

Attachment 3: Summary of fireworks research and consultations

Jurisdictional Scan

Staff completed a jurisdictional scan of 15 neighbouring municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and comparable cities in other Provinces and the United States.

Generally the research shows that Toronto's regulations around fireworks use aligns closely with other Ontario municipalities. These municipalities permit their residents to: use fireworks on designated days (e.g., Victoria Day and Canada day) without a permit; and do not allow fireworks to be discharged on public property such as parks or roadways. There is some variation among Ontario municipalities as to designated fireworks days, and some cities have recently added additional dates. Municipalities such as Brampton and Mississauga have recently expanded their designated dates where fireworks can be used without a permit to include cultural holidays such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. Other municipalities such as Vaughan, Markham and Pickering have not added additional designated dates where fireworks can be used without a permit. Pickering is the only municipality with dedicated public spaces for the safe discharge and disposal of fireworks.

Outside of Ontario, a number of cities including Edmonton and Calgary do not allow members of the public to discharge fireworks on any day without a permit.

The City of Vancouver implemented a ban on the use and sale of public fireworks as of November 1, 2020. Vancouver had previously experienced significant property damage due to fireworks, and the change was supported by the majority of residents. Before the ban was proposed, the city implemented a number of different initiatives over an 8 to 10 year period to mitigate annual issues with fireworks. These included increasing enforcement and creating a permitting systems (all users were required to do online education test before they were allowed to buy and use fireworks on the designated fireworks date). While the pandemic has reduced enforcement resources to support successful implementation of the fireworks ban, Vancouver has seen a decrease in property damage from fireworks and staff are continuing to monitor complaints data.

As part of the review, staff interviewed municipalities from across Canada, including from the GTA. Many municipalities have also seen an increase in unpermitted fireworks use during the COVID-19 pandemic and currently considering how to address these issues. A common issue raised was complaints around noise and improper use of fireworks on designated days. Many GTA municipalities also identified an increase in complaints around fireworks use during COVID-19, which has prompted reviews. In all cases there was recognition of the challenges of enforcing fireworks regulations, as well as the value of education for the public and vendors.

Public Feedback and other engagements

The City solicited public feedback on fireworks regulations via email from January 28 to February 22, 2022. The feedback period was advertised through though emails to Councillors and interested stakeholders. A total of 42 email responses were received, with the majority of respondents in support of further restricting the use of fireworks. Respondents commented on increased fireworks use during recent warmer weather

seasons and its impact on their quality of life, Toronto's wildlife and the environment. Respondents suggested a number of restrictions for public fireworks use, including: restrictions on the day and time fireworks can be used in the City; the use of designated parks where residents can visit to safely discharge fireworks; and a full ban on the use of fireworks.

To inform this report, staff also reached out to recent and current Toronto fireworks vendors to learn about their ideas and concerns related to the topics included in this report. Additionally, staff met with both the Canadian National Fireworks Association and the Etobicoke Fireworks Remediation Committee.

Public Opinion Research

City staff procured a third-party vendor to conduct demographically representative public opinion research and focus groups to better understand awareness among Toronto residents of the City's fireworks regulations, as well as residents' experiences, priorities, and concerns as it relates to the sale and use of fireworks by the public.

Key research findings include:

- Many residents have had mostly positive experiences with fireworks. Among the negatives associated with fireworks, residents highlighted noise disturbances from fireworks use after reasonable hours, and related safety risks. Residents generally feel that as long as fireworks are used safely and within reasonable hours, issues regarding fireworks usage would significantly decrease in quantity and severity.
- The majority of residents do not have a detailed understanding of Toronto's fireworks rules.
- Half of residents support keeping Toronto's current fireworks use and sale regulations the same. About 40% of residents support increased restrictions on how the public can use and buy fireworks, while 10% support reducing restrictions.
- When asked to consider potential changes to Toronto's fireworks rules, 79% of residents agreed/somewhat agreed that fireworks vendors should be required to take educational training on fireworks rules, while 53% of residents agreed/somewhat agreed that members of the public should always be required to obtain a permit to buy and use fireworks in Toronto.
- Many focus group participants felt that the public should be made more aware of fireworks rules and regulations through ongoing public education.
- Although focus group participants did not widely think fireworks rules should be made more restrictive, some felt that proper enforcement of fireworks regulations is critical to public safety.

See Attachment 4 for a summary of public opinion research findings.

Internal Engagement

Internal City divisions were also consulted as part of this work, including Economic Development and Culture (EDC); Parks Forestry and Recreation (PFR); and Solid Waste Management Services (SWM), who have various operational interests related to fireworks. Solid Waste Management joined MLS and TFS in the public education

campaign last summer to help elevate messaging around proper disposal of fireworks. Their concerns are around improper disposal creating a potential fire risk in waste disposal bins and at City facilities receiving waste material. Additionally, PFR and EDC both organize city fireworks displays with professionally certified Fireworks Technicians for special events like New Year's Eve, and Canada Day. Staff heard from the public that these displays are important alternatives to residents doing their own individual fireworks. Recent changes to the Fireworks By-law enacted in 2021 prevent some of these displays from going forward. This is discussed in the Amending By-law section of the report. Further changes to the public use of consumer fireworks would not impact their City displays, as they utilize professional technicians and display fireworks.