

City of Mississauga

Corporate Report



<p>Date: May 6, 2025</p> <p>To: Chair and Members of General Committee</p>	<p>Originator's files:</p>
<p>From: Raj Sheth, P.Eng, Commissioner of Community Services</p>	<p>Meeting date: May 21, 2025</p>

Subject

2025 Fireworks By-law Review

Recommendation

1. That General Committee choose between three options including maintaining the status quo, implementing additional restrictions or executing a complete prohibition with regards to the licensing and use of fireworks as outlined in the corporate report from the Commissioner of Community Services, dated May 6, 2025, entitled "2025 Fireworks By-law Review".
2. That the housekeeping amendments to the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law 0182-2023, as outlined in the corporate report, dated May 6, 2025, from the Commissioner of Community Services, entitled "2025 Fireworks By-law Review" be approved.
3. That staff report back with details of proposed amendments to the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law 0182-2023 and any other by-laws that pertain to the sale, use and effects of fireworks, in accordance with the option approved by Council.
4. That staff continue to tailor and enhance its enforcement approach, in collaboration with Peel Regional Police and Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services, where practical, to more effectively enforce the Fireworks Licensing and Use and associated by-laws, irrespective of the option approved by Council.
5. That staff launch a robust public education campaign, based on the option approved by Council, to increase awareness of the rules surrounding the sale and use of fireworks.
6. That all necessary by-laws be enacted.

Executive Summary

- Staff reviewed the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law 0182-2023, as directed by Council, to address growing concerns regarding public safety, enforcement demands and complaints.
- This report presents three regulatory options for fireworks sale and use, aiming to

balance public safety and community expectations.

- Community engagement included a survey with 3,539 contributors, revealing general support for increased penalties and enforcement, as well as varied opinions on banning fireworks, maintaining the status quo or increasing fireworks restrictions.
- Staff recommend introducing or expanding Part I charges for fireworks sale and use and Administrative Penalty System fines in the future to provide the City's enforcement officers more effective tools to manage non-compliance and ensure adherence to the Fireworks Licensing and Use and associated by-laws.
- Recommended amendments to the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law include updated definitions and new provisions for pyrotechnics and pyrotechnic simulation devices to ensure safety and clarity.
- Staff emphasize the importance of enhancing enforcement by collaborating with Peel Regional Police and Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services to ensure more effective enforcement.
- A robust public education campaign is also recommended to raise resident and vendor awareness of fireworks regulations and safe practices.

Background

In November 2024, Council requested a report on the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law 0182-2023 (herein referred to as 'the Fireworks By-law'). Staff were tasked with assessing the by-law's effectiveness, examining complaint data, and evaluating its impact on Enforcement and stakeholders. The report is to also include a comprehensive review and analysis of fireworks complaint data from the City of Brampton and Town of Caledon to assess the impact of their firework bans and provide insights to guide Mississauga's fireworks regulatory framework. Additionally, staff were asked to explore the estimated costs of organizing a city-sponsored fireworks event.

This report summarizes staff's engagement, research and analysis to help Council consider and endorse one of three options for the regulation of fireworks sale and use.

Present Status

Current Fireworks By-Law

Currently, the City permits fireworks without a permit on designated holidays, including Lunar New Year, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Diwali and New Year's Eve (NYE). For Victoria Day and Canada Day, the statutory holiday serves as the designated date, while for Lunar New Year and Diwali, the date is determined by the Director of Enforcement. In the case of inclement weather, fireworks are permitted on the following day.

Residents are not permitted to set off fireworks in a street, public property, a parking lot or any private property that is not their own. On permitted days, fireworks are allowed from dusk until

11 p.m., except on NYE, when they are permitted until 1 a.m. Residents must obtain a permit from MFES to set off fireworks on any other day of the year on permitted locations.

A licence from By-law Enforcement is required to sell fireworks in the City. Only F.1 class fireworks (family or consumer fireworks) can be sold, and vendors must comply with federal and provincial regulations and local by-laws. Licences are issued only for the 10 days leading up to and including the designated holiday. Vendors are prohibited from selling fireworks to individuals under the age of 18, selling restricted fireworks, or selling during any time of the year except for the 10-day period preceding the holiday.

Public Complaints and Enforcement Response Data

Over the past three years, complaints about fireworks use in Mississauga have risen. Common concerns include fireworks being set off outside designated days or times, use of prohibited fireworks, and improper handling of fireworks. In both 2023 and 2024, the most frequent issue reported was the use of fireworks outside the permitted days and times.

The following table illustrates increased demand for service and corresponding enforcement metrics relating to fireworks use:

Enforcement Metric*						
Number of Complaints						
Year	Holiday Name	Permitted Holiday Date (A)	Non-Permitted Holiday Period (B)**	Total (A + B)	Non-Permitted (Outside Holiday Period)	Yearly Total
2022	Lunar New Year	0	0	0		
	Victoria Day	12	16	28		
	Canada Day	13	21	34		
	Diwali	12	10	22		
	NYE***	2	0	2		
	Total 2022			86	94	180
2023	Lunar New Year	6	3	9		
	Victoria Day	60	83	143		
	Canada Day	34	38	72		
	Diwali	56	37	93		
	NYE***	5	0	5		
	Total 2023			322	211	533
2024	Lunar New Year	5	0	5		
	Victoria Day	29	39	68		
	Canada Day	38	30	68		
	Diwali	163	83	246		

	NYE***	6	0	6		
	Total 2024			393	209	602
Number of Fines and Charges						
2022	1					
2023	11					
2024	2					

* Pertains to fireworks use only (excluding sale)

** Holiday period includes the days prior and/or after the designated date for fireworks use without permit

*** NYE captures both December 31 and January 1 of the following year as part of the holiday date and period.

The rise in fireworks complaints between 2022 and 2023 may be linked to public education efforts, increased enforcement, and the launch of an online reporting tool, which made it easier for residents to file complaints outside of regular business hours. The increase from 2023 to 2024 is likely due to factors such as heightened public education initiatives and after-hours and weekend enforcement. Enhanced enforcement efforts, including the establishment of an evening enforcement team, further improved the City's ability to address complaints.

The upward trend in the number of fireworks complaints, particularly with enhanced enforcement efforts, suggests heightening public focus and the importance of continuing proactive enforcement efforts and education within the City.

Comments

Enforcement

Fireworks enforcement in Mississauga is a collaborative effort among By-law, Security Services, PRP, and MFES. By-law addresses complaints about vendors and fireworks use on private property, sidewalks, and residential streets. Security Services manages concerns related to fireworks on City property and in parks. PRP focuses on public safety issues, including complaints about fireworks use on major roadways, where they may pose risks to drivers and pedestrians. They also focus on disturbances that compromise community peace or escalate into criminal behavior, such as vandalism. MFES oversees the fireworks permit process and responds to all fire incidents, regardless of their cause. Together, these groups ensure enforcement across private, public, and community settings.

Below are challenges relating to the enforcement of the Fireworks and associated by-laws:

Resources

Handling fireworks-related complaints and managing large gatherings where fireworks use is expected demand substantial staff resources. This often results in reallocating resources from other areas, straining enforcement and leaving gaps in coverage across the City. Enhanced joint enforcement efforts in hot spots, to address and maintain public safety during large gatherings, cost the City over \$60,000 in 2024 for Enforcement staffing alone. Costs incurred for

signage, paid duty officers, and equipment such as aerial drones, will need to be considered moving forward.

Responding to Calls for Service Related to Fireworks

A common challenge in addressing fireworks complaints is the limited information provided by complainants, who often only have a general idea of the location in which fireworks are being set off. Without precise locations, enforcement becomes less effective and timely. Additionally, since fireworks are discharged quickly, the response window is brief, making it difficult for Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) to catch contraveners in the act.

Public Safety Risks

There have been several troubling incidents where individuals have discharged fireworks in a reckless and highly unsafe manner, creating significant hazards for those nearby. These include instances of fireworks being deliberately aimed at police cruisers, which not only endanger officers but also escalate tensions and disrupt public order. Another alarming example involved launching fireworks from a balcony toward an adjacent building, posing serious risks to the safety of residents, potential property damage, and an increased likelihood of fire.

Such actions demonstrate a blatant disregard for safety protocols and highlight the serious risks associated with the improper use of fireworks – risks associated with injury of bystanders and officers and escalation of charged situations. Furthermore, they create additional challenges for enforcement agencies tasked with maintaining public safety, as incidents like these demand immediate attention and resources. The consequences of such actions can extend beyond physical harm, as they undermine community trust and compromise the overall sense of safety for both residents and enforcement personnel. These incidents underscore the importance of stringent enforcement and comprehensive public education on the safe use of fireworks.

Limited Compliance Toolkit

Currently, MLEOs have limited tools for addressing fireworks violations on private property, relying on Part III charges, which have higher procedural requirements. This makes issuing effective penalties more challenging. Administrative Penalty System (APS) fines and Part I charges offer a more adaptable approach than Part III charges, allowing for quicker, more consistent enforcement with fewer procedural hurdles. These penalties simplify the process of issuing fines, increasing the likelihood of enforcement and providing a financial incentive for compliance. Incorporating these tools into the Fireworks and associated by-laws could enhance the City's ability to respond to violations effectively while promoting compliance.

Litter, Debris and Property Damage

Fireworks use presents significant challenges, particularly in terms of litter, debris, and property damage, all of which can negatively impact public spaces and amenities. After fireworks are discharged, they leave behind debris such as ash, cartridges, and shells. This litter often accumulates in parks, playgrounds, and other shared spaces, posing hazards to children and

residents who may come into contact with it. Such debris not only detracts from the cleanliness of these spaces but also creates potential safety risks.

Cleaning up debris after holidays, because of fireworks use, increases municipal workload and costs. The effort required to clean up after such events increases by approximately 33% or 30 hours compared to regular, non-holiday periods, which represents fireworks and the associated event/gatherings. This added workload places further pressure on already limited staff resources and budgets.

Improper use and disposal of fireworks can cause extensive property damage to playgrounds, park structures, and other public amenities, leading to costly repairs and potential closures. Such closures can disrupt recreational activities and diminish the overall enjoyment of public spaces.

Environmental Impact

Fireworks use has several environmental impacts, including air pollution, noise disturbances, harm to wildlife, waste generation, and increased fire risks. When fireworks are set off, they release particulate matter into the atmosphere, contributing to short-term spikes in air pollution. These pollutants can affect air quality and exacerbate respiratory issues for sensitive populations. Noise pollution is another significant concern, as the loud explosions from fireworks can disturb human and animal populations. Wild birds can be startled by these sudden sounds, which may cause them to abandon their nests or become disoriented. Similarly, pets sensitive to loud noises can experience stress and anxiety, negatively impacting their well-being.

Additionally, the waste generated by fireworks displays - such as paper remnants, shells, and other debris - harms the environment, further contributing to environmental degradation. Moreover, the use of fireworks increases the likelihood of fires, particularly when they are discharged irresponsibly or in unsafe areas. Fires can lead to property damage and threaten local ecosystems, adding to the overall environmental burden of fireworks use. Together, these impacts highlight the need for responsible use, proper disposal, and strict regulations to mitigate the environmental consequences of fireworks.

Jurisdictional Scan

Staff consulted ten municipalities regarding their fireworks by-laws. The aim was to understand changes and gather insights to inform potential updates to Mississauga's fireworks regulatory framework.

Out of the municipalities surveyed, Caledon, Brampton, and Milton fully ban fireworks sales and use, citing concerns like public safety, air pollution, and complaints. As of the drafting of this report, Markham, Kitchener, and Oakville are reviewing their by-laws, signifying possible changes soon. Meanwhile, Ottawa, Burlington, Hamilton, and Toronto allow fireworks on just two days annually - Victoria Day and Canada Day - demonstrating a more restricted approach.

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In contrast, Mississauga is relatively lenient, permitting fireworks use without a permit on five designated days each year. Additional details can be found in Appendix 1.

As per Council’s direction, below is a summary of the experience of the two jurisdictions that banned fireworks within the last two or so years:

Brampton

As part of the jurisdictional scan, staff reviewed Brampton’s updated fireworks by-law and enforcement outcomes. In December 2022, Brampton implemented a city-wide ban on fireworks sale and use, except for sparklers and toy pistol caps. A permit system remains available for fireworks used by film production companies.

Following the ban, Brampton strengthened public education efforts through social media, radio, multi-lingual materials, and other platforms. Enforcement was also significantly increased in collaboration with Brampton Fire and PRP, focusing on high-priority areas. While fireworks complaints remain high, complaint volumes decreased by 22% from 1,657 in 2023 to 1,290 in 2024. To provide residents with a safe alternative, Brampton hosts city-run fireworks displays during Diwali and Canada Day at public parks.

Caledon

Staff reviewed updates to Caledon's fireworks by-law, which banned personal fireworks use in April 2022. Despite the ban, Caledon maintains a permit system for theatrical pyrotechnics and fireworks displays in controlled settings, such as film productions and community events.

After the ban, fireworks-related complaints rose significantly from 67 in 2023 to 226 in 2024, a 237% increase. This spike was attributed not only to non-compliance but also to greater public awareness through enhanced education efforts and population growth. To provide residents with a safe alternative, Caledon hosts a city-run drone show during Diwali.

City-Run Fireworks Show

City-run events are designed to balance public interest in fireworks displays with safety considerations and compliance with by-laws, while also promoting community engagement. To explore options for providing a safe and controlled environment for residents to celebrate certain holidays, staff collaborated with Culture and Events to estimate the cost of hosting a ten-minute fireworks show. The estimated expense for such events is approximately \$90,800 per show, covering fireworks products, road closures, PRP support, operational staff, and marketing efforts. A detailed breakdown of these costs can be found in Appendix 2.

Engagement and Consultation
Public Survey Findings

Between March 10 and March 31, 2025, staff conducted a survey and received 3,539 responses. The survey aimed to understand public opinions on fireworks use in Mississauga and provided a platform for residents to share their experiences, views, and priorities.

Most respondents (96%) were residents, with the rest identifying as fireworks vendors/retailers, members of the fireworks industry, or other. The responses revealed varied opinions: 1,442 people believed fireworks should not be allowed; 1,334 favoured allowing fireworks with or without a permit; and 679 preferred allowing them only with a permit. The most significant result showed that 1,464 respondents supported a full ban on the sale, possession, and use of fireworks without a permit - slightly more than the 1,317 respondents who supported keeping the current by-laws unchanged (a difference of 147 or about 4% of total respondents). Additionally, 1,395 respondents opposed fireworks use without a permit on any holiday, though a larger group (1,601) supported allowing fireworks without a permit on Canada Day, if new restrictions were to be introduced.

While fireworks were associated with fun, entertainment, and community togetherness, concerns about noise pollution, late-night disturbances, and the impact on pets and wildlife also emerged. This was reflected in widespread support for stricter penalties for by-law violations (1,724) and increased enforcement of permit-less fireworks use (1,426 respondents).

Overall, while fireworks are valued as a cultural and social activity, many respondents leaned toward tighter regulations or a complete ban to balance safety and environmental concerns. See Appendix 3 for more details, including respondents' experiences with fireworks and their willingness to attend city-run fireworks shows.

Mississauga Enforcement Partners

Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services

Staff consulted MFES to evaluate current operations and potential impacts of changes to the Fireworks By-law. MFES provided feedback on ways to strengthen the by-law, as reflected in the recommended housekeeping amendments.

Fire-related calls tend to increase slightly during holidays, but attributing incidents directly to fireworks remains challenging due to current data collection practices. Calls often involve grass, garbage, or vehicle fires, which may or may not be fireworks-related.

MFES cautioned that reducing fireworks days while continuing to allow private fireworks permits could increase workload, due to a likely surge in permit applications for holidays when permit-less fireworks use is no longer allowed. However, operational impacts cannot be fully measured and may require further assessment.

Peel Regional Police

Staff also consulted PRP regarding enforcement challenges and cost implications. PRP's involvement primarily focuses on public safety during large gatherings where fireworks may be present. Resource needs for unplanned events are difficult to predict, while planned events typically require regular duty officers, paid duty officers, and assignment of operational teams based on risk assessments and public safety concerns.

PRP does not specifically track fireworks-related calls, which are often categorized under broader incidents like public safety (e.g., assault with fireworks as a weapon) or noise complaints. Fireworks are sometimes mistaken for gunshots, which are still investigated.

PRP supports by-law measures that can help enhance or promote public safety - this includes banning fireworks sales and use, while allowing flexibility for fireworks use with permits at organized events such as weddings or community gatherings.

Options

Options Regarding the Sale and Use of Fireworks

Option One: Maintain Status Quo

This option proposes no significant amendments to the current fireworks regulatory framework. The sale and use of fireworks would continue to be permitted on designated holidays, adhering to existing regulations. The by-law, however, would be amended to potentially include additional safety-related restrictions. The permit system would remain unchanged, allowing individuals to apply through MFES for approval to use consumer and display fireworks on permitted locations.

Option Two: Implement Additional Restrictions

This option proposes stricter regulations, limiting the sale and use of consumer fireworks exclusively to Canada Day or Victoria Day and Canada Day. Fireworks would no longer be permitted on other holidays without a permit. The by-law would also be updated to potentially introduce further safety-related restrictions.

Under this approach, all permit applications for fireworks on dates other than the one or two permitted holidays would need to be submitted to MFES for review and approval. The permit process would be further tightened, with permits granted only for professional displays at community events, film productions, or significant occasions hosted by recognized organizations.

Option Three: Complete Prohibition

This option proposes amending the Fireworks By-law to implement a full ban on fireworks sale, distribution, possession, and use within Mississauga. While such a ban may not entirely eliminate access, it would curtail availability and reduce opportunities for impulse purchases. To align with practices in other municipalities like Brampton, the use of novelty devices classified as type F.5, specifically sparklers and toy pistol caps, would be allowed. Should this option be

selected, the name of the Fireworks Licensing and Use By-law may need to be changed to the Fireworks By-law to reflect the change in scope as the sale and use of fireworks would be prohibited.

The permit process would follow a model similar to Option Two, with permits being issued exclusively for professional displays at film productions, theatrical events, or major community celebrations hosted by recognized organizations. No permits would be granted for individual consumer use.

For all options, staff recommend that by-law amendments, if enacted, take effect after Canada Day. This would allow the City sufficient time to make the necessary by-law amendments and educate residents and vendors about the changes. It would also, should further restrictions or a complete ban be put into place, enable licensed fireworks vendors to phase out existing stock and adapt to the new rules surrounding fireworks.

Additional By-law Amendments and Actions for All Options

Enhanced Enforcement and Public Education

Regardless of the chosen option, the City will maintain both reactive and proactive measures to enforce the Fireworks and associated by-laws, ensuring public safety and encouraging compliance. This approach will require Enforcement to adapt its strategies, including the strategic deployment of staff from within the Division and collaboration with PRP and MFES in areas with heightened public safety or enforcement concerns. Increased enforcement efforts may boost the chances of MLEOs educating the public, apprehending violators, and issuing fines or charges. Additionally, a visible enforcement presence can act as a deterrent, discouraging non-compliance.

To further enhance compliance, Enforcement and MFES will implement a comprehensive public education campaign targeting residents and fireworks vendors. Using a range of communication strategies, this campaign will focus on raising awareness of the City's Fireworks By-law and the penalties associated with violations. Should Option One or Two be implemented, the campaign will also emphasize fireworks safety, reinforcing the importance of responsible use.

Increasing Fines and Penalties for Contraventions

Current fines and penalties are insufficient to effectively deter non-compliance with the City's Fireworks By-law. Enforcement tools, particularly Part III charges, are challenging to implement due to their higher evidentiary requirements and lengthy procedures. As a result, current penalties alone may not be sufficient to deter non-compliance. To increase the effectiveness of the City's enforcement efforts, staff recommend increasing existing fines and introducing APS fines and new Part I charges specifically for fireworks-related violations. These changes, facilitated by amendments to the Fireworks By-law and the Licensing Administrative Penalty By-law 0135-2014, would provide Enforcement with more efficient and consistent tools to manage non-compliance while imposing greater financial consequences on offenders. Note that due to

logistical and capacity considerations, APS fines may be introduced at a later date, after initial by-law amendments. Refer to Appendix 4 for current penalties in place and violations under consideration.

Housekeeping Amendments

Staff recommend the following amendments:

- **Regulating Special Effect Pyrotechnics and Pyrotechnic Simulation Devices:** Define and regulate special effect pyrotechnics and pyrotechnic simulation devices as a distinct category to ensure proper safety measures. These devices, often used at weddings or indoor events, present similar hazards as general pyrotechnics and require specific oversight.
- **Clarifying Public vs. Private Displays:** Update the definition of a public fireworks display to reduce confusion. The distinction will be based on whether the fireworks are set off on property owned by the person responsible and whether they are intended for public or spectator viewing and may include the number of spectators present.
- **Defining Novelty Devices:** Introduce a definition for Novelty Devices such as sparklers and toy pistol caps that produce limited visible or audible effects and state that these may be permitted in the event a complete prohibition is adopted.
- **Restricting Fireworks Use by Location:** Specify that fireworks can only be used on property owned by the user or with written permission from the property owner.
- **Enforcing Permit Guidelines:** Ensure no fireworks are discharged within the City unless they are used on the specific day(s) and times stated on the permit.

These amendments aim to improve safety, ensure compliance, and provide greater clarity for users and enforcement staff.

Financial Impact

Depending on the option selected, there may be financial impacts for both City revenue and expenses. Currently, revenue is generated through fireworks permit and inspection fees by MFES and business licence and inspection fees through Enforcement. A city-wide ban on fireworks sales and use could result in an estimated annual revenue loss of \$19,000, based on 2024 figures and assuming permit and licence numbers remain unchanged.

Enforcement primarily involves the Enforcement Division, with support from PRP and MFES during enhanced operational details. In 2024, fireworks enforcement cost the City over \$60,000 for staffing alone, and rising demand - especially during holiday periods - will likely increase expenses due to factors like additional personnel and overtime. Other expenses, such as the requirement for paid duty officers and aerial drones, may increase future costs. In contrast, long-term resourcing may decrease with consistent compliance.

Public education, crucial for increasing awareness and compliance, is estimated to cost \$23,500 annually, with adjustments based on needs in future years.

A city-run fireworks event is estimated to cost \$90,800 per show. While the City offsets costs for Canada Day and NYE fireworks displays through grants and sponsorships, additional shows would require substantial sponsorship from local businesses or organizations to cover costs.

Conclusion

As directed by Council, staff reviewed the Fireworks By-law to address rising complaints, public safety concerns, and enforcement challenges. A public survey revealed mixed views: residents value fireworks for their cultural and social significance but expressed frustration over issues like excessive noise, safety risks, fire hazards, and environmental damage. While many respondents supported a ban, a significant number favoured maintaining the status quo, with only a difference of 147 between the two groups (or about 4% of total respondents). Of the ten municipalities benchmarked, six have either implemented full bans or are considering or reviewing such measures, while others restrict fireworks use to two designated days annually.

This report outlines the operational impacts on Enforcement, PRP, and MFES and presents three options for Council's consideration to enhance public safety while reflecting community expectations. Regardless of the chosen option, staff recommend:

- Increasing existing fines and introducing APS fines and Part I charges for better deterrence and enforcement flexibility.
- Clarifying amendments to the Fireworks By-law.
- Enhancing enforcement in collaboration with PRP and MFES.
- Launching a robust public education campaign to raise awareness of rules and promote fireworks safety.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Jurisdictional Scan

Appendix 2: City-Run Fireworks Show Estimated Costs

Appendix 3: Public Survey

Appendix 4: Fines and Charges



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