

Service Enhancement

Downtown Safe, Clean and Inclusive Package

BACKGROUND:

At the December 16, 2019 Special Meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Audit, the Committee provided direction for Administration to bring back service package cost options for Council to consider at the January 6, 2020, Budget Meeting. Provided below are three options.

SHORT DESCRIPTION:

Multi-departmental service enhancement package to augment safety, cleanliness and social inclusiveness in the larger downtown area. With service integration and cooperation, a uniformed presence and a comprehensive suite of response services in the downtown, will be available eighteen hours per day/seven days per week.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION:

The service enhancement package consists of six interrelated areas: Police, Bylaw Services, contracted security, social inclusion services, parkade safety upgrades, as well as homeless camp and hazardous materials cleanup (within Public Works). The below narratives describe the service category enhancement to include three options: Option 1 is status quo; no changes to 2019 service levels. Option 2 provides cost-effective enhancements to the six interrelated service categories. Option 3 provides comprehensive enhancements to the six interrelated service categories. Administration recommends Option 2 as it balances increasing service demands with reasonable associated costs. Each service enhancement below provides descriptions of the three options.

POLICE SERVICES

Background:

At present, the RCMP have a dedicated Downtown Safety Unit (DSU) consisting of five members. In addition, 20% of each patrol Watch is assigned exclusively to the downtown core. Options 2 and 3 propose a dedicated daily downtown patrol, comprised of two officers, for a six-hour duration, seven days per week, for nine months of the year. This two-member patrol surge would be completely paid for through overtime expenditures. These patrols could be implemented immediately. If additional police officer FTEs were funded for additional presence in the downtown core, it would take between six to nine months for the positions to be filled. Those additional officers would also be subject to other pressures such as mandatory training, vacation leave, court time, etc. that would detract from their effectiveness in providing additional police presence.

At present, there is a gap between operational commitments (uniformed members, “boots on the ground”) and administrative support capacity (civilian personnel, providing the supports required to enable the uniformed members to conduct their duties). As a result, Administration has recommended a service enhancement of two new civilian personnel for 2020, and a further four for 2021 (*separate from this service enhancement package*). Previous increases of uniformed members have not come with an associated increase in administrative support. When combined with increasing disclosure and related administrative requirements, administrative support remains prioritized over additional uniformed members.

Impacts:

The dedication of 20% of patrol officers to the downtown core enhances police presence in the area but negatively impacts the response times and quality of service provided in other areas of the city. The introduction of these targeted downtown patrols will provide an enhanced police presence in the downtown core that will be focused on the highest priority times of day. As these officers will be complementary to the patrol Watch on shift, they will be assigned to foot and bicycle patrols as they will not be required to be available to conduct prisoner transport or respond to other areas of the city for high priority public safety incidents.

Pointedly, at present, uniformed members are performing administrative duties that could be done in a more cost efficient manner using civilians. In order to increase street presence, the gap between administration and operations requires closing. The proposed 2020-21 police support services enhancements should rectify this (*separate service category enhancement*).

Police Services Options:

Option 1 – Status Quo: Nil cost. No dedicated daily downtown patrol. Continuation of the DSU; 2020 projected service levels consistent with 2019.

Option 2 and/or 3 – Daily Downtown Patrol: Cost of \$273,249 for a nine-month duration. Details as per above description. If approved, service to be assessed in November 2020. As the cost of this service is borne by overtime expenditures, it can be scaled back or forward in future years. Administration recommends this option.

BYLAW SERVICES

Background:

In 2019, Bylaw Services added two 'Bylaw Compliance Assistants,' tasked to prioritize downtown social issues and clean-up. These services are provided Monday – Friday, from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm. To increase service levels for extended hours seven days per week requires additional officers. The number of additional officers approved determines the daily coverage duration. A notable strength of increasing Bylaw Services is that it can be accomplished relatively quickly, in terms of hiring and training, and the skillset complements both police and social outreach well. For example, new officer positions could be operational by March.

Impacts:

Assessed as a stand-alone service enhancement, increasing Bylaw Officer positions dedicated to the downtown and bowl area may provide consistent coverage for extended hours and days, dependent upon which option is selected. When combined with the additional services, layered synergies in terms of more effective response may be realized. The impact of not providing this service enhancement would be to maintain the status quo of limited coverage during business hours.

Bylaw Services Options:

Option 1 – Status Quo: Cost of \$14,704 to elevate the two 'Bylaw Compliance Assistants' to 'Bylaw Enforcement Officers.' 2020 projected service levels mostly consistent with 2019. Potential for marginal improvements. Coverage between Monday to Friday, 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, limited capacity for foot patrols, and delayed response times for calls for service outside of the downtown.

Option 2 (Notable Improvement): Cost of \$189,051 annually. In addition to the two new existing Bylaw Enforcement Officers from 2019, two more officers to be hired, for a total of four dedicated to the downtown area. This will provide seven days per week coverage from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm. Limited foot patrols during the afternoon hours, some reduction in buildup of weekend debris and issues, and more responsive service is expected.

Option 3 (Comprehensive Improvement): Cost of \$580,944 annually. In addition to the two new existing Bylaw Enforcement Officers from 2019, six more officers to be hired, for a total of eight dedicated to the downtown area. This will provide seven days per week coverage from 6:00 am to midnight. Foot patrols conducted six or more hours per day, reduced buildup of debris, and very responsive service is expected.

Administration recommends Option 2 as it provides service improvements at a reasonable cost increase.

CONTRACTED SECURITY SERVICES:

Background:

In 2019, contracted security costs are forecasted to be just below \$350,000. These costs have been absorbed across multiple facility budgets resulting in overages. Security costs over the previous few years have significantly increased, and service requests display no evidence of abatement. These costs include full-time security guard presence at the Four Seasons Leisure Pool, 1st Ave Building (shared by TourismPG and CN Rail), the Prince George Conference and Civic Centre (during events), and periodic mobile security for the Rolling Mix Concrete Arena and Canada Games Plaza area. The mobile security patrol has consistently provided insufficient security coverage to satisfy user group requests and places staff and the public at potential risk. It has been determined that the mobile security should be increased to a full-time contracted position at RMCA, to include a roving /mobile patrol of the larger downtown core. Total service enhancement for security for 2020 is \$400,000. An RFP process would be utilized in accordance with City policy.

Impacts:

Substantial reduction of customer concerns was evident following the implementation of fixed security presence in the FSLP, 1st Ave Building, and the PGCCC. It is reasonably asserted that a similar trend will be evident with increased security at the RMCA, and mobile patrols of the parkades. Removing this service will place significant strain on the City from a Health and Safety perspective of both staff and patrons, as well as potentially reduce customer visits.

Security Options:

Option 1, 2, and 3: Cost of \$400,000. As this service has incrementally increased over the previous few years, it represents a conditional requirement to safely operate civic facilities. Reducing or eliminating this service could likely lead to significant Health and Safety concerns, for both staff and the public. For these reasons, the provision of security at civic facilities is viewed as an operational baseline from a safety perspective. An RFP process will be utilized to ensure the City gains the most cost-effective and efficient delivery of security services. The additional \$50,000 for 2020 above the \$350,000 for 2019 results from the current security gap at RMCA. Providing a fixed, full-time contracted security position to this facility should close the security gap.

Administration recommends an enhancement of \$400,000 as a new service category to provide public and staff safety.

SOCIAL INCLUSION SERVICES:

Background:

In late 2019, two homeless service hubs opened in the downtown. The hubs are operating as pilot projects, with the goal of better connecting individuals living on the street to services and supports. The first, located at 181 Quebec Street, provides storage, washroom, and outreach services six days per week. Current funding, provided by the City of Prince George and BC Housing, enables its operation for a one-year pilot period from September 2019 – August 2020. The Prince George Native Friendship Centre is the service provider. The Association Advocating for Women and Community (AWAC) operates the second pilot, funded by the City of Prince George and indirectly by BC Housing's Extreme Weather Response (EWR) program. It opened at 144 George Street in November and provides access to outreach services, as well as storage, laundry, shower, washroom, and sleeping facilities from 10 am – 4 pm, seven days per week for a six-month period. Outreach workers at both sites are responsive to calls for service and can transport individuals and belongings on an as required basis. Outside of the funded pilot service hub, AWAC also operates a street outreach team that works from 7 pm – 1 am nightly.

The proposed enhancement totaling \$236,000 will enable the year round operation of both homeless service hubs, and will accommodate the relocation of the Quebec Street pilot to a larger and more appropriate site. The City will continue to work with BC Housing to secure its funding participation in the year-round operation of the homeless service hubs.

Impacts:

There is an opportunity to integrate outreach services attached to the homeless service hubs with policing, bylaw, and security services to provide the full continuum of response services necessary for a safe, clean, and inclusive downtown. This service integration, which will also assist with displacement, will be compromised should the proposed enhancement not proceed. In addition, the homeless service hubs have the capacity to collect important information about who is homeless in the downtown and the barriers they experience when accessing services, like housing. This data then serves to inform interventions. The proposed enhancement will also enable the City and its partners to develop the relationships and service integration that will be required to approach complex social issues in a way that mitigates safety and cleanliness concerns.

Social Inclusion Options:

Option 1 – Status Quo: Current operations, enabled with one time funding, will operate until July 2020. If the status quo is maintained, the two homeless service hubs will close as of August 1, 2020. Connection of vulnerable individuals to services, data collection to inform interventions, and the capacity to provide a full continuum of integrated response services in the downtown and area will be compromised when the operations close.

Option 2 (Continued Improvement): Cost of \$236,000 for the annual City contribution to maintain operations at two sites. BC Housing funding will be required to ensure enhanced outreach services are available to support the continued operation of the hub sites. During scheduled hours of operation, outreach staff at each of the hub sites are available to respond to calls for service in the downtown area.

Option 3 (Guaranteed Complement of Outreach Staff): Cost of \$336,000. This option reflects the City's commitment to fund full operating costs, including outreach service staff, associated with the two hub service sites.

Administration recommends Option 2 as it ensures continued access, at a reasonable cost, to important social services and supports for those living on the street. It also allows for the integration of safety, security, and social inclusion human resources, to provide a full continuum of response services.

PUBLIC WORKS – CLEANUP SERVICES:

Background:

Daily operations are meant to provide consistent and defined levels of service for all residents and neighbourhoods. In 2019, the volume of service calls for cleanup of homeless camps, biohazards, garbage and other related items prevented the City's ability to maintain a consistent level of service in other neighbourhoods. At present, Public Works staff (Parks and Solid Waste Services and Utilities Divisions) are reacting to service requests and triaging service levels in order to respond to major camp cleanups, removal of biohazards, and needle cleanup that pose health and safety concerns for all residents. To date, in 2019, there have been 117 major homeless camp cleanups; this is in addition to the illegal dumping cleanups throughout the city. Although a majority of these sites are located within the vicinity of downtown and the bowl area, there have been numerous camps located elsewhere throughout the city. A "major" cleanup is separate from the nearly 2,000 service calls received for minor or routine cleanups. A major cleanup can include up to nineteen staff, evident during one example at Carrie Jane Gray Park: nineteen staff (Parks and Bylaw), two bobcats, two dump trucks and one bucket truck and chipper were used. Prior to a major scheduled cleanup, policing and bylaw resources are used to meet with the inhabitants and provide them with time to gather their belongings and move on. A major cleanup may take up to an entire day to conduct.

Impacts:

The daily reactive response to service requests outside normal service levels is preventing a consistent level of service delivery in other areas of the city by both Utilities and Parks and Solid Waste Service Divisions.

Cleanup Options (Public Works):

Option 1 – status quo (reduction of City-wide service levels): tax increase is nil. Decision point provides two selections for this option: the first is to maintain the status quo; reallocating assigned resources to reactive needle, biohazard and camp cleanup at the cost of daily services to other areas of the city, or accepting a higher level of debris and waste within the larger downtown area. The latter would also produce health and safety concerns from biohazardous waste, discarded needles, and so forth.

Option 2 (Consistent service for all): Cost of \$274,495 (plus an additional cost of \$216,000 for capital - equipment). This option includes one new FTE EQ2 Operator, year round, and two Labourers for approximately nine months (from spring – snow). Equipment to be purchased includes: a pick-up truck, single axle dump truck, and skid steer with trailer, in addition to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and pressure washers. These staff and equipment would be used for homeless camp cleanup and reactive/service requests for biohazard cleanup. To provide for efficiencies, these staff and equipment could also be used for restoration work for Utilities' digs and Municipal

Utilities (3rd party service connections) when there is downtime from camps and biohazard cleanups. Based upon 2018 and 2019 service requests, it is anticipated that these increased resources will provide better and more timely service, but may still not be fully adequate to providing daily coverage.

Option 3 (Premium clean): Cost of \$996,886 (combined labour and capital). This option includes all of Option 2 plus an additional three staff dedicated to downtown and area daily cleanup services, such as weed abatement, sidewalk cleaning, which includes the purchase of a Madvac LS175 equipment. This option provides concurrent daily downtown cleanup and daily homeless camp removal.

Administration recommends Option 2 as it provides dedicated, adequate resources to cleanup camps and debris/hazardous materials in the downtown area in a reasonable time without requiring the reallocation of other resources from other areas of the city on a regular basis.

PARKADE SAFETY UPGRADES

Background:

Daily customer concerns continue to be received from both the 2nd Avenue and 5th Avenue Parkades, caused by individuals sleeping on the entrance and exit ramps, thereby preventing paying customers' access to parking, in addition to significant debris, garbage, human waste and graffiti. The City has contracted cleaning services to provide a daily cleanup of the Parkades. Additionally, Facilities Maintenance have installed brighter lighting in the 2nd Avenue Parkade, covered graffiti with new "graffiti-resistant" paint, and are in the process of installing a sound system. CCTV systems have been considered; however, at this time are deemed a risk from a liability perspective. The next proposed phase is to close the entrance and exit ramps with additional gates to enclose and secure the entrance and exit ramps for paying customers. 2nd Avenue Parkade is the pilot site, and noted safety improvements would be extended to the 5th Avenue Parkade in the near future. These costs are not borne as part of the operating budget or as a service category enhancement. Parkade costs are funded through the Off-Street Parking Levy.

Impacts:

The daily maintenance of the parkades is creating a substantial strain on Facilities Maintenance and Bylaw Services. These improvement measures – mostly CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) should enable staff to return to daily operations, such as preventive maintenance of the City's numerous other facilities and provide a safer and more welcome environment for paying patrons.

Parkade Options:

Option 1 – Status Quo: Nil cost as no further improvements to be installed. Customer concerns likely to continue to increase, in addition to daily cleanup and maintenance costs (painting over graffiti, cleaning up debris, human waste, and so forth).

Option 2 and/or 3 (Increased customer safety): Cost of \$200,000 for 2020 to install new security gates at the entrance and exit. This includes walls to enclose these two main access points. Additional incremental costs include better lighting, paint and so forth. These costs are quoted by the current contractor and do not include engineering, drawings, et cetera. Work is anticipated to commence in the early spring for summer completion. If successful, 5th Ave Parkade to receive similar upgrades for late 2020/21.

Administration recommends Option 2/3 as it provides for increased public safety.

LAYERED INTEGRATION OF SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS

The intent of this service enhancement package, outlined and recommended as 'Option 2,' includes deliberate and dedicated planning to align the current service silos through an integrated approach toward a *layering* and *synchronization* of services. Simplified, by working through a centralized 'Table' and collaborating on shared data and information, and developing a 'Common Operating Picture,' the intent throughout 2020 is to deliver an aligned approach to better managing the downtown and area social issues. Work is still to be developed on this initiative, namely through the recommendations of the new Select Committee. Details of this yet-to-be completed approach could be provided to Council in the summer and fall of 2020. The initial step requires allocating new resources. The extensive planning work undertaken to date and expected throughout 2020 by Administration has not been cost-captured in this enhancement request. It is anticipated that workflow will continue to be impacted but is manageable.

FINANCIAL COST OF THE ENHANCEMENT:

Below is a high level overview of the three service enhancement options. Administration recommends Option 2, which is detailed in the next chart below:

Service	Option 1 Cost – Status Quo	Option 2 Cost – Recommended Package	Option 3 Cost – Enhanced Package
Police Services	Nil – no service increase	\$273,249 (2 member daily patrol)	\$273,249 (same as Option 2)
Bylaw Services	\$14,704 (elevate 2 current officers)	\$189,051 (add 2 new officers)	\$580,944 (add 6 new officers and extra fleet expenses)
Security (contracted)	\$400,000 (fixed cost, RFP)	\$400,000 (same as Option 1)	\$400,000 (same as Option 1)
Social Inclusion	Nil – no service past August 1, 2020	\$236,000 (City contribution to total costs)	\$336,000 (City funds full cost of service hubs)
Public Works (cleanup services)	Nil – no service increase	\$274,495 (add 3 staff and operating costs of new fleet) \$216,000 (capital fleet costs)	\$481,886 (labour and operating costs of new fleet) \$515,000 (capital fleet costs)
Parkade Safety (2 nd Ave)	Nil – no service increase (but incremental ongoing cleanup costs)	\$200,000 (2nd Ave Parkade – entrance and exit)	\$200,000 (same as Option 2)
Misc hardware costs	Nil – no facility security enhancements	\$50,000 (locks, access points, fobs, etc)	\$50,000 (same as Option 2)
Total	\$414,704	\$1,838,795	\$2,837,079
Less off-street parking and capital costs	-	(416,000)	(715,000)
Total tax increase costs:	\$414,704	\$1,422,795	\$2,122,079
% of tax levy increase	0.38%	1.29%	1.93%

Option #2 is the recommended option: although not a silver bullet, it offers incremental improvements to better manage the downtown and area social issues at a reasonable cost:

OPTION 2:

Division	Description	Total	Tax % increase
Police	7 two-member patrols at 6hrs each per week (9 months)	\$ 273,249	0.25%
Facilities	Establish existing security costs in budget of \$350k and enhance by \$50k	400,000	0.36%
	Security Gate Updates for Parkades	200,000	0.18%
	Miscellaneous hardware costs	50,000	0.05%
Bylaw	Upgrade two Compliance Assistants to Bylaw Enforcement Officers and add two more Bylaw Enforcement Officers	189,051	0.17%
Social Inclusion	Downtown Homeless Service Hubs - contribution to staffing	236,000	0.21%
Public Works	Marginalized Camp and Illegal Dump Cleanup (non-labour is fleet); downtown HAZMAT removal	274,495 (operating) 216,000 (equipment)	0.45%
TOTAL		\$1,838,795	1.67%
	Security Gate Updates paid for by Off-Street Levy	(200,000)	(0.18%)
	Marginalized Camp and Illegal Dump Cleanup paid for by MFA Lease	(216,000)	(0.20%)
	Service Enhancements - Downtown Safety and Cleanliness	\$ 1,422,795	1.29%

RECOMMENDATION:

Administration recommends Option 2 at a service enhancement cost of \$1,422,795 representing a tax increase of 1.29%.