

- People with moderate to severe PTSD constantly live in fear, they are anxious, hypervigilant, irritable, have sleep disturbances, and this can lead to devastating consequences such as loss of job, break up in families, depression, substance use, and even suicide.

These concerns are serious; however, choosing Option B does not address the issues those with PTSD face.

1. A recent survey by Statistics Canada on mental health and stressful events (reference below) clearly cites sexual assault as the most commonly reported worst event among those diagnosed with PTSD. Several other traumatic events are mentioned. The word “fireworks” does not appear in the document, neither as a cause nor a trigger for PTSD.
2. It has also not been our experience, nor are we aware that fireworks have been a significant cause of escalation in ER presentations or help seeking to crisis lines due to PTSD symptoms.
3. While we do not discount the fact that some individuals with PTSD may be hypervigilant and all loud noises may be a trigger, banning loud noises is unlikely to be a cure or even a solution for PTSD symptoms. The evidence-based treatment for PTSD is an integrated approach of pharmacological and psychosocial treatments: this includes reprocessing for traumatic events and creating new associations for neutral triggering stimuli. For example, understanding the association between fireworks and the rituals of Diwali may help shift the traumatic association with fireworks, especially as Diwali fireworks can be anticipated in advance.
4. We ask the council to carefully differentiate between anxiety symptoms and anxiety disorders. The former is more widespread and transient whereas the latter is a persistent condition usually assessed and diagnosed by a professional and requiring professional treatment.

We urge the council to consider the actual evidence on triggers of PTSD and the fact that we cannot realistically eliminate all potential triggers for PTSD, nor is such an approach the most appropriate or helpful solution for PTSD (just as banning airplanes is not the solution for overcoming the fear of flying, even if the sight or sounds of airplanes can trigger panic attacks).

Furthermore, we urge the council to consider that the vast majority of fireworks during Diwali celebrations are small-scale, low-budget sparklers and spinning wheels. Banning these, as advocated by Option B, seems excessive and punitive, and would directly impact the ability of the Hindu and Sikh community to practice their own culture and religious beliefs. This will increase marginalization, stigma, and stress, and thus will likely increase adverse mental health outcomes in the Hindu and Sikh population. Resultantly, London city’s mental health services will likely be taxed even further.

We thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for providing an opportunity to share our opinions. We would like this letter to be included in the agenda for the Council meeting on Aug 29 when reviewing this issue. The Council is free to contact any of the physicians at the email addresses included if further clarification is required.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220520/dq220520b-eng.htm>

Disclaimer: The contents expressed in this letter are the opinions of the authors in their individual capacity and not a reflection of the views of the various healthcare organizations they are affiliated with.

Respectfully submitted (in alphabetical order)

