
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 11, 2005
File No.: 0540-20
To: City Manager
From: Parks and Leisure Services Department
Kelowna Detachment RCMP
Subject: Graffiti Task Force

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT City Council allocate \$50,000.00 to hire a Graffiti Task Force Coordinator. This amount would cover the wages and expenses of the coordinator who would work with the Graffiti Task Force to implement initiatives described in the Priorities section outlined in the Parks and Leisure Services Department report dated January 11, 2005;

THAT the coordinator's position be filled as a contract with the City of Kelowna through the Kelowna Detachment RCMP Community Operational Support Unit.

BACKGROUND:

The Graffiti Task Force is a consortium of stakeholder representatives comprised of the City of Kelowna, Regional District of Central Okanagan, RCMP, Downtown Kelowna Association, Rutland Business Association, School District No. 23, Far West Transit Services, Teen City Beat – Central Okanagan Boys and Girls Club and Canada Post. Together, they have been working to develop strategies aimed at graffiti abatement as part of a wider effort to enhance community safety, to promote awareness of graffiti-related issues and to provide community stakeholders with strategies to combat graffiti vandalism.

The Graffiti Task Force has been meeting regularly since March 14, 2002. During this time, the Graffiti Task Force has been encouraging organizations and residents to join the Task Force and has been reviewing various graffiti eradication and prevention strategies including those that promote awareness of graffiti-related issues, voluntary restrictions on the sale of graffiti-related products and the co-ordination and cost-sharing of graffiti reduction programs.

Based on expenses reported by School District 23, Downtown Kelowna Association, City of Kelowna and Far West Transit, approximately \$198,000.00 was spent on graffiti clean up efforts during the 2002 fiscal year. If these figures were adjusted to include the Regional District, Canada Post, utility corporations and waste removal companies it is reasonable to estimate that the real costs of graffiti vandalism in the Kelowna area are in excess of \$400,000.00.

The costs to our community are not just financial. It affects our image, deters patronage of commercial areas and may negatively impact investment potential. Unchallenged, graffiti encourages other crimes and undermines our community's sense of safety and well-being.

The committee has undertaken a number of initiatives since its inception, some that are as follows:

- Hiring a program coordinator for a three-month period through funding provided by the City of Kelowna to assess the graffiti issue, recommend development activities to address graffiti abatement and evaluate the future needs of our community in terms of a sustainable graffiti prevention program.
- Developing a pilot educational program for grade five students involving the RCMP and School District No. 23.
- Conducting an audit of graffiti vandalism within the City of Kelowna to be used as a baseline for assessing new graffiti abatement programs.
- Organizing graffiti awareness and clean-up campaigns as well as community information sessions.

Eradication, Prevention, Education and Enforcement have been the pillars of the Graffiti Task Force initiatives.

THE FUTURE OF THE GRAFFITI VANDALISM REDUCTION PROGRAM:

At this point, the Graffiti Task Force is at a crossroads in terms of project development and implementation with respect to graffiti abatement.

To have a successful, integrated and multi-faceted approach to reduction of graffiti vandalism, much more work needs to be done. Recognizing its limitations, the Task Force believes if such a graffiti reduction program is to develop, a full-time coordinator needs to be hired to take conduct the program's development and implementation.

GRAFFITI TASK FORCE PRIORITIES:

The purpose of this request for funding is to provide the financial resources to hire a coordinator who would be responsible for:

- Working with the Graffiti Task Force to implement best practices for graffiti vandalism reduction from other jurisdictions.
- Development of appropriate communication plans, marketing materials, research and grant submissions to address eradication, prevention, education and enforcement of graffiti vandalism.
- Engaging stakeholders in the graffiti vandalism reduction program.
- Seeking out funding partnerships to provide cost-sharing resources for the graffiti vandalism reduction program.

SUMMARY:

The City of Kelowna, the Kelowna RCMP, private property owners, local businesses, and local agencies spend considerable time and money on graffiti removal. Existing graffiti prevention strategies have been selected on the basis of their appropriateness for the types of graffiti problems currently being experienced in Kelowna and for their relative ease of implementation. While it is difficult to assess the success of a few of these relatively new strategies, it is obvious that the problem persists. To address graffiti vandalism with any further resolve will require a dedicated resource to take conduct of the program's development.

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Civic Properties Manager
City of Kelowna

Cpl. Reg Burgess
Community Operational Support Unit
Kelowna Detachment RCMP

GDR/

c.c. Director of Planning and Corporate Services
 Director of Works and Utilities
 Director of Finance
 Kelowna and District Graffiti Task Force