

Response to Increased Unpermitted Fireworks Use during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Date: April 13, 2021

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and the Acting Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to an October 2020 City Council directive, requesting Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) and Toronto Fire Services (TFS) undertake a review of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 466, Fireworks.

Chapter 466, Fireworks regulates the use and sale of fireworks in Toronto. Fireworks on private property may only be used without a permit on Victoria Day and Canada Day. To use fireworks on private property any other day of the year, residents must have a permit from TFS. Discharging or igniting fireworks in a city park by members of the public is also prohibited. The sale of fireworks in Toronto requires a vendor permit issued by MLS.

Staff undertook a review of Chapter 466, Fireworks in early 2021. This work included a review of current regulations and enforcement practices related to the sale and discharge of fireworks, as well as a jurisdictional scan, public survey and stakeholder consultations, and an analysis of fireworks-related emergency incidents and complaints. Staff also considered the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the review, staff found that there was a notable increase in unpermitted fireworks use and emergency incidents related to fireworks during the 2020 warm-weather season, compared to previous years. Staff believe this is due to factors related to the pandemic, including more residents staying home in the city, cancellation of other events and City and community fireworks displays, and redeployment of enforcement resources to enforce public health measures and provincial emergency orders. Staff anticipate similar conditions during the 2021 warm-weather season.

Through a public survey, staff identified an overall lack of awareness of Toronto's current fireworks rules. Staff also found that Toronto residents have varied opinions about issues related to fireworks. A large number of survey respondents were concerned about fireworks noise, and impacts of fireworks use on pets, wildlife, the

environment, and individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Additionally, some respondents expressed how much they enjoy fireworks, while others support a city-wide ban. Many survey respondents supported enhanced education and enforcement to ensure individuals follow existing regulations.

In response to the immediate need to mitigate the increase in unpermitted fireworks use during the COVID-19 pandemic, MLS and TFS have developed an action plan to support compliant fireworks use and sale, and reduce nuisance impacts of unpermitted fireworks use. The proposed action plan will include a suite of enhanced public education and outreach initiatives, complemented by data-driven priority-based enforcement in areas where the most issues have occurred. Staff will also review current fireworks-related set fines, and apply to the Province of Ontario to increase fine amounts, as needed.

As part of the review of Chapter 466, Fireworks, staff found that Toronto's fireworks rules are comprehensive and currently align with surrounding jurisdictions. Since 2017, city-wide compliance with fireworks use regulations has been fairly strong; incidents and service requests related to fireworks appear localized in a small number of wards bordering Lake Ontario. Based on these findings, staff do not recommend bylaw changes at this time. Staff believe that the most effective way to address increased unpermitted fireworks use expected as the pandemic persists is through enhanced education and enforcement. MLS and TFS will continue to monitor fireworks incidents and complaints during the 2021 warm-weather season and the COVID-19 recovery period.

MLS and TFS will implement the proposed action plan immediately, prior to Victoria Day, the first designated fireworks holiday.

This report was developed in consultation with Economic Development and Culture, Legal Services, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, and Strategic Communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and the Acting Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services recommend that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no current or known future year financial impacts arising from the recommendation contained in this report. The cost of the fireworks action plan, including communication, education, and enforcement, will be accommodated within the Approved Operating Budgets for MLS and TFS.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

On October 27, 28, and 30, 2020, City Council adopted Item MM25.14, Requesting a Review of Chapter 466, Fireworks, directing the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards and the Fire Chief and General Manager, Toronto Fire Services, to report to the General Government and Licensing Committee on the outcome of a review of Chapter 466, Fireworks, including a jurisdictional scan and consideration of increased education, enhanced environmental protections, and other regulation on fireworks sales and discharge.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.MM25.14>

COMMENTS

As directed by City Council in October 2020, Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) and Toronto Fire Services (TFS) undertook a review of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 466, Fireworks. This work included a review of current regulations and enforcement practices related to the sale and discharge of fireworks, as well as a jurisdictional scan, public survey and stakeholder consultations, and an analysis of fireworks incidents and complaints. Staff also considered the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Toronto, most fireworks incidents and complaints are related to discharge of family fireworks (low-hazard, designed for recreational use). Users of fireworks designed for professional use, including display fireworks (high-hazard fireworks) and theatrical fireworks (high-hazard fireworks and special-purpose pyrotechnics used in the film and television industry) are regulated by the federal government under the *Explosives Act*. Professional fireworks are generally not legally available to the wider public as individuals buying and using these types of fireworks must be certified by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan).

Through the review, staff found that there was a notable increase in unpermitted family fireworks use and emergency incidents related to fireworks during the 2020 warm-weather season. Staff believe this is due to factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through stakeholder consultations and a public survey, staff identified an overall lack of awareness of Toronto's current fireworks rules. Additionally, jurisdictional research revealed that Toronto's fireworks rules are comprehensive and align with surrounding jurisdictions. Staff also found that since 2017, city-wide compliance with fireworks use regulations has been fairly strong, outside of a small number of wards bordering Lake Ontario where the majority of fireworks related incidents and service requests have occurred.

Based on these findings, MLS and TFS have developed an immediate action plan to support compliant fireworks use and sale during the COVID-19 pandemic, and reduce nuisance impacts of unpermitted fireworks use. The proposed action plan, which includes enhanced public education and outreach initiatives, complemented by data-driven priority enforcement and a review of fireworks set fines, is described in detail in this report.

Staff do not recommend bylaw changes. Staff believe the most effective way to address increased unpermitted fireworks use during the pandemic is through enhanced education and enforcement. MLS and TFS will continue to monitor fireworks incidents and complaints during the 2021 warm-weather season and the COVID-19 recovery period.

Current State - Fireworks Regulations and Enforcement

City of Toronto Regulations

Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 466, Fireworks (the Fireworks Bylaw) regulates the sale and discharge of fireworks in the City. Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 608, Parks (the Parks Bylaw) prohibits the discharge of fireworks in City Parks except when authorized by permit. The sections below provide details of these regulations.

Discharge of Fireworks

In the City of Toronto, family fireworks are not allowed to be discharged except on Victoria Day and Canada Day (in the event of inclement weather, discharge is also allowed on the day before or after), or where a permit has been issued by TFS. Fireworks must be discharged on private property, and are not permitted in public parks (unless authorized by a permit from Parks, Forestry and Recreation), roadways, or other public property.

TFS is responsible for the approval of Fireworks Discharge Permits and issues three permit types as per the Fireworks Bylaw:

- **Special Occasion Permit:** Members of the public looking to discharge family fireworks on private property on dates other than Victoria Day and Canada Day may apply for this permit type.
- **Display Permit:** This permit type is for professional public displays of fireworks or pyrotechnics (for example, at concerts or large displays for a special occasion). This permit can only be issued to a Fireworks Display Supervisor certified by NRCAN.
- **Pyrotechnics Permit:** This permit type is issued in conjunction with the City's Film Office for purposes of special effects used during film shoots. TFS reviews and approves the use of products to be used (for example, flame effects using propane, detonation cords, and pyrotechnics). This permit can also only be issued to a Fireworks Display Supervisor certified by NRCAN.

The number of permits in each of the above categories that TFS has issued over the past four years is outlined in Table 1 below. The number of permits in 2020 is lower due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Special Occasion Permits are currently being reviewed by TFS on a case-by-case basis and only approved in limited situations to ensure

compliance with public health measures and provincial emergency orders.

Table 1: Fireworks Discharge Permits issued by TFS 2017-2020.

Permit Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Special occasion permit	8	6	15	3	40
Display permit	34	30	84	11	159
Pyrotechnics permit	41	50	83	28	202

Through the Parks Bylaw, PFR has the authority to issue permits to authorize fireworks displays in City parks. PFR typically permits community fireworks displays in select parks across the City on Victoria Day and Canada Day; however, these displays were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 and will also not occur in 2021 due to continued restrictions on public gatherings and events to support public health.

Sale of Fireworks

The sale of fireworks in Toronto requires a permit issued by MLS. All vendors must adhere to permit conditions, including not selling fireworks to minors and requirements for safe fireworks storage. As outlined in the Fireworks Bylaw, MLS issues permits for both permanent and temporary fireworks vendors. Permanent vendors may sell fireworks year round, and are allowed to sell family fireworks, as well as professional fireworks. Temporary vendors may only sell family fireworks on Victoria Day, Canada Day, and Diwali, and the seven-day period before each holiday. Note that residents are required to obtain a Special Occasions Discharge Permit from TFS to use family fireworks on Diwali.

In total, MLS issues five different fireworks vendor permit types:

- **Permanent Fireworks Vendor:** businesses selling fireworks year-round from a permanent business location.
- **Temporary Lease Fireworks Vendor:** businesses that sell fireworks from a temporary, leased location for designated holidays.
- **Temporary Mobile Fireworks Vendor:** Businesses that sell fireworks from a temporary mobile location, such as a trailer for designated holidays.
- **Temporary Fireworks Vendor (over 25 Kg):** allows existing businesses to temporarily sell more than 25 kg of fireworks at their store for designated holidays.
- **Temporary Fireworks Vendor (under 25 Kg):** allows existing businesses to temporarily sell less than 25 kg of fireworks at their store for designated holidays.

The number of permits that MLS has issued over the past four years is outlined in Table 2 below. A fireworks vendor permit is required for each location from which fireworks are sold. The number of permits in 2020 is lower as MLS suspended issuing vendor permits from in spring and summer 2020 in response to the pandemic.

Table 2: Fireworks Vendor Permits issued by MLS 2017-2020.

Permit Type	2017	2018	2019	2020
Permanent Fireworks Vendor	7	6	6	5
Temporary Lease Fireworks Vendor	1	1	0	0
Temporary Mobile Fireworks Vendor	15	14	16	0
Temporary Fireworks Vendor (over 25 Kg)	29	31	22	4
Temporary Fireworks Vendor (under 25 Kg)	20	18	13	2

Federal Fireworks Regulations

Fireworks are regulated at the federal level by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) through the Explosives Act. The Explosives Act and its regulations outline requirements for manufacturing, transporting, storing, selling, and using fireworks in Canada. Each class of fireworks (consumer/family, display, and special effect pyrotechnics/theatrical) have requirements based on risk factors.

Under the Explosives Act, any person buying or handling high hazard, professional grade fireworks must be certified by NRCan. Individuals buying and discharging more common fireworks (for example, sparklers, roman candles, fountains) do not require NRCan certification as these fireworks are recreational grade and considered lower risk.

The issuance of display and pyrotechnics discharge permits under Toronto's Fireworks Bylaw adheres to the federal requirements, and applicants are required to provide proof of their federal certification as part of the approval process when required. Toronto's Fireworks Bylaw also requires that vendors adhere to the federal legislation in regards to fireworks sale and storage.

Enforcement and Education

Efforts by MLS and TFS to enforce and support compliance of Chapter 466, Fireworks and the fireworks provision of Chapter 608, Parks are primarily complaint and emergency response based. When resources are available, MLS enforcement officers may also proactively patrol select park locations where unpermitted fireworks use is popular, sometimes in partnership with Toronto Police Services (TPS). MLS enforcement officers respond to any complaints about fireworks vendors, including those operating without a proper permit. In response to fireworks-related incidents or service requests, and during proactive enforcement activities, MLS officers and TFS staff focus on education and compliance, and depending on the actions taken by the public, MLS officers may issue orders, as appropriate.

Under Chapter 466, Fireworks, any person who contravenes any provision of the Chapter is guilty of an offence. MLS has the ability to issue either a ticket with a set fine ranging from \$300 to \$500 (depending on the offence), or a Part III summons with a maximum potential fine of \$5,000. MLS also has the ability enforce against individuals

contravening the fireworks provision in Chapter 608, Parks, by issuing a ticket with a set fine of \$300, or by issuing a Part III summons with a maximum potential fine of \$5,000.

Fireworks related enforcement can be challenging due to the high number of parks and public spaces located throughout the City. In many instances, by the time City staff arrive after reports of unpermitted fireworks, the fireworks have concluded and individuals have left the scene. MLS Bylaw Enforcement Officers must witness fireworks discharge in order to issue orders. MLS enforcement staff do not dispatch on an emergency response basis. MLS enforcement resources are limited on statutory holidays, and calls related to essential services are prioritized.

Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, non-essential bylaw investigation and enforcement services were reprioritized to the enforcement of public health measures and provincial emergency orders.

TFS and MLS currently provide education to residents about how to discharge fireworks safely and bylaw requirements through City of Toronto webpages, 311 knowledge base, interactions with enforcement, and annual social media posts in advance of the designated fireworks holidays dates. There is signage in City parks which identifies that visitors must comply with Municipal Code Chapter 608, Parks which prohibits fireworks discharge in parks.

Fireworks Bylaw Review and Analysis

Incidents and Complaints Data

As part of the review, TFS and MLS analyzed emergency incidents and service requests related to fireworks use and sales over the last four years.

TFS Emergency Incident response due to Fireworks

TFS reviewed incidents that were coded as fireworks (no fire), and those that were fires with an identified cause as fireworks. If an emergency call is received for fireworks use where no fire is reported, TFS will send one apparatus to investigate. TFS saw a marked increase in responses as a result of fireworks in 2020; in 2017, 64 incidents were responded to, and in 2020, 176 responses were mounted, an increase of more than 175 percent. The data for TFS incident responses is outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: TFS incident responses from 2017 to 2020.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Fireworks incidents (no fire)	63	57	81	172	373
Fire incidents where the ignition source was identified as Fireworks	1	3	4	4	12
Annual Total incidents	64	60	85	176	385

In examining the incidents data, staff found that there is an annual peak in incidents in May and July, where fireworks are permitted to be discharged on Victoria Day and Canada Day without a permit. In the majority of these incidents the fireworks had concluded or the responding crew made the residents aware of the bylaw requirements and asked them to stop. A review of the incident reports found that the vast majority of the calls were for unpermitted discharge in parks, open spaces, or schools, indicating that further education around where and how fireworks can be discharged on the designated dates is needed.

Parks and Noise Related Fireworks Complaints

The majority of fireworks related service requests (complaints) received by MLS is for the unpermitted use of fireworks in parks in the city. Fireworks complaints in parks increased greatly in 2020 compared to previous years. Table 4 below shows fireworks related complaints under the Parks Bylaw from 2017 to 2020. From 2017 to 2020 MLS laid 6 charges for using fireworks without a permit in a city park.

Staff found that fireworks related parks complaints from 2017 to 2020 are concentrated in a small number of wards, most of which border Lake Ontario. Ward 3 Etobicoke-Lakeshore has consistently had the highest number of fireworks related parks complaints (67 of the total 199 complaints have been in Ward 3).

Noise complaints related to fireworks have been low across the City. Under Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 591, Noise, noise associated with fireworks falls under § 591-2.9. Unreasonable and persistent noise. Table 4 below shows fireworks related noise complaints from 2017 to 2020. Note, the City paused noise enforcement, and was not recording noise related service requests during part of 2020 as part of the COVID-19 response and redirection of non-essential bylaw investigation and enforcement services to the enforcement of public health measures and provincial emergency orders.

Table 4: Fireworks related complaints under the Parks Bylaw and fireworks related noise from 2017 to 2020.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Fireworks related complaints under the Parks Bylaw	18	22	36	123	199
Fireworks related noise complaints	7	13	11	1	32

Fireworks Vendor Complaints

Complaints related to fireworks vendors have been consistently low over the last five years. From 2016 to 2020, MLS received a total of eleven complaints for vendors selling fireworks without a permit, including only two in 2020. During that same timeframe MLS laid four charges against fireworks vendors; three for not having a permit, and one for improper storage of fireworks in a vehicle.

Research and Consultation

Jurisdictional Scan

Staff completed a scan of 16 Canadian and American cities to compare regulations related to fireworks sale and discharge. The jurisdictions were chosen for their size and comparable urban landscape to Toronto. Jurisdictions surrounding Toronto were also included to understand how neighbouring municipalities manage fireworks. The research shows that Toronto's regulations around fireworks use and sale align closely with other Ontario municipalities.

All six of the Ontario municipalities included in the scan allows use of family fireworks on Victoria Day and Canada Day without a permit. Brampton also allows fireworks use on Diwali and New Year's Eve without a permit, while Mississauga also allows fireworks on Diwali and Chinese New Year. In all municipalities neighbouring Toronto, fireworks are not allowed to be discharged on public property such as parks, streets or public squares.

All of the Ontario municipalities reviewed issue permits for professional fireworks displays by a certified individual. Hamilton, Ottawa, Brampton and Pickering do not issue permits for members of the broader public to discharge family fireworks on private property outside of designated holidays. Permits for public discharge of family fireworks are available in Toronto, Vaughan, and Mississauga.

Toronto's Fireworks Bylaw also aligns with other Ontario municipalities on the need for vendor permits. Of the municipalities reviewed, all but one requires fireworks vendors to have a permit or license. Toronto is the only municipality that permits permanent vendors to sell all year round. Brampton and Vaughan require training for fireworks vendors ahead of permit issuance.

Across Canada, a number of cities, including Halifax, Montreal, Calgary, and Edmonton, do not allow family fireworks to be discharged on any days without a permit. Jurisdictions including Vancouver, New York City, and Chicago, have a full ban on family fireworks, and only allow professional firework displays upon approval of a permit.

The City of Vancouver implemented a ban on family fireworks as of November 1, 2020. This brings the City of Vancouver in line with its neighbouring municipalities, many of whom had already banned consumer firework use by the general public. Prior to the fireworks ban in Vancouver, residents looking to use fireworks on the city's one designated fireworks date (Halloween) were required to obtain a free permit by completing a short online knowledge test about fireworks safety. Residents were required to show this permit when purchasing fireworks.

Public Survey and Other Feedback

The City hosted an online survey from February 19 to March 5, 2021 to gather input and better understand opinions of members of the public. The survey was advertised on relevant City of Toronto webpages and social media channels, as well as through targeted stakeholder emails. Approximately 6400 individuals responded to the survey.

The online survey did not have the scientific controls that a third-party public opinion survey would. As such, the results should not be considered representative of all Toronto residents, but rather used to provide additional insight to this review.

Survey results are summarized below. Additional details are provided as part of Attachment 1 - Summary of Findings: Fireworks Bylaw Review Online Public Survey.

Key quantitative findings from the survey include:

- 40% of survey participants do not know where to access information about Toronto's Fireworks rules.
- 38% of survey respondents were familiar with how to use fireworks safely.
- 40-45% of respondents were not aware of Toronto's rules about when or where fireworks can be used, and another 26% were only somewhat aware.
- 57% of respondents were not familiar with the rules around when individuals need a permit for the use of fireworks, and only 14% were aware of how to obtain a permit.
- 57% of respondents were not familiar about the rules around fireworks sale.
- Survey respondents were most concerned about impacts of firework use on pets, wildlife and environmental, loud noise caused by fireworks use, and potential for fireworks use to cause fire or injuries.
- Respondents were least concerned about whether the rules about fireworks sales and use were effective, and compliance of those selling fireworks.
- Approximately 11% of survey respondents did not have any concerns related to fireworks use and sale in Toronto.

These survey results indicate that there is a lack of awareness of Toronto's fireworks rules, and there is an opportunity for enhanced public education. Increasing outreach and availability of information for residents in the weeks preceding designated fireworks dates may help in reducing unpermitted fireworks use.

In the open comment field of the survey, individuals shared a wide range of experiences and recommendations related to fireworks:

- Some respondents felt that increasing education would help address illegal fireworks use.
- Many respondents wanted to see more enforcement of existing regulations, raising concerns about individuals using fireworks outside of designated holidays.
- A large number of respondents shared concerns about the impact of fireworks to wildlife and pets. Recommended solutions to address this included the adoption of low-noise or silent fireworks. Some respondents identified that if fireworks use is restricted to the designated holidays, it would be possible to manage and prepare their pets.
- Some individuals expressed frustration about fireworks noise in general, while others were more concerned with unpredictable noise disturbing sleep and households in the middle of the night.
- Some residents expressed desire for a city-wide fireworks ban, many of whom cited wildlife and environmental concerns. Conversely, a number of respondents

expressed how much they enjoy fireworks, and either supported existing regulations or suggested that current rules are too restrictive.

Staff also considered feedback from two online public petitions that have received around 2,200 signatories collectively. Both petitions raise concerns about impacts of fireworks use on pets, wildlife, the environment, and individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The petitions call on the city to adopt low-noise fireworks, increase education and signage in parks, and enhance fireworks enforcement.

The Canadian National Fireworks Association (CNFA) requested to meet with staff to discuss the review. The CNFA advocates on behalf of the fireworks industry. They have worked with other Canadian jurisdictions, and are proponents of fireworks education, and training and certification for fireworks vendors. In meetings with staff, the CNFA promoted a training and certification program that they have developed for fireworks vendors, which is similar to the Smart Serve program in the alcohol beverage industry. Considerations related to fireworks vendor training and education are discussed in the section below.

Additional Review Considerations

Impacts of COVID-19

Staff believe that the notable increase in unpermitted fireworks use during the 2020 warm-weather season is due to factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, more Toronto residents stayed home in the city, and City and Community run fireworks displays and other activities were cancelled. Sixty percent of survey respondents stated that they have viewed city/community fireworks displays. More residents may have done their own individual fireworks in 2020, to avoid large gatherings. Additionally, fireworks enforcement was challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic as non-essential bylaw investigation and enforcement services were reprioritized to the enforcement of public health measures and provincial emergency orders.

These conditions are expected to continue during the 2021 warm-weather season as City-led and City permitted events have been cancelled up to July 1, 2021 (inclusive of Canada Day activities). Based on the review, staff feel that the most effective way to address increased unpermitted fireworks use during the pandemic is through enhanced education and enforcement. Staff therefore do not recommend making bylaw changes at this time. MLS and TFS will continue to monitor fireworks incidents and complaints during the 2021 warm-weather season and the COVID-19 recovery period.

Low-Noise Fireworks

Staff heard through the public survey that some Toronto residents would like to see adoption of low-noise fireworks to reduce noise impacts. Low-noise or quiet fireworks are not specifically defined in the industry; however, the term usually refers to fireworks that are made with more black powder instead of metallic powder and are wrapped more loosely. Low-noise fireworks do not go as high as traditional fireworks, and make less of a loud booming noise, but are not completely silent.

A small number of jurisdictions, including Banff and a small town in Italy, have moved towards low-noise fireworks displays. While some family fireworks currently on the market, such as fountains and sparklers, can be considered low-noise, there is still limited demand within the industry. Since import and manufacturing of fireworks is relegated by the federal government, it may be challenging for the City of Toronto to regulate or enforce low-noise fireworks. The City will continue to monitor low-noise fireworks uptake in the industry, and potential opportunities to integrate low-noise fireworks as part of future City led fireworks displays.

Fireworks Vendor Education

The Canadian National Fireworks Association (CNFA) has recommended that Toronto adopt a requirement for all fireworks vendors to be certified through their training program. The City of Edmonton is currently recommending the inclusion of this requirement in their newly established vendor permit process. The CNFA program has limited adoption in other large Canadian cities as of yet and staff are not aware of any performance data that shows how the program supports compliant fireworks use.

Staff believe there is an opportunity to enhance fireworks vendor education; however, there is not a clear need for third-party vendor training at this time. MLS complaints data shows no significant compliance issues among City of Toronto licensed fireworks vendors. The public survey also showed that residents have limited concerns about fireworks vendor compliance. Additionally, residents can purchase fireworks online or outside the city, and therefore may not always interact with a Toronto fireworks vendor.

MLS and TFS will continue to monitor the need for a fireworks vendor training program. Any potential procurement for third-party fireworks vendor training would be required to meet City of Toronto procurement standards.

Designated Dates

Currently Canada Day and Victoria Day are the only two designated dates where family fireworks can be discharged in Toronto without a permit. Mississauga and Brampton have broader lists of designated dates, including Diwali and Chinese New Year, and Diwali and New Year's Eve, respectively. Survey respondents suggested changes to Toronto's designated dates in both directions: reducing the number of dates and further restricting fireworks use, or expanding the list of designated dates where permits are not required to more dates.

Due to the immediate need to mitigate the issue of unpermitted fireworks that has increased during COVID-19, staff are bringing this report forward to address concerns and implement actions to support compliant fireworks use during the upcoming 2021 warm weather season. Staff recognize that further work is required to review Toronto's fireworks regulations around designated dates, including equity and public safety considerations.

COVID-19 Unpermitted Fireworks Action Plan

In response to the increase in unpermitted fireworks use in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, MLS and TFS, in collaboration with Strategic Communications, have developed an action plan to support compliant fireworks use and sale in 2021. The

action plan includes a suite of enhanced public education and outreach initiatives, complemented by data-driven priority enforcement and a review of fireworks set fines.

Enhanced Public Education and Outreach

Staff believe that enhanced public education and outreach is the most effective way to support safe and compliant use and sale of fireworks, and reduce nuisance impacts on residents. Staff therefore propose implementing an enhanced public education and outreach plan that includes the following tactics:

- **Ad campaign:** Paid digital and social media ads, including ads geo-targeted to areas with increased issues.
- **Social media campaign:** Educational posts via the City's channels (corporate and TFS Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).
- **News releases:** Issued prior to designated fireworks dates to inform residents about fireworks regulations.
- **Revamped City of Toronto webpage:** Information on fireworks regulations and safety tips available on one webpage for easy access.
- **311 Knowledge Base:** Updated to provide information on fireworks regulations.
- **Vendor education:** Vendor outreach and education about the rules around fireworks sales and storage, and requirement to display/hand out City-developed fireworks poster to individuals purchasing fireworks.
- **City parks:** Exploring opportunities to provide information about City bylaws prohibiting fireworks use in parks and impacts of fireworks use on wildlife.

Key messages will include when and where residents can use fireworks, with an emphasis on public areas where fireworks are not allowed (parks, schools, and roadways). Additionally, the education campaign will raise awareness of safe discharge of fireworks, how to properly dispose of used fireworks, low-noise fireworks, and fireworks impacts on pets and wildlife.

Data-Driven Priority-Based Enforcement

Public education and outreach initiatives will be complemented by continued enforcement and compliance efforts by MLS. MLS will maximize enforcement resources by targeting parks and neighbourhoods where the greatest number of complaints and incidents occurred last year. When possible, officers will conduct proactive enforcement in these areas during dates when unpermitted fireworks use is common. Officers will focus on compliance and educate residents about Toronto's fireworks regulations and safety requirements.

Although MLS and TFS are committed to implementing the proposed action plan, as the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, enforcement resources will continue to be reprioritized to the enforcement of public health measures and provincial emergency orders.

As part of the action plan, staff will also review current fireworks set fines, and compare fine amounts with other public nuisance and health and safety related infractions. Staff will apply to the Province of Ontario to increase set fines as needed.

Next Steps

MLS, TFS, and Strategic Communications are already working towards the implementation of the proposed action plan prior to Victoria Day, and will continue these efforts throughout the 2021 warm-weather season. City staff will also continue to monitor fireworks incidents and complaints, and other considerations described in this report.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Summary of Findings: Fireworks Bylaw Review Online Public Survey