

DATE: June 2, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Adam Davey, Director of Community Services and Public Safety

SUBJECT: Safe Streets Bylaw and Parks and Open Space Bylaw Amendment

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Draft “City of Prince George Parks and Open Space Bylaw No. 7370, 2002, Amendment Bylaw No. 9211, 2021”
2. City of Prince George Downtown Social Well-being Initiatives

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

1. GIVES FIRST THREE READINGS to “City of Prince George Safe Streets Bylaw No. 9209, 2021”;
2. GIVES FIRST THREE READINGS to “City of Prince George Bylaw Notice Enforcement Bylaw No. 8813, 2016, Amendment Bylaw No. 9210, 2021”; and
3. ENDORSES, in principle, the draft “City of Prince George Parks and Open Space Bylaw No. 7370, 2002, Amendment Bylaw No. 9211, 2021” to be completed and returned for Council’s consideration of first three readings at the June 28, 2021 regular council meeting.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with enhanced Bylaw options in relation to the ongoing social challenges in the larger downtown area and throughout the City of Prince George. Specifically, two recommendations are provided for consideration. The first is a Safe Streets Bylaw, and the second is amendments to the Parks and Open Spaces Bylaw. Combined, the intent is to clarify and define what activities are not permissible, and where, in order to better address conflict of use of space issues. The additional proposed amendment, to the Bylaw Notice Enforcement Bylaw, includes the prescribed dollar-cost penalties for violations of the proposed Safe Streets Bylaw. These fees are based upon existing similar offences. The City is also working with partner agencies such as Northern Health and other levels of government to improve conditions in the downtown. Attached to this report is a summary of key initiatives, titled City of Prince George Downtown Social Well-being Initiatives.

Charlotte Peters, Manager of Bylaw Services and Supt. Shaun Wright, Officer in Charge, Prince George RCMP, will be available to answer questions from Council.

BACKGROUND:

In recent years, the Bylaw Services call for service (CFS) volume related to social issues has drastically increased. The chart below depicts two types of common related CFS that impacts the larger downtown and bowl area in particular.¹ A Safe Streets Bylaw may better help address many of these types of CFS that largely revolve around conflict of use of space issues by providing clear definitions of prohibited activities. The two common CFS categories are ‘needles’ and ‘other – related: tents/open-drug use/human waste/etc.’

Calls For Service (CFS) 2017 - 2020

Year	CFS - Needles	CFS – Other: ‘tents/open drug-use/human waste/etc.’
2017	6	149
2018	158	911
2019	294	802
2020	497	1796
As of June 4, 2021*	219*	931*

The City of Prince George currently uses the following Bylaws to deal with the problems in the larger downtown bowl area and city:

1. Parks and Open Space Bylaw No. 7370, 2002 which gives the authority to remove people from open spaces if they are in contravention of the bylaw. This includes: camping, open fires and littering, engaging in a nuisance activity (which is not defined) and alcohol use;
2. City of Prince George Highways Bylaw No. 8065, 2008 which gives the authority to move people and their possessions who are blocking the Highway (which includes the sidewalk) so as to impede traffic (which includes pedestrians).

The City of Prince George does not have any specific bylaws that deal with aggressive panhandling, loitering, littering, laying on or obstructing sidewalks, graffiti, overt drug use, disposal of needles and drug paraphernalia, creation of structures and temporary shelters and open burning.

The following recommendations are therefore proposed for Council’s consideration:

1. **Creation of a *Safe Streets Bylaw* which deals with such issues as aggressive panhandling, loitering, littering, laying on or obstructing sidewalks, graffiti, overt drug use, disposal of needles and drug paraphernalia, creation of structures and temporary shelters and open burning.**

This initiative is designed to remove any questions of interpretation by using plain language and set out clear expectations of behavior in the downtown and throughout Prince George. Consideration of the implementation of the Safe Streets Bylaw ought to be done in conjunction with the establishment of a preferred location(s) for the homeless population to overnight camp when shelter space is unavailable, and as prescribed under the conditions set within the Amendment to the Parks and Open

¹ Though ‘Needle’ and ‘Other’ CFS impact many areas of the city, it appears to be concentrated in the larger downtown (including Gateway) and bowl area.

Spaces Bylaw. Locations that are strictly not allowed for camping will be outlined in the proposed amendment to the Parks and Open Space Bylaw within Schedule A and will be presented at the June 28th regular meeting for Council's review and consideration. Administration will also be presenting permissible locations for overnight camping for Council's consideration, under strict and specific rules as outlined in the Bylaw, and only when shelter space is unavailable. Administration has confirmed with BC Housing that there appears to be adequate shelter availability in Prince George so that homeless persons have an indoor space to sleep at night, should they wish.

2. Amend the *Parks and Open Space Bylaw* which says :
 - a. No person shall set up a tent or other temporary abode in an Open Space Area, except in accordance with rules established under Section 16.1.; then
 - b. Establish rules as per 16.1(d) which states "establish rules for camping and other activities, including the designation of areas within which camping is allowed and limits on the duration of the activity".

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The ongoing conflict of use of space and related social issues in the larger downtown area has prompted the development of enhanced bylaw options. It is assessed that these two proposed bylaw recommendations, the implementation of a Safe Streets Bylaw, in addition to amendments to the Parks and Open Space Bylaw, may provide the City better tools to assist in providing a safe, clean and inclusive community. To be clear, these are not solutions, however provide additional tools and clarification that may better address the ongoing matter.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Adam Davey, Director, Community Services and Public Safety

PREPARED BY: [Charlotte Peters, Manager of Bylaw Services]

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: [2021-06-14]