



Staff Report to Council

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Date: August 30, 2024
To: **Mayor and Council.**
Name and title: Eric Depenau, Director of Administrative Services
Subject: One Year Report on the Implementation of Defensive Force Options – Bylaw Services
Attachment(s): None

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION, the report dated August 30, 2024, from the Director of Administrative Services titled “One Year Report on the Implementation of Defensive Force Options – Bylaw Services”.

Purpose:

For Council information.

Background:

In July 2023 Council received an information report in relation to Bylaw Enforcement Officers being issued defensive tools. These included a defensive baton, OC spray and a set of handcuffs. Until that time the only protective equipment typically provided to Bylaw Enforcement Officers in Prince George was a protective vest. A motion requesting a follow up report after one year had passed was made. This report is in response to that motion.

Since the new tools have been issued, employees throughout the department, which include individuals working predominantly downtown, individuals working throughout all areas of the city, animal control officers and parking control officers have been asked about the impact of this change. As a result of, what management considers to be, proper training and equipment, these employees have relayed that they feel more confident and better prepared to handle their daily duties in a safe manner. Some employees have gone so far as to say that they would no longer feel comfortable doing the job without these tools and wished they had received them sooner.

In terms of public perception, it is assessed that there has been little change. Bylaw Enforcement is arguably one of the more forward facing and contentious departments as daily, the officers are asking people to comply with a set of standards imposed by local government. When compliance isn't gained through other means, such as education, fines are imposed, and this often results in anger from residents. Even in instances where investigations are just starting people can be immediately escalated. There has not been an instance since the tools were introduced that the defensive tools have been deployed. With that said, the importance of possessing these tools and providing protective vests as well as appropriate training to all employees in Bylaw Services is viewed as an important step in protecting staff and giving them the tools necessary to deal with the potential breadth of situations they may encounter at work.



This picture illustrates some of the many weapons that have been located by bylaw officers in the course of their work – Photo taken by staff in August 2024 at the Downtown Safety Hub

Administration intends to formalize a requirement that all current and future Bylaw Enforcement Officers, which include Animal Control Officers and Parking Control Officers, receive and complete theoretical and practical training as standard level of training for all officers in order to be issued defensive force options. For clarity, formalizing the standard training and equipment to be used while working is intended to further establish the expectation that all officers are required to carry and use the defensive baton, OC spray and handcuffs in a manner consistent with their training and wear a protective vest when executing their duties enforcing bylaws on behalf of the City of Prince George.

Formalizing this equipment and training following the introduction and testing phase of these tools is seen as a step in further raising the professional standards of the department. Formalizing this training and equipment is planned to occur through updates to the department's Safe Operating Procedures, Officer Training Manual (PPE) and job descriptions as examples.

Summary and conclusion:

The introduction of defensive tools for use by Bylaw Officers, Animal Control Officer and Parking Control Officers is believed to be a positive step in improving the safety of these employees at work. There has been no known negative impact or incidents. Based on the results obtained during the last year the next step is to standardize in policy the current training and equipment as standard and required for officers working for the City of Prince George.

Respectfully submitted:
Eric Depenau, Director of Administrative Services

Prepared by Charlotte Peters, Manager, Bylaw Services

Approved:
Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024/09/25