

## Addressing Street Harassment in Calgary

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Community Development Committee recommend that Council:

1. Give three readings to the proposed amendments to the Public Behaviour Bylaw 54M2006 with a proposed effective date of 2022 June 1;
2. Direct Administration to conduct a public awareness campaign in collaboration with community partners and businesses; and
3. Direct Administration to pursue membership with the United Nations Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Council directed Administration to assess The City of Calgary's ability and options to address street harassment, including undertaking engagement, reviewing related public safety bylaws, and determining jurisdiction to enact a bylaw. Council has the authority through Section 7 of the *Municipal Government Act* to enact bylaws with respect to safety, health and welfare of people and the protection of people and property. The proposed amendments to the Public Behaviour Bylaw (Attachment 1) to deal with street harassment are within that authority. A public awareness campaign and membership with the United Nations Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Program Global Initiative would bolster The City's ability to address street harassment.
- **What does this mean to Calgarians?** The proposed recommendations use collaboration, education and enforcement to address behaviour that infringes on Calgarians' ability to enjoy public spaces and feel safe in communities.
- **Why does it matter?** The proposed recommendations deter negative behaviour, help victims, and make it clear that street harassment will not be tolerated in Calgary. They foster the Social Wellbeing Policy principles of equity and prevention.
- To inform the recommendations, Administration engaged with Calgarians and community partners, conducted public opinion research, scanned Canadian cities, researched legislation in international jurisdictions and peer-reviewed literature, and analyzed The City's existing public safety bylaws through an equity lens.
- Through engagement, Administration heard that Calgarians have been victims of street harassment. Public opinion research (Attachment 2) suggests that most of those surveyed felt that all Calgarians have a responsibility to reduce street harassment and that The City needs to play a role in its prevention.
- Currently, there is no provincial legislation or City of Calgary bylaw that addresses street harassment in an effective and comprehensive manner.
- On 2020 December 15, Council approved Notice of Motion PFC2020-1370 (Attachment 3), directing Administration to address street harassment.
- Strategic Alignment to Council's Citizen Priorities: A city of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods.

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### DISCUSSION

Street harassment is a systemic, cultural, and intergenerational issue that is prevalent in society as an expression of power. It denies victims safe access to public spaces and forces them to alter behaviour out of fear, anxiety, and other psychological and physical harms. Victims of street harassment may learn to associate their identity with powerlessness.

#### Definition

Administration defines 'Harass' as to "*communicate with a person in a manner that could reasonably cause offence or humiliation, including conduct, comment, or actions that refers to the person's race, religious beliefs, colour, disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and includes a sexual solicitation or advance*".

#### Information Sources

The recommendations of this report, intended to provide ways for The City to address street harassment, are informed by:

1. *International and Municipal Scans*: Cities were evaluated, both local and international, to understand how street harassment is being addressed in their communities (Attachment 4).
2. *Public Opinion Research*: Calgarians were surveyed to understand their perception of, and experience with, street harassment.
3. *Equity Analysis Bylaw Review*: City bylaws related to public safety were analyzed using an equity lens that revealed gaps with respect to street harassment (Attachment 5).
4. *Engagement*: Calgarians, internal staff and committee members were engaged through a survey to share views on what defines street harassment, existing gaps, and potential actions in addressing this issue (Attachment 6).
5. *Community Partner Engagement*: Community partners shared how they view street harassment, its causes, and ways they support victims.
6. *Peer-reviewed research*: Research was examined for concepts and direction to further understand the sociological pieces at play with this problem.

#### Findings

Public opinion research revealed that nearly 45 per cent of Calgarians surveyed feel that street harassment has a moderate to major impact on their quality of life. London, Ontario and Edmonton, Alberta address harassment, hate and racism through municipal bylaws. Both of these cities as well as Vancouver, Halifax and Montreal are members of United Nations Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative, which works with women's organizations and governments to develop, implement and evaluate approaches to prevent and respond to harassment against women and girls in public spaces. While this initiative is gender specific, it may be extended to represent the entire population of Calgary.

Calgary, like many other municipalities, uses several municipal bylaws to address some aspects of street harassment. However, existing bylaws fail to hold the offender accountable or address the underlying causes of street harassment. Through engagement, Calgarians expressed that bylaws, public awareness, and collaboration with community partners are potential ways to address street harassment. The public opinion research noted that Calgarians aged 18-34 are more likely to mention education and awareness campaign to reduce street harassment, rather

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than increased police presence. A conversation with community partners emphasized the importance of using unconventional ways of addressing this issue such as working with youth, restorative justice, and bystander awareness.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

Administration engaged Calgarians and the Gender Equity Diversity and Inclusion subcommittee of the Social Wellbeing Advisory Committee to understand impacts of street harassment on quality of life. The engagement focused on defining street harassment, understanding existing gaps and identifying potential actions to address this issue.

The engagement with the subcommittee provided strategic direction for this project. Street harassment has a compounding impact over time and interviewing victims about their personal experiences can trigger unintended reactions. Therefore, an organization-level approach was used to engage with Calgarians as it focused on the government's role in dealing with street harassment.

To gather data, a survey was sent to the following groups:

1. Community Partners that support victims of street harassment: These organizations filled out the survey and forwarded it to clients with lived experience.
2. Community Peace Officers and Calgary Police Officers: These internal stakeholders understand ongoing challenges of enforcement and have firsthand knowledge in working with the existing bylaws and laws.
3. The Anti-racism Program and the Indigenous Relations Office: The Anti-Racism Action Committee advises on the development and implementation of a community-based anti-racism strategy and engages with stakeholders on systemic racism. The Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee provides recommendations on policies that are meant to support Indigenous people. Both committees filled in the survey and forwarded it to their members.

A What We Heard Report, outlining the findings from both the internal and external engagement was shared with all contributors (Attachment 6).

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Social**

Addressing street harassment holistically will provide an environment that supports the wellbeing, comfort, and safety of Calgarians. The proposed recommendations allow The City to advance the Social Wellbeing Principle of prevention as they aim to reduce incidents of street harassment. The proposed amendment to the Public Behaviour Bylaw advances the Social Wellbeing Principle of equity as it supports the diverse population of Calgary. Addressing street harassment is a social need that requires a municipal response to encourage a safe community.

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### **Environmental**

Not Applicable

### **Economic**

Addressing street harassment may promote growth in Business Improvement Areas and support revival of Calgary's downtown by addressing perceived lack of safety due to harassment.

### **Service and Financial Implications**

*Existing operating funding - base*

There are no current operating budget impacts associated with this report. If Council approves the recommendation, additional costs associated with bylaw enforcement would be absorbed into the existing operating budget. Administration may request additional resources during the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budget deliberations if required to implement recommendations.

### **RISK**

There is a risk that the proposed amendments to the Public Behaviour Bylaw could be challenged in court. To mitigate that risk, the bylaw is considerate of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Administration is prepared to defend the bylaw if a court challenge is made. Administration will ensure that the issuance of any violation tickets is appropriate and can withstand a legal challenge.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Amendment to Public Behaviour Bylaw
2. Public Opinion Research
3. Notice of Motion
4. International and Municipal Scan
5. Equity Analysis Bylaw Review and Feedback from Gender Equity Diversity Inclusion
6. Summary of Engagement – What We Heard

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Jill Floen	Law	Inform