

Fireworks banned Caledon-wide with some exceptions

By **Zachary Roman**

The personal use of fireworks is prohibited in Caledon effective immediately, as is the sale of fireworks.

Town of Caledon Council voted to enact a new fireworks bylaw at its April 26 meeting; the new bylaw included the bans.

Two delegations registered to speak at the meeting in opposition of the bylaw.

Perry Logan, president of the Canadian National Fireworks Association (CNFA), was one of those delegations and thanked council for letting him delegate again, as he has advocated against the bylaw in the past.

'I'm asking council to understand that by approving the report it will eliminate a legal industry that contributes jobs to your Town? and will eliminate a cultural? tradition enjoyed by thousands living in your (Town),?' said Logan.

'The report offers nothing in the way of enforcement solutions that bylaw did not have access to last year or the year prior.'

Logan said he and the Canadian National Fireworks Association are willing to meet with Town Staff and work to find a solution on a bylaw that works for both parties. Logan again said a ban on fireworks would not work and that the sale of fireworks will just move online or to a neighbouring town.

Logan and the CNFA advocate for education as the solution to delinquent fireworks users.

Ruth Wheelwright was the other delegate at the April 26 meeting.

She has lived in Caledon since 1964 and said one of the many joys of living on her 68-acre rural property has been to hold celebrations. She always holds a celebration of Canada Day which includes fireworks. She said she manages them safely; that they're placed in sand, lit from a distance, and completed by a reasonable time ? 9:45 p.m.

'I'm gobsmacked I won't be able to do this anymore,?' said Wheelwright as she delegated. 'Please, please, I beg of you do not pass this horrible motion. You're eliminating so much fun. To bring us down to the lowest common denominator I think is terribly unfair.'

In Wheelwright's written comments to Council, she said she understands some people are not respectful with their fireworks use, but that a solution could be found.

'Perhaps there could be restrictions depending on property size, restrictions on when fireworks can take place: holidays only and before 11 p.m.,?' she wrote. 'Whether it's Diwali, Canada Day, Victoria Day or Labour Day, please let us celebrate in a safe and respectful manner.'

Wheelwright went on to state her address ?to save you (the Town) some time? and that if the vote is passed, she'll still be holding her annual Canada Day celebration complete with fireworks.

Caledon resident Mimi Chan submitted written comments to Council in support of the new fireworks bylaw.

'I applaud the proposal of the new fireworks bylaw proposed by Town Council on the banning of discharge of fireworks for personal use as well as the sale of consumer fireworks,?' she wrote. 'The passing and enforcing of this bylaw represents a very significant assurance of the safety of living in Caledon. Please vote yes.'

Councillor Johanna Downey said she supports the new bylaw, her main concern being safety due to her talks with the Town's Fire Chief. She liked that community groups can still apply for a permit to discharge fireworks from the Town's Fire Department.

Town of Caledon municipal law enforcement director Mark Sraga noted under Caledon's current bylaw, if people are letting off fireworks on any days other than Canada Day or Victoria Day, that is actually not permitted.

The new bylaw will allow fireworks on any day if a permit is obtained; however, the permit will require the person setting off the fireworks to be certified by the government to do so.

Councillor Annette Groves said she would not be supporting the bylaw and had questions for Council on a variety of topics related to it, such as on the type and number of complaints the Town received related to fireworks.

'We are really taking away from the enjoyment of neighbours getting together? if they do want to do that I don't think we need to have them go through that process of getting certified,' said Groves.

Councillor Lynn Kiernan said fireworks are a noxious chemical nightmare to the environment, and supported the bylaw from an environmental standpoint. She said she understands fireworks can be fun but suggested perhaps it's time to find a new fun way to cap off evenings.

'This is the progressive move for the Town of Caledon? and I will wholeheartedly support it,' said Kiernan.

Councillor Tony Rosa said Wheelwright brought forward some of the same concerns he's heard from his constituents.

He said he doesn't want to penalize what he said are the majority of people who have used fireworks safely. He agreed with Logan that education is the way to fix any problems with fireworks use.

Councillor Jennifer Innis said in terms of a fireworks bylaw, it's all or nothing. She said the current bylaw is unfair to those she represents who celebrate Diwali and/or Chinese New Year.

A motion to implement the Town of Caledon's new fireworks bylaw was passed, with Councillors Rosa and Groves in opposition.

Later at the same meeting, a motion was passed to review the new fireworks bylaw in 18 months.

HAVE YOUR SAY ? Do you support the Town's move against fireworks? Send your thoughts to brock@lpcmedia.ca.