



CORPORATE SERVICES

Staff Report

REPORT NO: COR-2025-24
TO: Council
SUBMITTED BY: Kaitlin Bos, Manager of Legislative Services/Municipal Clerk
PREPARED BY: Erin Merritt, Supervisor of Municipal Law Enforcement
REVIEWED BY: Harold O’Krafka, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: June 2, 2025
SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to the Fireworks By-law

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report COR-2025-24 Proposed Changes to the Fireworks By-law be received for information; and,

THAT Council directs Staff to bring back a By-law to amend By-law 2023-17 being the Fireworks By-law to the August Regular Council Meeting that includes the following recommendations as included in Report COR-2025-24 including;

- Decrease number of permitted days;
- Add permitted times to set off fireworks;
- Prohibiting the sale of fireworks within the Township; and,
- Increase set fines.

SUMMARY:

The Township of Wilmot, along with our regional partners from the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley and Woolwich have been working together to improve fireworks safety across the region. All agreed to collaborate on finding ways to improve fireworks safety through coordinated by-law restrictions, management, and enforcement. Through research from other municipalities, an Engage WR survey, discussions with members of the Fireworks industry, this report outlines the proposed changes through recommendations to the Township of Wilmot fireworks by-law.

BACKGROUND:

In 2023, the Township of Wilmot conducted a review of the Noise By-law with a hearty public engagement campaign, from this engagement campaign we received a lot of feedback regarding fireworks, as well as noise. With the number of comments received on the disruptive nature of

fireworks, Township of Wilmot staff added a review of our Fireworks By-law was put onto our annual workplan.

In March 2024, the City of Cambridge engaged Cambridge residents to inform their ongoing Fireworks By-law Review.

In September 2024, Kitchener City Council directed staff to do research and consultation to develop recommendations by April 2025 for:

- How the City of Kitchener can make fireworks regulations more stringent
- Potential policies or actions that can be implemented to address the fireworks issue effectively
- Strategies for a coordinated regional effort to manage and enforce fireworks regulations

In response to the last point, Kitchener staff reached out to area municipalities. In which all agreed to collaborate on finding ways to improve fireworks safety through coordinated by-law restrictions, management, and enforcement.

A fireworks safety survey was launched on January 30, 2025 on [EngageWR](#). The engagement opportunity was advertised on the Township's social media and website seeking input from Wilmot residents. The survey complemented Cambridge's previous engagement efforts, inviting further input from residents across the region. The survey garnered 3739 responses with 216 respondents said they were from Wilmot township. Wilmot township responses mirrored the overall responses that were given. The survey results key takeaways from Wilmot residents were the following:

- In the last 3 years, 55% of Wilmot respondents never attended/watched private or household fireworks
- In the last 3 years, 78% of Wilmot respondents never set off private or household fireworks
- When asked about reducing the number of days fireworks are permitted – 55% of respondents strongly supported/ supported compared to 32% of respondents opposed or strongly opposed less days
- When asked if the hours should be reduced when fireworks can be set off 67% of respondents strongly supported or support a reduction
- The respondents were very evenly split when the question of a sale of firework ban was asked, with slightly more support for a ban on private or household use of fireworks.

With the information gathered from the survey, research into what other communities are doing with regards to fireworks including Brampton, Caledon, Milton, Vancouver, Woodstock, London and all regional partners. Additionally, staff met with Aleem Janji, Chief Advocacy Officer for the Canadian National Fireworks Association (CNFA) to gain industry perspectives on trends, safety and what municipalities they see as working well, stricter regulations and bans.

REPORT:

In response to the survey results and other consultation that was mentioned above, Township staff have prepared the following recommendations for your consideration:

Recommendation #1: Decrease number of permitted days

The current by-law allows for the day before and the day after the holiday. The proposed change would just be on the specific holiday (Victoria Day, Canada Day, Diwali and the Lunar New Year).

Rationale: Less days for fireworks but still allowing residents the option of enjoying fireworks on the days included in the by-law.

Recommendation #2: Add permitted times to set off fireworks

The current by-law does not set out specific times when fireworks can be set off, just specific days. The proposed change would be that the revised by-law states:

Fireworks are permitted to be set off during the following days and times:

- Victoria Day – 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- Canada Day – 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- Diwali – 8:00 p.m. to 11 p.m.
- Chinese Lunar New Year – 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Rationale: The introduction of start and stop times, allows clear understanding of when fireworks can be set off. This also allows for residents who don't like fireworks for many reasons (distress to animals, wildlife, people with PTSD or auditory sensitivity) to be aware of when they may encounter fireworks.

Recommendation #3 Prohibiting the Sale of Fireworks

To prohibit the sale of Fireworks within the Township of Wilmot, starting in 2026.

Rationale: This measure is intended to reduce access to fireworks, requiring individuals to plan ahead rather than purchasing them impulsively. The Township of Wilmot currently does not license businesses who sell fireworks, and such business are only permitted to sell fireworks currently for 20 days per year. This would allow businesses to sell off their current stock and ensure adequate time for public education on the change. While we acknowledge that some residents may still obtain fireworks online, may purchase from municipalities outside of the municipal requiring advance planning and proof of age for purchases is expected to gradually decrease local usage over time.

Considerations: Negative impact on local businesses income derived from the sale of fireworks.

Recommendation #4 Increase set fines

As outlined in By-law 2023-17 the set fines are \$150 to \$250, and we propose to have these fines increased to \$500.

Rationale: To act as a deterrent and improve compliance.

Considerations: The Township of Wilmot has not issued any tickets under the current Fireworks By-law that came in to force and effect on April 3rd, 2023. If passed, part-time by-law enforcement officer could be scheduled to work during these evenings, however enforcement of this by-law is difficult. For example, if the officer is in New Hamburg and gets a call about fireworks being set off in St Agatha, by the time the officer drives to the location, the fireworks most likely are over with. It is difficult to lay charges without proof, so an officer would have to find evidence, and/or get a witness statement to be used as evidence. Most neighbours we have found are not willing to provide a statement or testify in court, if the matter proceeds through the courts.

Currently, a by-law officer will follow-up with the residents where a complaint was received, provide education regarding the by-law and possible fines if such activities continue to occur.

Regional Alignment:

In an attempt to improve clarity, compliance and enforcement both for residents and enforcement staff, we tried to align regionally on some aspects of our fireworks by-laws. The hope is that clearer messaging for public education, more effective compliance and less confusion throughout the Region as by-laws would better align. Although complete alignment is not reasonable, the recommendations above were agreed upon, while still allowing flexibility for the Township.

Table 1: Regional Scan of Decision-Making on Recommendations

	Considered by Council	Result
City of Kitchener	May 5, 2025	Passed all Recommendations
City of Waterloo	May 5, 2025	Passed all Recommendations
City of Cambridge	June 17, 2025	To be determined.
Township of Wilmot	June 2, 2025	To be determined.
Township of Wellesley	<i>May 27, 2025 (tentative)</i>	To be determined.
Township of Woolwich	May 27 or June 10, 2025	To be determined.
Township of North Dumfries	April 28, 2025	Only Recommendation #4 Increased Set Fines

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Healthy Community

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Region of Waterloo Survey Responses Report

Attachment B: Township of Wilmot Specific Survey Results

Attachment C: Township of Wilmot By-law 2023-17 being the Fireworks By-law