for distance to spectators or other obstructions like trees, buildings, dry brush or grass. For the 35 metre projectile that would mean a distance of 70 metres.** If you assume an average lot in London is 15 metres x 45 metres, it is obviously impossible to safely discharge such a projectile in almost all backyards without endangering neighbours or their property, to say nothing of the noise we are subjecting them to. Even the smallest roman candle was listed as reaching a height of 15 metres.

The original fireworks by-law (PW-3) was enacted years ago to address concerns of public health and safety. Since that time thousands of violations have been witnessed by citizens, concerns have grown and the need for enforcement is paramount. Under option B, the job of law enforcement will be considerably easier, as the date, time and place of permitted uses will be documented. In addition, citizen's will have the peace of mind of knowing that the pyro-technicians have satisfied the necessary prerequisites including obtaining the required insurance ("subject to limits of not less than Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000.00) inclusive per occurrence for bodily injury, death and damage to property including loss of use"). Under Option A, the costs associated with injuries and fires resulting from "unpermitted" users will continue to fall on the municipality and taxpayers, which may also include liability to the Province under the Forest Fires Prevention Act (Recovery of Losses and Costs Due to Forest Fires).

At the public participation meeting on August 15, 2023, it appeared that the Committee councillors were swayed by the large contingent of people of the Indian religions who celebrate the festival of lights known as Diwali. We are fortunate to live in a place that has guaranteed our freedom of religion. However, both our provincial and federal legislations set parameters for our religious freedom, namely that it not be made a justification for practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of our communities nor interfere with the responsibility of our elected leaders to create laws to protect us.

A similar controversy has been playing out in India (where a large majority of the people celebrate Diwali) since 2010 when a tribunal was set up to deal with cases related to environmental protection. In 2020, the tribunal ordered a ban on the sale and use of firecrackers in the capital region. There is no reason that our strong lobby for the Diwali festival day could not be addressed in Option B with either a permit for display fireworks on that day or an exception for the use of a much greener, quieter, safer alternative.

In the present moment, the environmental challenges facing us require the concerted efforts and creativity of our entire community. Religions and traditional cultures play a crucial role in finding sustainable solutions. Let's move forward together!

Respectfully submitted,

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