

Background and Previous Council Direction

Background

The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw (29M97) governs the safe and responsible use of temporary signs in the road right of way (RROW). The bylaw was thoroughly reviewed and updated in 2017 following extensive stakeholder engagement and public input. When compared to other jurisdictions, Calgary's approach to regulating temporary signs in the RROW is permissive and weighted in favour of responsible sign use. Most users of signs have some opportunity to place signs in the RROW whether they be a resident, business, campaign, not-for-profit or community organization. Permits are not required for signs with a face of less than 0.6 square metres, posters, or election signs. The expectation is that sign owners follow the rules in the bylaw.

The Provincial guidelines for the installation of temporary/election signs on provincial highways were also reviewed to ensure there was a general consistency in the legislation proposed for The City. The sign placement and removal requirements were found to be virtually identical. The specific differences in the Provincial guidelines were the maximum allowable size of a sign (1.5 square metres), and a minimum distance of 500 metres from highway construction zones.

While not a top-of-mind issue for most Calgarians, the public sentiment in 2017 was that there were too many signs, and that they are distracting and unattractive. However, Calgarians also felt that signs serve an important function for community groups. Half of the 2017 survey respondents said they had been called to action by a message observed on a temporary sign – they registered for a program, went to an event, or attended a meeting. Community groups and businesses agreed that temporary signs are cost-effective and efficient, and expressed concerns should their use be further restricted.

Previous Council Direction

DATE	REPORT NUMBER	DIRECTION/DESCRIPTION
1997 July 28	CSPS 030	<p>Temporary Signs on Highways Policy</p> <p>Council adopted a policy on Temporary Signs on Highways that outlined the purpose of having a bylaw to regulate all signage matters within the road right of way. This policy also identified that Calgary Bylaw 29M97 was developed to meet the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada that the placing of temporary signs on municipal property may be regulated and controlled but not totally prohibited.</p>
6/15/2017	TT2017-0309	<p>Bylaw Update</p> <p>Council amended the Temporary Signs on Highways bylaw (29M97) to ensure proper accountability, transparency and good governance in this legislation, and the supporting processes, as it had not been updated in 20 years.</p>
12/20/2022	EC2022-1372	<p>Notice of Motion</p> <p>Council approved the Notice of Motion on Reducing Election Sign Complaints by Improving the Temporary Sign Bylaw and directed Administration to return with proposed bylaw amendments to support a reduction in the number of temporary signs no later than 2023 Q1. Administration was also asked to consider temporary signs as part of the Single-Use Items Reduction Strategy.</p>
3/22/2023	EC2023-0238	<p>Improving the Temporary Signs Bylaw to Address Election Sign Complaints</p> <p>Executive Committee considered a report that proposed to make changes to the Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw (29M97). Committee indicated that the proposed changes would not have the desired impact on sign proliferation and referred the report back to Administration with direction to report back to the Executive Committee with alternatives.</p>