



# Corporate Report

NO: R238

COUNCIL DATE: November 20, 2006

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: November 9, 2006

FROM: General Manager, Engineering  
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture

FILE: 0350-06

SUBJECT: Graffiti Elimination Program

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Engineering and the Parks, Recreation & Culture Departments recommend that Council:

1. receive this report as information;
2. direct staff to take all necessary actions to incorporate features as documented in this report into the design of new City buildings and infrastructure so as to discourage graffiti;
3. direct staff to pursue a cooperative approach with the Ministry of Transportation to address in a timely manner graffiti on Provincial highway infrastructure; and
4. direct staff to review other strategies open to the City regarding the elimination of graffiti including but not limited to relevant by-laws and legislation regulating the sale of spray paint and etching fluid and provide additional recommendations for Council's consideration on further actions that can be taken by the City to eliminate graffiti in the City.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to provide background information on how the City deals with graffiti on City infrastructure, other public utilities, and on private property and to obtain Council authorization to proceed with a number of new approaches in relation to working toward the elimination of graffiti in the City.

## BACKGROUND

Graffiti is an issue experienced in most urban areas and the City of Surrey's experience is fairly typical in relation to the amount of graffiti being painted on both City and private facilities. The City has exercised a significant amount of effort in controlling the proliferation of graffiti in the City as follows:

Engineering Department looks after Graffiti on signal traffic control equipment, signs, streetlights and other City engineering infrastructure.

Parks, Recreation & Culture Department looks after graffiti on all their facilities. This includes park buildings and amenities, recreation facilities, Surrey Arts Centre and various heritage facilities.

The Surrey Library works closely with the City's Corporate Facilities Division to manage graffiti on the Library buildings.

Overall, the City currently spends in the range of \$225,000 to \$275,000 per year in graffiti removal. Contractors who specialize in graffiti removal undertake much of the work.

- Graffiti on Ministry of Transportation infrastructure is addressed by the Ministry staff directly or by means of their maintenance contractor. The City notifies the Ministry when graffiti is observed on provincial highway infrastructure. Staff are concerned that this approach in some circumstances does not yield a quick resolution to the matter and recommend that staff be directed to contact appropriate officials of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways to determine if there is a more expedient approach to addressing graffiti on Highways infrastructure.
- The removal of graffiti on private property such as buildings, fences, electrical kiosks, dumpsters, etc., is coordinated through the By-law Enforcement & Licensing Section. The removal of graffiti from private property is the responsibility of the property owner. Where graffiti is observed, or a complaint is received, By-law Enforcement staff notifies the owner that they have 30 days to remove the graffiti. If the graffiti has not been removed after the 30 days has expired, then the City has the option to have the graffiti removed using the City's contractor with the costs charged back to the owner of the property.

An alternative approach open to every private property owner is to utilize the services of the Surrey Crime Prevention Society. This Society provides volunteer labour and uses either paint supplied by the property owner, or donated paint that the Society has in stock, to paint over the graffiti on private property. A copy of the information sheet provided by the Society to property owners is attached to this report.

The City has for the last several years provided an annual grant to the Society from the Council Initiatives Fund in the amount of \$25,000 to support the on-going work of the Society.

A situation where graffiti is more difficult to remove includes B.C. Hydro electrical kiosks and other infrastructure on City roadways owned by utility companies. In these circumstances, the City has more limited powers to order this graffiti removed.

### **Graffiti Reduction through Better Design**

Measures that assist in reducing or eliminating graffiti include strategic landscaping along building faces and fences, use of building or fencing materials whose surfaces are

conducive to easy cleaning or repainting, and through the use of films and coatings that can be applied to windows and other building materials to prevent acid etching and to allow easier cleaning.

Aesthetically pleasing appliqué graphics have recently become available that can be applied to utility boxes and other small structures. Other cities have found that these appliqué's discourage graffiti, as is the case with murals applied to buildings. Staff will study the use of these materials in the Surrey context.

### **By-law or Legislative Changes**

The sale of spray paint, which is used to produce graffiti, and etching fluid, which is used to deface glass surfaces, is not controlled in relation to its availability through retail stores or as to who can purchase it. In view of the growing problems with graffiti, staff will review whether there are by-law or legislative approaches, which could place some reasonable controls on the sale of these materials, and thereby reduce graffiti.

### **Beautification Committee**

A City Beautification Committee involving staff from several Departments has been structured and has been charged with the task of specifically researching new and innovative ways to combat graffiti within the City. Recommendations from the Task Force will be brought before Council for consideration in due course.

### **Fence along Fraser Highway**

A fence was recently constructed as part of the Fraser Highway widening through Fleetwood, between 88 Avenue and Venture Way. This fence, which has been a target for significant amounts of graffiti, is a private fence on private property. It has been graffiti-tagged a number of times, and also painted over a number of times by the Surrey Crime Prevention Society to eliminate graffiti. Unfortunately the paint used to eliminate the graffiti was non-matching donated paint. The RCMP is now coordinating the repainting of the fence with the property owners and volunteer groups and will ensure that the correct colour paint is used so that the completed job is aesthetically pleasing.

So as to assist in ensuring that the subject fence is not the subject of further graffiti in the future, Parks staff is investigating landscaping options to cover the fence and reduce the opportunities for tagging for implementation as soon as possible. Initial estimates to install topsoil and plant and maintain the landscaping until it is well established are in the range of \$60,000 to \$70,000. Concepts for the landscaping include hedging cedars and prickly bushes on the embankment section, and vines to cover the surface of the fence. The narrow space between the back of the sidewalk and the fence in some sections of the project presents a challenge for successful landscaping and in future where fencing needs to be provided along arterial roads, a wider landscaping strip will be designed into the project along with appropriate anti-graffiti measures involving suitable landscaping, among other things.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council:

- direct staff to take all necessary actions to incorporate features as documented in this report into the design of new City buildings and infrastructure so as to discourage graffiti;
- direct staff to pursue a cooperative approach with the Ministry of Transportation to address in a timely manner graffiti on Provincial highway infrastructure; and
- direct staff to review other strategies open to the City regarding the elimination of graffiti including but not limited to relevant by-laws and legislative regulating the sale of spray paint and etching fluid and provide additional recommendations for Council's consideration on further actions that can be taken by the City to eliminate graffiti in the City.

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Attachment

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