

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – FEBRUARY 20, 2006

“SIGN OFF” INITIATIVE

Recommendation

The Environmental Task Force Committee recommends that:

1. The City of Vaughan establish a Sign Off program to commence in June 2006.
2. Utilizing current resources for the initial year, but providing budgetary support in succeeding years, this initiative is directed at establishing and maintaining a zero tolerance approach to illegal signs in the City of Vaughan.
3. The focus of this initiative is directed at illegal signs attached or glued to or in the immediate vicinity of traffic and directional signs.

Economic Impact

Expenses involved would primarily be toward the costs for hiring a number of part time summer students to conduct a 3 month blitz in the summer of 2006. Funds to support this project would be drawn from current budgets. Some further costs may be incurred following the end of the summer project to ensure that our progress is maintained. Other costs will involve communicating the program to the community and violators.

Purpose

There is a growing epidemic of sign pollution throughout the city. These signs, which are hanging or glued onto virtually every traffic sign and at every intersection, are a blight to our streetscapes. At present we have very limited ability to enforce the existing laws relating to the placement of these signs. Even though removal of illegal signs has been designated an enforcement issue, it is clear that with this limited ability to enforce the laws pertaining to these signs, the issue has become much more of a streetscape and quality of our communities matter.

The only viable approach to addressing this problem is to establish and maintain a zero tolerance to this form of visual pollution. The experience of Rudolph Giuliani, former Mayor of New York City, with a zero tolerance approach to graffiti was extraordinarily successful in ridding that city of that form of visual pollution.

Background - Analysis and Options

1. Hire students from June to the end of August to blitz the city; removing as many of these signs as possible.
2. All signs removed should be identified as to who placed them wherever possible. Where an address for an offender is available, charges for removal should be billed to the offender. At the very least, we should alert the offender by telephone or email to the fact that we have removed their signs and the costs involved. It is critical to the success of this initiative that offenders understand that they are wasting their money by placing illegal signs in the City of Vaughan. Data on quantity of signs, types of signs, names of perpetrators, recurrences should be gathered during the course of the blitz.
3. A plan for ongoing maintenance, after the blitz, should be developed and submitted to Council by September, 2006. At the same time, a report on the summer blitz should be presented to Council. Included in the report should be recommendation for a 2007 program.

4. Through various methods, residents and illegal sign posters should be informed of the initiative and the actions being taken by the City.
5. A role for residents should be encouraged as follows:

When an illegal sign is spotted, take note of the telephone number. Call the number and leave a message where the sign was spotted and state that it is illegal under the City of Vaughan Bylaw and must be removed. State that no further signs should be posted in the city by the offender. Ask that the sign be removed immediately or a complaint will be made at the City.

The important messages for this aspect of the program is to alert interested citizens to their responsibility to help maintain pleasant, unpolluted streetscapes, to alert illegal sign posters that their signs are having a negative impact, to was illegal sign posters that they are breaking the law and to clog telephone lines with negative calls.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council relating to the enhancement of the City.

Conclusion

In order to address the growing visual and actual pollution on our streets by illegal signs, action must be taken. A blitz, ongoing maintenance, resident action and an overall zero tolerance program will have a significant impact on this problem.

Attachments

None

Report prepared by:

Councillor Alan Shefman

Respectfully submitted,

Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio Chair,

Environmental Task Force Committee