
CITY OF KELOWNA

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 3, 2009
File No.: 6130-05
To: City Manager
From: Director, Civic Operations
Subject: Graffiti Vandalism

RECOMMENDATIONS:

THAT a Final Budget submission of \$49,500 for the Graffiti Eradication and Prevention Program be considered by Council.

BACKGROUND:

During 2009 budget deliberations, City Council requested that staff submit a status report on the Graffiti Program and also address the need for a Graffiti Eradication & Prevention Coordinator.


The City's graffiti program has been in place for over 7 years. The most recent program was managed by Kelowna RCMP Community Policing Unit and the Graffiti Eradication & Prevention Coordinator has been vacant for almost the past year. This position has been assigned to the Civic Operations Department and the City's Web Page outlines the Graffiti program.

Graffiti has a significant impact on all of us. The city currently spends approximately \$110,000 per year in clean up costs plus administration costs. Under the current program private property is responsible to clean up graffiti at their cost. Most citizens see graffiti as blight on the landscape that undermines our pride in our community and adversely affects our property values. Many believe areas subject to graffiti are unsafe, attract other nuisances and crime, that it devalues their business and scares customers away, that graffiti makes our City unattractive which could impact our tourism industry and that laws protecting public and private property from this act of vandalism are not being enforced. Between 2005 and 2007 there were 2,041 graffiti reports 75% were graffiti on city property.

The current Graffiti program is based on the 3 R's: **Recognize**, **Report** and **Remove**.

Recognize that graffiti is a crime and it is not acceptable to allow graffiti to remain. **Report** graffiti on all public and private property by calling the City of Kelowna's Graffiti Hotline at 250-469-8600 or email graffiti@kelowna.ca . Citizens can also report graffiti through the City's Eagle Eye program on the City's Web Page. **Remove** graffiti as quickly as possible. It is the City's policy to remove graffiti within 24 hours. Residents and Business owners are encouraged to remove graffiti promptly.

Under the current program the City is notified of graffiti through messages left on the Graffiti Hotline, through e-mail or Eagle Eye. Obviously if graffiti is not reported City resources are not deployed. If



graffiti is reported on City property, civic resources are deployed to clean up the graffiti on public property only. When the Graffiti Eradication & Prevention Coordinator was in place, volunteers were deployed to also help. If graffiti is on private property, the service request is directed to Bylaw so that they can get the owner to clean up the property. Under the current bylaw (Bylaw to Prohibit Unsightly Premises and Visual Nuisances), owners are given 15 days to comply otherwise the City could have the graffiti cleaned up and have all costs paid by the property owner. The number of graffiti reports and costs to clean up graffiti on city property over the past few years has increased as follows:

Year	Incidents Reported	Cost
2005	542	\$40,437
2006	435	\$42,263
2007	657	\$68,050
2008	831	\$96,309

The statistics above don't include graffiti vandalism on traffic signs and all associated costs. In 2008, there were 546 graffiti incidents on traffic signs which cost the taxpayer \$15,000. Most of the signs could be cleaned but 91 traffic signs needed replacement. Obviously the problem is increasing and improvements are needed. One of the reasons the program has stalled is the Graffiti Prevention and Eradication Coordinator position has been vacant. This position is responsible for administering the program and promoting public awareness, recruitment and development of volunteers, liaison with property owners, development of partnerships, knowledgeable graffiti resource, referring non compliance to Bylaw for resolution, organizing community clean ups, developing a best practices program, developing innovative programs and approaches to graffiti eradication and prevention, maintaining a data base, statistics and budget to aid in enforcement and program development, assists in development of communication plans and conducts research. This position would also participate in community service programs for those individuals assigned through the Central Okanagan Restorative Justice Program. Prior to the departure of the Graffiti Eradication and Prevention Coordinator 140 volunteers were recruited and helped in graffiti clean up.

Under current civic policy graffiti is to be removed from City property within 24 hours from the time it is reported. If it's not reported it's not cleaned up. Once the service request reaches our crews, graffiti generally is removed within 24 hours however this isn't always possible as some calls are reported on a Friday or weekends plus significant increased volumes can be a challenge. Therefore crews are not dispatched until the next business day. Secondly the graffiti hotline, managed by our Bylaw Department, needs improvement as it is not user friendly and doesn't provide the opportunity to discuss the matter with an employee as it is a mail box only. Given other bylaw priorities and large workload, messages are not promptly listened to, delaying issuance of service requests. Any budgetary requirements to address this shortfall will be addressed as part of the 2010 Budget.

The current program provides minimal help to private property owners. Private property owners feel that they are victims of graffiti vandalism and the graffiti clean up expense which often reoccurs. If they don't clean up their graffiti they might feel victimized again but this time by the City. The City requires clean up within 15 days or the City may choose to have the graffiti cleaned up and the property owner is responsible for all costs.

In 2009 our first goal will be to hire the Graffiti Eradication and Prevention Coordinator as this position is critical on the success of this program. In addition the following improvements are recommended for 2009:

1. The volunteer program needs to be re-established to maximize our efforts in reducing graffiti and continue with the Adopt a Spot program and other innovative programs to eradicate

graffiti. Supplies will cost \$5,000 annually. This will be implemented once the Coordinator is hired.

2. That the City consider amending bylaws and policy to require all graffiti on non city owned installations, items or structures placed legally on public property (e.g. utility kiosks, Telus and Shaw cable boxes, mail boxes, street lights, garbage dumpsters, etc.) be removed within 24 hours. Often those calling in don't know who owns the utility kiosks or who to call. All graffiti complaints must be reported to the graffiti hotline and then resources can be deployed effectively to remove the graffiti. Once the Graffiti Eradication & Prevention Coordinator is in place partnerships will be developed with these private companies to expedite graffiti removal. Utility boxes are a magnet for graffiti therefore we will also consider amendments to the subdivision bylaw requiring all new installations of utility boxes be wrapped with a decorative film to discourage graffiti and beautify the City. We will also pursue wrapping existing boxes and any budget for this initiative will be considered for the 2010 budget.
3. That the City request all stores who sell implements used for graffiti vandalism to voluntarily discontinue their sale or place them in an area of the store that can be easily monitored by store personnel to prevent theft and if this is not possible video surveillance of the area. We considered changing our bylaws to prohibit the sale of any graffiti implement to a person under the age of 18 years old but this is not legal under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We realize this would have aided in reducing this problem but some vandals currently use supplies from home and make their own paint and markers.
4. Develop a "Graffiti Campaign" which will increase awareness of the problems associated with not removing graffiti, informing the community and schools how they may help, promote and educate the public through advertising, developing graffiti awareness and removal workshops; getting Crimestoppers to aggressively pursue this problem, policing services to install surveillance cameras in graffiti hotspots, getting Community Policing and Neighbourhood Watch Programs enhancing this program and informing parents what they could do to help. In addition to the above we need to improve our webpage so that citizens can easily find paint & graffiti removal companies and make it easier for citizens to report graffiti accurately and effectively. This is expected to cost \$15,000 annually.
5. In order to deal with the graffiti on public lands hire 2 students annually to aid in the clean up of graffiti on city owned property and traffic signs. The cost for this component is \$29,500 including vehicles, equipment and materials.

In order to improve this program next year we will also consider initiatives for the 2010 budget including helping private property owners, a mural program and wrapping existing utility boxes prone to graffiti.

INTERNAL CIRCULATION TO:

Carla Stephens, Director of Communications & Media Relations
Rob Mayne, Director of Corporate Services
Doug Gilchrist, Director of Real Estate & Building Services
Keith Grayston, Director of Financial Services

LEGAL/STATUTORY AUTHORITY:

Bylaw No. 8217 – A Bylaw to Prohibit Unsightly Premises and Visual Nuisances
City Council Policy No. 302 – Graffiti Prevention Program

EXISTING POLICY:

Graffiti Prevention Policy - No. 302

FINANCIAL/BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS:

\$49,500 annually added if approved by City Council at 2009 Final Budget.

Considerations that were not applicable to this report:

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION:

LEGAL/STATUTORY PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS:

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS:

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

EXTERNAL AGENCY/PUBLIC COMMENTS:

COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Submitted by:



Joe Creron
Director, Civic Operations Department
Community Services



Approved for Inclusion:



John Vos, G.M., Community Services

Cc: Dale Beaudry, Transportation Services Manager
Carla Stephens, Director of Communications & Media Relations
Rob Mayne, Director of Corporate Services
Doug Gilchrist, Director of Real Estate & Building Services
Keith Grayston, Director of Financial Services