

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION**

*For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on May 7, 2025*

### **2. Prohibiting the Sale of Gun-Shaped-Lighters (GSL) and Calling on the Province to Explore Legislation to Ban GSLs**

Submitted by: Councillor Klassen

#### WHEREAS

1. Gun-Shaped Lighters (GSL) have proliferated in the City of Vancouver over the past year, with an estimated 50-75 stores selling multiple GSLs, particularly in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and downtown core;
2. GSLs closely resemble real firearms, leading to public distress and a significant increase in 9-1-1 emergency calls, with 162 police responses recorded in 2024;
3. Over 50% of these 9-1-1 calls were classified as priority weapons calls, necessitating an elevated police response, including the deployment of multiple officers, use of force options such as Conducted Energy Weapons (Tasers), less-lethal beanbag shotguns, and ARWEN launchers;
4. The presence of GSLs in public spaces has resulted in multiple dangerous encounters where police officers have had to draw their firearms, creating a risk of fatal outcomes should a suspect fail to comply or appear to threaten officers or the public;
5. There have been documented instances where GSLs were used in violent crimes, including 6 cases involving violent offenses and 10 cases leading to criminal charges such as robbery, assault, and weapons possession;
6. The concentration of GSL-related calls has been predominantly in high-density urban areas, with 46% of the calls occurring in the DTES and 39% in downtown Vancouver;
7. A significant allocation of police resources has been required to respond to these incidents, with 32 calls necessitating the dispatch of 10 or more police units, and an average of 2.5 hours needed to resolve each call;
8. The Criminal Code of Canada does not prohibit the possession or sale of GSLs unless they are used in the commission of a crime, leaving law enforcement with limited avenues to seize these items proactively;
9. There are currently no Federal, Provincial, or Municipal laws prohibiting the sale or possession of GSLs, despite their clear risk to public safety and law enforcement personnel; and
10. The frequency of GSL-related incidents has been increasing month-over-month and occurring on a near-daily basis, further exacerbating safety concerns. A proactive ban on the sale and distribution of GSLs in the City of Vancouver through a by-law or by-law amendment would serve to enhance public safety and reduce

the burden on law enforcement while other legislative measures are being explored.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to provide recommendations regarding by-law amendments to prohibit the sale of gun-shaped lighters in the City of Vancouver;

FURTHER THAT any proposed by-law amendments include enforcement measures and penalties to ensure compliance (i.e., amendments to the provisions and schedules of the Ticket Offences By-law No. 9360).

- B. THAT Council request the Mayor to write a letter to the Province requesting legislative measures to prohibit the sale, distribution, and possession of Gun-Shaped Lighters (GSLs) in British Columbia, including consideration to amending relevant legislation to empower law enforcement to seize GSLs proactively and prevent their proliferation in communities across British Columbia.

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