

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

From: Deanna Ronson and Becca Amendola

Re: 10th Meeting of Community and Protective Services Committee , June 13, 2023, Item 4 (4.2) on the Agenda

Greetings Mayor Morgan and Committee Members,

We are writing to you on behalf of our group, Londoners for Quiet Fireworks in regards to the Fireworks By-Law Options Report.

First, thank you to Chiefs Hepditch and Hayes for preparing and submitting the Fireworks By-Law Options Report. We appreciate them taking the time to put together this report. Having said that, we have a few concerns with the report.

Discussion and Considerations: the report reviews several types of fireworks as well as drone/laser light shows and certain key information is lacking.

It doesn't look like the researcher did any kind of probe into the cost of drone or laser light shows. The figures provided, "the cost of a custom designed drone show ranges from \$17,000 (50 drones) to \$196,000 (500 drones) based on 2022 price estimates" is based on information that our group gave to the City. These figures are from ONE company only ~ North Star, based in Belleville, ON. We called the company last year to get these stats.

We would think that in preparing a report, it would be better to contact a few drone businesses to get an average cost, rather than the fees from one business.

In regards to laser light shows, the report doesn't provide any cost estimates. We can tell you from contacting the CEO/General Manager of the Hyde Park Business Assoc ourselves, that the cost of their Pond Fest laser show was approx. \$15,000. The provider that they used was LaserTech Canada, based in Montreal (<https://lasertech-canada.com>).

If the City is concerned that an alternative form of light display will be more costly than traditional fireworks, but the benefits will outweigh the costs, then, why not seek corporate sponsorship?

We would not be the first municipality to do so. The Windsor -Detroit International Freedom festival, which puts on one of the largest displays of fireworks in North America, has always had corporate sponsorship. Hudson's sponsored the show for many years, followed by Target, then the Ford Motor Company since 2013.

If London were to seek corporate sponsorship for its Canada Day celebrations, we could easily have a huge drone show.

Review of Local Municipal Fireworks By-Laws: there is at least one other municipality that has completely banned the sale and discharge of consumer fireworks (in addition to Brampton).

The Town of Caledon, ON, passed the following by-law.

Fireworks Bylaw:

The bylaw, effective April 26, 2022, means **discharging of fireworks for personal use is not allowed in Caledon, nor is the sale of home fireworks.**

The bylaw uses a permit system for large fireworks displays such as community events, motion picture and theatrical pyrotechnics. The permit will require the following:

- minimum safe distances of 300m from all vulnerable occupancies (schools, nursing and care facilities), industrial, fuel dispensing facilities and agricultural facilities containing livestock;
- displays be discharged by a licensed Display Supervisor;
- sufficient insurance for liability purposes;
- inspections for safety; and
- fireworks be planned for acceptable times and locations from dusk to 11 p.m. unless otherwise approved.

Any person who violates any provisions of the Fireworks Bylaw is guilty of an offence.

“Is the new fireworks bylaw in Caledon working?”

The town of Caledon said the bylaw, which took effect April 26, helped reduce the number of personal fireworks this Victoria Day weekend.

‘We received five emails and nine phone calls over the Victoria Day weekend to report personal fireworks activity,’ said Mayor Allan Thompson. ‘That is a marked improvement over previous years and will only get better as more people learn about the bylaw.’” (bit.ly/45VPTm1)

In Mississauga, in an attempt to reduce the amount of fireworks sales, the “budget committee passed a \$1,000 licensing fee for stores selling fireworks. . . . The motion, moved by Ward 5 Coun. Carolyn Parrish, raises city fees for firework retailers from \$226 before taxes to \$1,000 effective Jan. 1, 2023” (bit.ly/43APjbl).

The City of Collingwood has cancelled Canada Day fireworks for 2023 in favour of redirecting funds towards alternative Canada Day activities. “We’re working on a mini music crawl of sorts with multiple regional artists performing out of multiple outdoor locations,’ Cubitt said. ‘We will also be hosting an evening concert at the Shipyards Amphitheatre on July 1.’” (bit.ly/43yDByt)

Of particular note in conducting a municipal scan of fireworks by-laws, Section 2.0 (2.1) of Collingwood’s Fireworks By-law No. 2012-064 states, “2.1 No person shall set off any fireworks when a fire ban is in effect.”

Given our current climate emergency and the widespread wildfires in Ontario, it seems prudent for the City of London to add the same section to its Fireworks By-law. Summer hasn’t even started and our area has been at extreme high risk of wildfires. Regardless of which by-law option council chooses, we need a section in the by-law that would include the ban of fireworks whenever a fire ban is in effect.

Summary of Resident Survey - “Your Thoughts on Fireworks”

For the last two years, Deputy City Manager, Cheryl Smith has been telling us that the city has been working to “support enhanced education and enforcement.” She noted that messaging would be coming from both the City of London and the London Fire Department, via their social media pages as well as, billboards and informational pamphlets that would be handed out by vendors selling fireworks.” This quote from her is from 2021.

The summary of the survey states, “Residents are not familiar with the City of London Fireworks By-law. There is a general perception that the By-law is not well enforced.”

From the response of survey participants, it would seem quite obvious to us that the City’s “enhanced education and enforcement” of fireworks has failed.

We think that the survey responses indicating that 56.6% of Londoners “would support a ban on fireworks other than displays on permitted dates at organized public events” proves that Londoners are ready to ban the sale and discharge of consumer fireworks.

Proposed Options for Consideration

Our group, Londoners for Quiet Fireworks asks that the Committee of Community and Protective Services choose Option B of the proposed options.

We know that there is some concern around the enforcement of such a ban. **We predict that the calls to enforcement will be greatly reduced with such a ban.** Folks may certainly choose to purchase fireworks outside of city limits, however, making fireworks less convenient to purchase will greatly reduce the supply. Residents will no longer be able to walk to a nearby vendor to purchase fireworks on a whim, or see and be enticed by a big corner billboard advertising fireworks in the parking lot of their local hardware or grocery store.

We understand that some councillors and residents believe that fireworks draw the community together which is absolutely true. However, **there are many other less harmful means of celebration that will draw a community together.**

For example, last year on Canada Day, The Forks in Winnipeg Manitoba hosted a day of “family-friendly activities, including soccer and basketball tournaments, pow-wow dancing, drumming, craft stations and performances by theatre groups and musicians” without fireworks. The focus was on finding other, inclusive ways, of coming together as community to engage in cross-cultural learning, and doing so in a manner that also happens not to have a negative impact on the environment, wildlife, people and pets (<https://www.cbc.ca/.../the-forks-july-1-new-plans-1.6492681>).

In the spirit of **Truth and Reconciliation**, perhaps the committee should look to its Strategic Plan, “building relationships with Indigenous peoples that are respectful, transparent, responsive and accountable” and work with local First Nations communities to advance this mission for its next celebration Canada Day (Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee, Jan. 26, 2021). I’m certain that working together, we could create a new way to celebrate that honours the Indigenous community and does not cause harm to the environment, people, wildlife and pets.

We also believe that the committee needs to look at the issue of fireworks through the **Climate Emergency Screening Tool**. There have been many scientific studies completed that show the harmful effects of traditional fireworks. Some of these toxic results include air and ground pollution. Heavy metals released during the discharge of fireworks also contaminate local watersheds. In light of the City's Climate Emergency Act, this evaluation of the pollution caused by fireworks is essential.

We know that the Municipalities Act **grants municipalities broad powers to invoke a by-law to protect the safety & health of its residents.** If councillors have yet to hear the harms that residents have about their safety and health, we implore you to listen to your constituents. We know that many folks who have been harmed by fireworks are wanting to speak at the PPM. However, we would like to know how the city has

engaged with disproportionately affected groups, such as the disabled community (persons with Autism, PTSD, sensory perception disorders, persons with COPD, allergies, etc), families with children with conditions that make them vulnerable to fireworks, wildlife rehabilitators who respond to animals in distress, people responsible for managing the natural heritage system, etc. Is the city willing and interested in engaging with these communities?

In closing, when looking at the proposed options for the new fireworks by-law, we hope the committee will consider the following:

1. the additional information that we provided regarding both the drone/light show fees and the municipal scans of Caledon, Mississauga and Collingwood that was lacking in the original report.
2. that the current by-law and the enhanced education and enforcement of said by-law is not working
3. that there are other ways to draw the community together that don't include fireworks
4. to look at the options through the lens of Truth and Conciliation
5. to look at the options via the Climate Emergency Screening Tool
6. that people are suffering from the effects of fireworks (health, property damage, pollution of the environment) and the municipality has broad powers to invoke a by-law that will protect the safety and health of its residents

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Deanna Ronson
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Co-founders Londoners for Quiet Fireworks
