



Dog Walker Engagement Summary

Stakeholder Report Back: What we Heard

September 20, 2021

Project overview

Pets are important to Calgarians, and the bylaw helps create a safe environment for Calgary. The Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw was reviewed as part of a Calgary Community Standards workplan item that came out of Service Plans and Budgets 2019 – 2022.

The updated Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw was approved at Council June 1, 2021 and comes into effect January 1, 2022. It includes a limit of 6 dogs off leash in off leash parks for any individual.

While the new Bylaw was passed by Council, Council passed a Motion Arising directing Administration to engage specifically with the dog walker industry and return to Council by the end of 2021 with any further recommended amendments to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

Engagement overview

Engagement History

Engagement on the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw was conducted in two phases initially, with a third phase added following approval of the updated bylaw at Council in June 2021.

Phase 1 and 2 engagement focused on reaching different stakeholders, including pet owners, people who do not own pets, City staff and pet industry representatives (e.g. veterinary clinics, businesses, pet daycares, pet sitters, dog walkers, animal rescue organizations, academics, breeders, kennels, other nearby municipalities, etc.).

Phase 1

The goal for phase 1 of the engagement was to understand what Calgarians thought were working with the current regulations, and what was not working and to seek input on what else should be included in the Bylaw. Input that was heard regarding dog-walking in phase 1 was:

- Be in control of all dogs in care at all times
- Have proper resources, including adequate and safe transportation, water and poop bags
- Dog-walking businesses should be insured and have liability coverage for all their employees
- Dog-walkers should be trained in animal first aid

Phase 2

The goal for phase 2 was to gather feedback on potential Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw amendments.



Input that was heard regarding dog-walking in phase 2 was:

Limit the number of dogs that can be walked at one time

- Do recall testing in off leash parks
- Work with Business Licensing regarding rules for dog-walkers
- Dog walkers should be visible and identifiable (e.g. ID, lanyard, vest, etc.)
- Dogs should be labelled and have visual identification so if they end up 'at large' they can be returned to the dog walker/company
- All dogs being walked by a dog walker need to be licensed
- Dog-walkers should be licensed

Phase 3

The updated bylaw includes a limit of 6 dogs off leash in off leash parks for any individual. There is no limit to the number of dogs one person can walk on leash.

We recognize that there is a fine balance between setting regulations and respecting business operations for the dog-walking industry. Therefore, dog walkers were invited to share feedback and ideas on a private webpage to help us understand how this limit could impact their business operations.

The goal is to find a balance between ensuring safety for all Calgarians and the business needs of professional dog walkers.

Online engagement was open Tuesday, August 24 to Monday, September 6, 2021.

How we communicated

Communications is vital to engagement success. This project was communicated through targeted ads on Facebook and LinkedIn as well as emails to members of the dog-walking community to share with their networks. In total, online engagement saw 682 unique visitors to the webpage.

What we asked

Engagement with the dog-walking industry in phase 3 engagement explored 3 main categories:

1. Getting to know the dog-walking businesses, including type of business, employment, insurance; how the business is promoted; and, training and/or education valuable for a dog walker.
2. Understanding how the dog-walking industry is impacted by the bylaw update in relation to the limit of six dogs off leash at a time in an off leash park.
3. Dog walkers' recommendations for finding a balance between business needs and safety for Calgarians.

Contact information collected from participants for this engagement was used to distinguish professional dog-walking businesses and understand how the businesses promote themselves. We heard that some



businesses used multiple means, including websites, email, phone contact, Facebook and Instagram. This information was reviewed separately and was in no way tied to any responses.

What we heard

The following is a high-level summary of what we heard through engagement.

1. The primary type of business is **sole proprietorship**.
 2. The primary type of employment is **full-time**.
 3. While some dog walkers that participated in engagement indicated multiple types of insurance, the top two held by most were **commercial general liability insurance** and **commercial auto coverage insurance**.
 4. Education, training, and certifications cited most by participants were pet first aid, personal experience, training in dog behaviour, and formal training in the animal-related field.
 5. Most frequent impacts to business operations heard in engagement ranged from loss of income, reduced client-base or extra work, to increased prices to account for lost revenue. Some also noted they expect minimal impacts to their business operations.
 6. The top two supported recommendations were **must carry an adequate number of leashes or means to restrain all dogs if required in an off leash park** and **must carry an adequate number of bags to remove defecation**.
- For a detailed summary of the input that was provided and a verbatim listing of all input that was provided, please see the full [What we Heard Report](#).

Next steps

Input was reviewed, themed and included in this What we Heard Report which will be posted to both the webpage for dog walkers as well as <https://engage.calgary.ca/petbylaw>. Input will be used to determine if any further amendments to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw are required. Potential recommended amendments will be presented to Council in December 2021.