

Memo



Date: March 16, 2010
File: 6130-05
To: City Manager
From: Darryl Astooroff, Transportation Services Manager
Subject: Graffiti

Report Prepared by: Scott Isfan, Graffiti Prevention Coordinator

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the report from the Transportation Services Manager dated March 16th, 2010.

Background:

The City's current graffiti program has been in place for over 7 years. In 2009 the responsibility for managing this program was transferred from the Kelowna RCMP to the Civic Operations Department.

Graffiti has a very significant impact on the citizens of Kelowna and is a worldwide problem. Statistics from a recent graffiti conference indicated that graffiti is a multi-million dollar problem in Canada.

Graffiti is not art when placed on public or private property without the owner's consent. It is vandalism and is a criminal offence. The City spent over \$140,000 last year to clean up graffiti plus administration costs. This is a \$99,000 increase from 2005 when the city spent \$40,437 on graffiti abatement. Although graffiti clean up has improved since the spring of 2009 it needs to be made clear that there continues to be a graffiti problem in Kelowna and the majority of graffiti in our city goes unreported.

The current graffiti program has been based on the three R's: Recognize Report and Remove and we will change the program to the 4 E's:

Engagement, Eradication, Education and Enforcement.

Engagement: By working together, businesses, citizens, the community and the city can reduce graffiti in Kelowna.

Eradication: Remove graffiti quickly. We need our residents to remove and report the instances of graffiti quickly and to send the message that we are proud of our city and will not tolerate graffiti.

Education: As a community, we need to be informed about the damaging effects graffiti has on our community. Education is a strong component of the Restorative Justice program in helping individuals understand the negative impact graffiti has on our community.

Enforcement: The RCMP need to investigate graffiti crime and act to pursue charges against offenders wherever possible. The most successful graffiti programs in other municipalities have a strong enforcement component and have a police force to aid and assist with this enforcement component.

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The City's goal is to remove graffiti on public property within 24 hours of it being reported. There are times when our response time lags (i.e. when graffiti is reported on a Friday and sits over a weekend) and we need to improve. Changes have been made and calls to the graffiti hotline mailbox are now promptly dispatched by Civic Operations Clerks to Building Services for graffiti removal. In 2009, we had 1,218 graffiti requests of which 1,070 are directly related to city property (excluding signs). About 90% of requests for graffiti removal are completed within 1 week. Until recently there has been minimal help to private business and homeowners. We have implemented a new protocol for graffiti on private property. In the past all reports were handled solely by Bylaw Enforcement Officers. Today all graffiti calls are handled by the Graffiti Prevention Coordinator (Civic Operations) and a "soft letter" to all property owners and businesses is sent out reminding them why it is important to remove graffiti and the negative effects graffiti has on our community if left unchecked. Homeowners and businesses are given 15 days to clean up the graffiti and about half voluntarily clean up the graffiti without Bylaw having to get involved. If a property owner does not remove the graffiti after 15 days then the service request is forwarded to Bylaw Services for enforcement.

Now that the Graffiti Prevention Coordinator has been in the position for almost a year we will be pursuing a number of initiatives in 2010 which will require supplementary reports to Council. Some initiatives will be addressed within existing budgets however we expect to make additional funding requests through the 2011 budget process.

We will propose a new bylaw in 2010 that would require all stores to keep their spray paint and paint markers behind locked cabinets by 2012. In the world of graffiti, true taggers are applauded by their peers if they steal graffiti supplies although some acquire supplies through online sales. This correlates directly with the risk behavior of a graffiti vandal. We had previously considered changing the bylaws to prohibit the sale of paint to any person under the age of 18 but this was deemed illegal under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Having the supply of spray paint and paint pens closely monitored should reduce theft and consequently reduce graffiti. We have met with a few local paint retailers and asked them voluntarily to lock away graffiti paints but this was not supported by merchants. We realize this will be a cost to business but graffiti is a cost to all tax payers.

We will also propose amending policy and bylaws 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, mailboxes, street lights, etc.) be removed within 72 hours of being reported. This timeline will make the corporations more accountable to keep their infrastructure clean in appearance and will compliment the corporations that are at present maintaining their inventory. For some companies currently the only way their equipment is cleaned is when it is reported to them by the community or by city staff. City staff have discussed this proposal with some corporations. Unfortunately some do not have a formal program for removing graffiti or they have a program in place but it is not adequate in keeping up to the influx of graffiti vandalism on their equipment. Another problem area is garbage dumpsters and we also recommend that the bylaw include a provision to remove all graffiti on dumpsters within 72 hours. In addition to the above we will prepare a report to City Council and recommend that all new utility and non utility cabinet installations placed on City property and road right of way be wrapped in an anti graffiti film to help in the prevention of graffiti and improve the ease of clean up.

In 2010 we will help private properties who have been affected by graffiti vandalism. We tested a free paint pilot program last fall, where homeowners affected by graffiti vandalism could receive free paint through a partnership with General Paint. The program was very successful and we will implement this program City wide. Depending on the success of this program additional annual funds might be necessary for 2011. This program will be provided on a first-come basis and once the \$5,000 earmarked for this

program is expended the program will be put on hold until additional funds are secured. The biggest concern with removing graffiti from private property is the amount of time that passes from when the graffiti is reported to when the graffiti is removed. Studies indicate that if graffiti is removed within 24-48 hours after the vandalism happens, there is only a 10% chance that the graffiti will reappear. If the graffiti is allowed to sit for 2 weeks or longer, there is a 90% chance that the vandalism will reappear.

In 2010 we will work with the Community and Media Relations Department on developing a program that increases graffiti reporting which we hope will improve productivity. If graffiti isn't reported, often it is not cleaned up.

In order to improve prevention we are exploring various technologies that may prevent vandalism and give us the ability to identify vandals for prosecution. This is a key piece in creating an effective enforcement program for dealing with graffiti vandalism. This review will be done in conjunction with our Risk Manager and the City Clerk.

In 2009 we purchased a Graffiti tracking system where each graffiti tag is recorded, tracked and analyzed before our abatement crews remove it. We have built up a large catalogued inventory of graffiti vandalism that has been broken down by each moniker and location, which again will help us be more proactive in pursuing the graffiti vandals before the incidents happen. The Graffiti tracking system will only be beneficial if we are going to focus on enforcement. With this information we will also be in a better position to work with programs such as Restorative Justice to make sure that fair and equitable penalties are put in place for the graffiti vandals that are apprehended. This may require additional funding in 2011 as the tracking system cost is directly related to the number of tags recorded.

In 2009 we tested 3M laminate with anti-graffiti coating "wraps" on traffic control cabinets. These "wraps" improve the look of the cabinets and make it easier to remove graffiti. We will work with Community and Media Relations on designs that will be used throughout the city. These will include traffic control cabinets and also city owned utility boxes as well as the solar powered garbage cans in the city. It will take several years to address the large inventory of existing city-owned cabinets and a 2011 budget submission will be made to begin wrapping existing boxes.

We have met with School District #23 and are looking at ways to be creative in getting the message out to the elementary schools that graffiti is unacceptable and also to engage the school district in graffiti reduction programs such as murals, adopt a spot programs, clean-up graffiti free days, etc.

We will submit a 2011 budget request to create a public art mural program to look at covering some of the civic buildings and properties prone to graffiti vandalism. Murals are a deterrent for graffiti. We have had a number of local artists submit portfolios in anticipation of the creation of this program.

We will be reactivating a Graffiti Action Committee over the next few months that may include a number of staff from various City departments, the RCMP, the School District, Crime Stoppers, Regional District, Utility corporations and a few others in order to do the best we can with the available resources.

Finally, we will pursue increasing the current fine for illegal graffiti. The current fine for prosecution of graffiti vandalism is \$100. The current fine is not a deterrent and Civic Operations staff will work with Bylaw Enforcement Services and the City Clerk on an increased fine for graffiti.

Although graffiti is still a concern in Kelowna, we believe implementing what's proposed in this report will reduce the problem.

Internal Circulation:

Carla Stephens, Director of Communications and Media Relations
Rob Mayne, Director of Corporate Services
Doug Gilchrist, Director of Real Estate and Building Services
Keith Grayston, Director of Financial Services
Gord Murrell, Supervisor of Roadways

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: Additional funds will be requested in the 2011 Budget

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/statutory Procedural Requirements:
Personnel Implications:
Technical Requirements:
External Agency/Public Comments:
Communications Considerations:
Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:



Darryl Astofooroff, Transportation Services Manager

Approved for inclusion:



Joe Creron Director, Civic Operations