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**Subject:** Firearms By-law Review

**Staff Report No.** CPS-011-25

**Department/  
Commission:** Corporate Services Commission

**Date:** June 18, 2025

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That Council direct staff to bring forward an updated Firearms By-law in the fall of 2025 based on the recommendations set out in section 3.3 of this report.

**Report Highlights**

- Provides a comparison of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's (Town) current Firearms By-law with those of neighbouring municipalities.
- Confirms that the Town's by-law is relatively consistent with trends in the region.
- Provides recommendations to bring the by-law more in-line with that of neighbouring municipalities.

**1. Purpose:**

This report outlines the Town's current Firearms By-law and compares it with by-laws from neighbouring municipalities in York Region.

**2. Background:**

On November 19, 2019, Council for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville passed By-law 2019-119-HU being a by-law to regulate the discharge of Firearms within the Town.

On May 7, 2025, Council passed the following resolution:

**WHEREAS** By-law 2019-119-HU (Firearms Bylaw) being a bylaw to regulate the discharge of Firearms within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville was enacted;

**WHEREAS** a review of the firearms By-law is deemed necessary;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** staff be directed to review the current Firearms Bylaw with neighbouring municipalities and report back with any recommended changes by June 18, 2025.

Accordingly, staff have conducted a review of the firearms by-laws of neighbouring municipalities.

### **3. Analysis:**

#### **3.1 Stouffville's Current Firearms By-law**

The Town generally prohibits the discharge of firearms or bows. Schedules "A" and "B" of the by-law show where discharge is and is not permitted. Certain exemptions exist in the by-law for the following groups:

- Peace officer, conservation officer or deputy conservation officer with discharge in the course of duties
- Landowner or tenant, or agent with prior written permission of landowner or tenant:
  - On lands outside defined areas
  - On a parcel of land in the defined areas provided its 10 acres in size and discharge is for the protection of property and no bullet or shot passes over the boundary of the land
- Landowner or occupier, or licensed hunter or trapper with permission of landowner:
  - And discharge is for the purpose of hunting or trapping and discharge is for protection of crops, on lands in defined areas, and owner possesses a valid Farm Business Registration number
  - And discharge is outside of defined areas, provided land is no less than 25 acres and discharge is for the purpose of hunting, trapping, target shooting
  - And discharged is outside or within define areas provided parcel is no less than 10 acres and discharge is of a bow for the purpose of hunting or target shooting
- Firing blank ammunition with lawful use in play or production
- As permitted by Council

There is a general prohibition on discharging Firearms or Bows within 200 metres of the boundary of any educational property being used for educational purposes, except where the property is being used for instruction in the proper use of Firearms or Bows. Educational property is defined to include school facilities or outdoor areas used for instructional purposes, whether or not they are adjacent to a building. The current By-law does not address the zoning of these lands.

The By-law is enforced by Town-appointed officers and violations result in fines under the *Provincial Offences Act* at the following amounts:

- First conviction: \$250-\$50,000
- Second or subsequent conviction: \$500-\$100,000
- Continuing offences: \$50-\$10,000 for each day the offence continues with a max daily fine of \$100,000

The Town's By-law also sets out a power of entry to carry out an inspection to ensure that the provisions of the by-law are being complied with.

### 3.2 Firearms By-law of Neighbouring Municipalities

Staff conducted a review of the Firearms By-law of seven (7) York Region Municipalities and two (2) Durham Region Municipalities, whose by-laws range from being approved in 1990 to as recent as April 2025.

General Rule	Exemptions	Penalties
<b>City of Vaughan (2025)</b>		
Discharging firearms or bows prohibited unless exempt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police, conservation officer, animal control officers</li> <li>• Farmers protecting livestock or crops</li> <li>• Other special and rare exemptions</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> offence: \$300-\$50,000 Subsequent: \$400-\$100,000
<b>Town of East Gwillimbury (2023)</b>		
Discharge prohibited in:  Prohibited areas, except under certain conditions  Regulated areas, unless conditions are met  Bows regulated unless conditions are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibited areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunting allowed on lands at least 50 acres, at permitted date and time per legislation, on privately owned land with permission of the property owner</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regulated areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lands at least 5 acres, privately owned with permission, permitted Town land</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bow:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land at least 5 acres, hunting or target shooting, private land with permission, within certain distance from other structures or lands</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General exemptions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permit issued, protection of property, normal farm practice, officers acting in the course of their duties, training purposes for officers, licensed clubs, education, ceremonial events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Exemptions granted by Council</li> </ul>	Fines per the Provincial Offences or Administrative Penalty set in the Town's AMPS By-law
<b>King Township (2014)</b>		
Discharged prohibited in defined areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discharged allowed outside prohibited areas on properties 5 acres or larger, so long as projectiles don't cross property lines and gun calibre meets restrictions</li> <li>• Discharge allowed in prohibited defined areas by the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police officers, conservation officers, individuals acting in accordance with the <i>Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act</i> (FWCA), farmers discharging for property protection, education/training, ceremonial or sport events</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> offence: \$100-\$50,000 2 <sup>nd</sup> offence: \$400-\$100,000 Continuing offence: \$10,000-\$100,000

<b>Township of Uxbridge (2013)</b>		
Discharged prohibited in prohibited areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discharge allowed in prohibited areas by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer</li> <li>• Firing blank ammunition that does not discharge a projectile</li> <li>• Farmers on lands owned or occupied by them for the euthanasia of livestock with severe injury or disease</li> <li>• A land owner, farmer or tenant who believes that wildlife is damaging or is about to damage their property</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discharge outside of prohibited areas is allowed so long as its in accordance of the FWCA</li> </ul>	Liable to fines under the POA
<b>City of Markham (2012)</b>		
Discharge of firearms or bow prohibited, with exemptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace officers</li> <li>• Ceremonial or education use with permission from the Manager of By-law</li> <li>• Licensed shooting ranges, paintball or skeet clubs</li> <li>• Discharge on a personal farm large than 5 hectares, in agricultural zones, for the purpose of protecting crops and livestock</li> </ul>	Liable to fines under the POA or the Municipal Act
<b>Township of Brock (2011)</b>		
Discharge prohibited in urban areas and certain zoned lands, public parks, roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid license and exercising the rights and privileges for the purpose of hunting, minimum of 100 metres from dwelling other than the land they own</li> <li>• Person acting within legislative requirements to protect livestock or crops and has a permit and/or license</li> <li>• To euthanize livestock for humane reasons</li> <li>• Where Council has granted exemption</li> <li>• Special events sanctioned by Council</li> </ul>	Liable to fine under the POA
<b>Town of Aurora (2005)</b>		
Discharge of firearms, air guns, spring guns, crossbows, or longbows prohibited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners or tenants of properties greater than 1 hectare for rodents or livestock protection</li> <li>• Police officers</li> <li>• Ceremonial or educational use with prior written permission from the Town</li> </ul>	Liable to fines under the POA
<b>Town of Georgina (1990)</b>		
Discharge prohibited in defined areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exemptions occur within or outside defined areas</li> <li>• Police, canine control, conservation officers, trappers</li> <li>• Farmers or tenants with consent for bird/pest/animal control</li> <li>• Licensed persons on 10+ acre properties with landowner consent</li> <li>• Council-approved firearm competitions</li> <li>• Legion members at certain times</li> </ul>	Fine of \$2,000 recoverable under the POA

Town of Newmarket (1990)		
Discharge of any gun, firearm, airgun, spring gun, or similar is prohibited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police officers</li> <li>• Farmers and their families on their own land</li> <li>• Individuals/groups/associations authorized by Council</li> <li>• Skeet shooting at authorized facilities</li> </ul>	Fine not exceeding \$1,000

Further to the above, King Township, the City of Markham, and the Town of East Gwillimbury prohibit the discharge of firearms within 100, 100, and 150 metres, respectively, of an educational property, including buildings, structures or grounds.

### 3.3 Recommendations

Following a review and comparison of the Town's Firearms By-law with those of neighbouring municipalities, staff recommend the following amendments and clarifications:

#### 1. Clarify Discharge Permissions Based on Defined and Non-Defined Areas:

Defined Areas would be areas where the Town has provided a map indicating discharge is prohibited, similar to Schedule "A" and "B" in the current by-law.

- In Defined Areas:

Discharge of firearms or bows is prohibited, with the exception of:

- Police officers, conservation officers, and animal control officers;
- Individuals acting in accordance with the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*;
- Farmers protecting livestock or crops;
- Ceremonial, educational, or training events that have received prior written approval from the Town.

- In Non-Defined Areas:

Discharge is also prohibited, except in the circumstances noted above, and additionally:

- Licensed hunters or trappers discharging on a privately-owned property, provided:
  - The property is a minimum of 10 acres;
  - The landowner has granted permission; and
  - No bullet, shot, or projectile crosses the property boundary.

## 2. Remove Section 6: Power of Entry

This section is recommended for removal, as no comparable provision was found in the by-laws of other York Region municipalities.

## 3. Clarify the Prohibitions near Educational Properties

The prohibition outlined in Section 3 of the current Firearms By-law lacks clarity regarding what lands constitute an Educational Property. As a result, it is challenging to determine the exact boundaries of an Educational Property.

To address this, the definition of Educational Property should be revised as follows:

“Educational Property” includes school facilities operated by a Board of Education, a private school, a university, a provincial college, a private college or an outdoor area when in use for instructional purposes by a Board of Education, University or College, whether or not adjacent to a building and includes any such lands owned by the above-mentioned institutions.

Additionally, Section 3 should be amended to read:

“No Person authorized to discharge a Firearm or Bow by Section 2 b), c) , d), e) or f) of this By-law shall discharge a Firearm or Bow in any area in which the discharge is not already prohibited, within 150 metres of the premises of an Educational Property, including but not limited to any building, structures or grounds related thereto, excepting those properties in use for instruction in the proper use of Firearms or Bows.”

## 4. Maintain Current Penalties

No changes are recommended to the penalty structure in the existing by-law, as it aligns with regional standards.

## **4. Options:**

### **4.1 Option A (Recommended)**

That Council direct staff to bring forward an updated Firearms By-law in the fall of 2025 based on the recommendations set out in section 3.3 of this report.

### **4.2 Option B**

That Council direct staff to make no changes to the current by-law.

## **5. Financial Implications:**

None.

## **6. Broader Intergovernmental Impacts and/or Considerations:**

None.

## **7. Communication:**

None.

## **8. Alignment with Strategic Plan:**

1. A Safe Town  
Make our community safer
2. Good Governance  
Provide Good Governance

## **9. Attachments:**

Current Firearms By-law 2019-119-HU

## **10. Related Reports:**

None.

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