

19 April 2017

Dear Wayne Mason,

This is a response to your call for feedback in your newsletter.

I am an author and historian. I have written an award winning book entitled *Scapegoat, the extraordinary legal proceedings following the 1917 Halifax Explosion*. I am also the historical and design consultant for Canada Post Corporation's 100th anniversary commemorative stamp of the event, to be released later this year. My letter addresses the failings of the new LED lighting system now in effect within the city of Halifax. Larger cities like Ottawa and Montreal are also affected thus it is an important national issue.

It is still not clear who is in charge of this programme. Russell Walker informed me it is the Nova Scotia Government; the newspapers make it appear as though it is the city. Past personal experience has shown that neither government responds well to the needs of individual citizens, especially on issues wherein there is little dissent on the part of the general public. My feeling is that most people say and write nothing because they feel their protests fall on deaf ears. However, I am writing with the expectation that your office may, at the very least, be open to acquiring additional knowledge regarding the present LED lighting system and the prospect of becoming more insightful as to the ramifications of its use.

The night ambience of many neighbourhoods has been destroyed by removing the golden glow that had been present for decades and replacing it with harsh, overbearing white light. Some of these new lights have been placed in front of adjacent properties on my street. Having LED lighting installed directly in front of my property will be intolerable. The scenario is already depressing - almost dystopian.

I strongly suggest that a review of the nature of the present LED lights in use is in order, and posit that the results of such a review would lead to fundamental and necessary changes in their physical structure and the process by which they are installed on city streets.

The need for a new street lighting system in Halifax is not in dispute yet compromises are in order with the LED lights. The present technology requires diffusion/filter covers to eliminate unwanted and unnecessary glare that affects car drivers, pedestrians and homeowners alike. It is highly doubtful that diffusion filters would impact the LED lights' efficiency. Ever since incandescent lights came into use decades ago, they have always been fitted with glass diffusion covers. Unfortunately, the newer street lights operate with their overly bright LED components completely exposed. They cannot be viewed directly for any more than a second or two.

This is an inherent design flaw and displays a lack of due diligence by those in charge of the project. Thus far, research into the issues of aesthetics and negative effects of the LED lights installations seems to have been completely ignored by everyone in charge - especially with regard to the impact on homeowners. Many have had to resort to buying thick curtains for their front windows because the lights are simply too bright. The enjoyment of sitting outside at night, as well as walking and enjoying the ambience of their neighbourhood for years has suddenly been taken away.

The light pollution from these lamps is excessive; and unlike those in a car on the highway that may may blind one temporarily then disappear, these lamps are a constant from twilight until dawn. There exists no viable reason why citizens should endure such reduction in the aesthetic quality of their neighbourhoods. It is also difficult to understand why the government would fully expect people to blindly accept the implementation of LED lights without question. I am sure you are aware of the on-going controversy regarding the harmful effects to people's overall mental and physical health from blue light emissions common to these present street lights.

Options should be available to people who are unhappy with the present situation regarding LED lights in HRM. These would include: 1) the use of light diffusion covers, 2) the possibility of incorporating yellow filters like those that are presently used in the downtown Halifax tourist district and 3) the incorporation of newer, better and available LED street-lighting technology that is smaller, effective, promotes less glare and does not emit health-harmful blue light (ref., Professor Robert Dick, University of Ottawa, founder of the Canadian Light Pollution Abatement Program).

The LED lights presently in use are a scourge on the night landscape. The negative effects far outweigh any so-called benefits to safety and the environment. After living 66 years in the same location, I do not wish to be forced into "light-proofing" my home. Governments - federal, provincial and municipal - should realize that the installation of these poorly conceived and designed LED street lights is a programme that may have started with good intentions but, ultimately, is rife with inherent flaws: Bad design characteristics combined with a profound lack of research into the negative health effects on people.

These flaws can and must be rectified as soon as possible by using newer technology. I strongly urge you to please take positive action regarding this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Joel H. Zemel

Cc; Mayor Savage, Premier McNeil