

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, February 10, 2026

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS BY-LAW REVIEW

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

City staff have conducted a review of Discharge of Firearms By-law 123-2016, as amended, to ensure it continues to be relevant and comprehensive by regulating the discharge of firearms and other designated weapons and the public display of firearms, and by providing for exceptions where a special event or film permit has explicitly allowed for such use. Proposed amendments also include the addition of administrative penalties for non-compliance and the strengthening of enforcement powers.

Report Highlights

- Proposed amendments to the Discharge of Firearms By-law include adding weapons to the category of designated weapons as well as prohibiting the display of imitation and replica designated weapons, unless otherwise permitted in the By-law.
- An exemption is also being proposed for special events and the creation of films where the permit granted by the City explicitly provides for such an exemption and sets conditions.
- Finally, it is proposed that the By-law be designated under the Administrative Penalties By-law and for administrative penalties to be set at \$500 for non-compliance, and that enforcement powers be strengthened in line with similar powers in other City by-laws.

Recommendations

1. That Council authorize the by-law amendments to Discharge of Firearms By-law 123-2016, as amended, substantially in accordance with Table 1 in the Analysis and Options section, in a form satisfactory to the Office of the City Solicitor.

Background

In line with the Council-approved By-law Strategy, staff in the City of Vaughan's (City's) By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) department are reviewing the City's Discharge of Firearms By-law 123-2016, as amended, to ensure it continues to be relevant and comprehensive.

By-laws in different municipalities address different types of weapons, imitation weapons and behaviours.

Staff reviewed the by-laws for a number of Canadian municipalities, including:

- Brampton
- Edmonton
- Hamilton
- London, Ontario
- Markham
- Mississauga
- Oshawa
- Ottawa
- Richmond Hill
- Toronto
- Vancouver

A jurisdictional comparison of the aforementioned municipalities revealed that their by-laws contain other provisions not included in Vaughan's by-law, such as:

- **Weapon types addressed in the by-law:** Other municipalities include additional types of weapons not included in Vaughan's by-law, such as bows, hunting knives, utility knives, machetes, sprays or other chemicals which have the effect of incapacitating a person, brass knuckles or similar, tasers and electrical weapons, other projectile weapons or weapons prohibited by the Criminal Code of Canada. It should be noted that within the last four years there was one reported incident of the discharge of a bow and arrow within the city.
- **Imitation and replica firearms in public:** Some by-laws have banned the carrying or the display of imitation firearms in public, except by permit, such as for a movie or educational event.
- **Films, training, and other events:** While the Vaughan By-law lists several specific businesses in which firearms are used on a regular basis, some other city's firearm's by-laws specify that, with City approval, firearms and other weapons may be used in films, training and other events. In the City of Vaughan, the City's Film and Special Events permit system asks applicants to specify any matters that require health and safety precautions, such as use of firearms or other weapons; however, this requirement is not currently addressed in the Discharge of Firearms By-law.

York Regional Police was consulted and provided a number of observations and suggestions.

Staff consulted with York Regional Police (YRP), who had the following suggestions for the City of Vaughan:

- **Addressing different types of firearms:** YRP suggested prohibiting the use of various types of firearms in public, such as BB guns, air powered, spring-powered, CO2-operated, and pump (pneumatic) and pre-charge pneumatic (PCP) operated firearms.
- **Replica and imitation firearms:** YRP has noted that sometimes shops display and sell replica weapons, and that sometimes people hang replicas as decorations in their vehicles (e.g. from the rearview mirror). Although YRP does not see this as a very common issue, they agree with City staff that the public display of replica and imitation weapons should be prohibited, whether or not they can fire a projectile, to reduce the likelihood that people may mistake them for real weapons, thus creating a potentially threatening or dangerous situation.
- **Animal trappers:** Sometimes people hire trappers to remove nuisance animals from their properties. This can result in neighbours reporting them, after seeing people with firearms and/or trapping equipment. Vaughan currently requires Wildlife removal companies to have a business licence, so that concerns from the public can be addressed more effectively.
- **Areas where outdoor shooting is allowed:** Some cities allow private property owners to discharge firearms outdoors on large lots, such as for “sport shooting” or hunting. YRP mentioned that in these areas, they sometimes receive complaints from neighbours about hearing gunshots. As the City does not have these type of properties, staff have decided not to include any regulatory provisions at this time.
- **Vaughan agricultural properties:** YRP believes that a lot of Vaughan agricultural properties are now being used for large homes, and for other non-agricultural uses. As such, they believe the extent to which farmers will need to continue to use firearms to protect their crops and livestock will likely decrease over time. In the meantime, exemptions pertaining to the dispatch of nuisance animals are being recommended to remain in the by-law.
- **Films and special events with firearms and weapons:** YRP feels the existing permit process for films and special events is working well, and that they are able to assess applications, suggest requirements, and provide police officer staffing when needed. As such, staff do not feel any changes are needed in this area, except to clearly state in the Discharge of Firearms By-law that films and special events require a City of Vaughan permit if they would like to use firearms.

Weapons are also regulated at other levels of government with enforcement of those regulations being carried out by YRP.

It should be noted that when it comes to firearms-related issues, YRP most often utilizes the federal Criminal Code of Canada, which regulates a range of crimes, including those that involve [firearms and weapons](#). The Criminal Code prescribes prohibited weapons and criminalizes a number of weapon-related behaviours. The City's Discharge of Firearms By-law is intended to deal with non-criminal matters pertaining to the use of designated weapons and the display of replicas. Both YRP and City staff are of the opinion that the public should have a working understanding of the laws and regulations governing such weapons if they choose to own one.

Staff are proposing to designate the By-law under the Administrative Penalties program and to strengthen enforcement powers.

Finally, under the provisions of the current By-law, enacted in 2016, fines for non-compliance can only be imposed under the Provincial Offences Act. In order to align this By-law with other City by-laws and to make enforcement more efficient, staff are recommending that the By-law be designated under the Administrative Penalties program and that administrative penalties be set at \$500 for any violation under the by-law.

In addition to introducing administrative penalties to the By-law, staff are also recommending strengthening enforcement powers to allow Officers to issue Orders, enter upon lands for inspection and investigation purposes and for the City to be able to recover costs incurred. Finally, along with this update to enforcement provisions, staff are also recommending that the format of the By-law itself be updated to reflect current standards.

The Analysis and Options section in this report provides the specific recommendations to address the observations and issues discussed.

Previous Reports/Authority

By-laws

- [Firearms By-law 123-2016](#)
- [Film By-law 168-2020](#)
- [Special Events By-law 045-2018](#)

Laws

- [Criminal Code R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46](#); Part III Firearms and Other Weapons.

Reports

- [Council-approved By-law Strategy](#), Item 3, Report No. 3 of the Priorities and Key Initiatives Committee, adopted without amendment by Council, June 24, 2014
- [Item 7, Report No. 27, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 28, 2016.](#)

Analysis and Options

Staff are recommending the following by-law amendments:

No	Current state	Recommendation	Reasoning
1	The current Discharge of Firearms By-law does not address firearm replicas or imitations. Due to the potential danger of mistaking these replicas for a real weapon, some municipalities have banned their public display, such as Brampton and Oshawa. YRP also believes addressing this would be a good safety measure.	To amend the by-law to include a prohibition on display of firearms and replica firearms in public, unless legally allowed, such as in the case of a federally licensed firearms vendor.	To reduce the likelihood that replicas will be mistaken for real weapons, and to limit the display of firearms, with the goal of mitigating public fear or discomfort.
3	The by-law is currently called the “Discharge of Firearms By-law”; however, staff recommend updating the title to address the display of firearms, in line with the recommendation above.	To amend the title and short title of this by-law to “Discharge and Display of Firearms”.	To ensure the title better reflects the subject matter of the By-law.
4	The Discharge of Firearms By-law lists several specific businesses and events which are allowed to use firearms on a regular basis. The City has also special events and films, which require City approval, which may also involve weapons or replicas, which must be specified upon the application for a special event or film permit;	To amend the Discharge of Firearms By-law to provide for exceptions as part of special event, film or other permits granted by the City.	To increase public awareness that City permission is required for all exceptions, and that there is a permit system that specifies conditions of use.

No	Current state	Recommendation	Reasoning
	however, these other regulations are not referenced in the Discharge of Firearm's By-law.		
5	The current By-law allows for the application of provincial offences and fines; however, there are no provisions for the application of municipal administrative penalties.	Staff recommend designating the By-law under the Administrative Penalties program and introducing a monetary penalty of \$500 for non-compliance with the By-law.	To provide the City with additional options to deter non-compliance with the By-law.
6	The current By-law is in an older format, which does not have some of the standard enforcement language used in other City by-laws.	To amend this by-law to incorporate new standard enforcement provisions and by-law formatting, including that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-compliance with the by-law is an offense, for which a municipal by-law enforcement officer may issue an order, fine or administrative penalty; - an enforcement officer can enter lands at any reasonable time to investigate suspected non-compliance; - if land owners do not comply with an order, the City may complete the work and recover unpaid costs through property taxes. 	To ensure residents continue to have clear, relevant by-laws that adequately explain rules in a consistent manner across City by-laws.

Financial Impact

There are no anticipated financial impact as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Operational Impact

There are no anticipated operational impacts as a result of the recommendations of this report.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

The City of Vaughan has Municipal By-law Enforcement Officers who enforce most City by-laws; however, YRP may also do so in many instances and, for this reason, YRP was consulted for input, and will be updated after Council's decision on the amendments to the By-law should they be approved.

Conclusion

Staff seek Council's support and approval for the recommendations in this report that are intended to continue to ensure the By-law is relevant and up to date with both new weapons and emerging issues and concerns. The recommendations in this report are in line with Council's Term of Council priority of Community Safety and Well-being.

For more information, please contact: Susan Kelly, Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, ext. 8952.

Attachments

N/A

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