

Municipal Comparisons – Temporary Sign Regulations

Background

The Temporary Signs on Highways Bylaw (29M97) governs the safe and responsible use of temporary signs in the roads right of way (RROW) within the City of Calgary. 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, allowing users to place most signs without a permitting system and trusts them to follow the rules. 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 the smaller signs, posters, or election signs.

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 construction zones on the highways.

Municipal Review

As part of the review into signs on public property and election sign regulations, a series of Canadian cities were selected for comparison.

MUNICIPALITIES			
Edmonton, AB	Milton, ON	Mississauga, ON	North Vancouver, BC
Oakville, ON	Ottawa, ON	Saskatoon, SK	Surrey, BC
Toronto, ON	Vancouver, BC	Winnipeg, MB	

Similar to the findings from a 2017 municipal scan (TT2017-0309), there is no standard approach to the regulation, permitting or enforcement of temporary signage in the public realm. Each municipality had developed their bylaws and processes as a function of their local character and street design and often in response to specific community concerns.

Regulations

In general, municipalities in the prairie provinces were found to have a more permissive approach to temporary signage on public rights of way. Municipalities that have more restrictive regulations tend to prohibit business signage on public rights of way other than on the sidewalk or boulevard directly in front of the business. For example, commercial signage on a public right

of way encouraging a potential customer to visit a business several blocks away is prohibited under these schemes. Oakville, ON has a particularly restrictive regulatory regime and requires permit applications for all temporary signs, whether on public or private land.

Elections

Three municipalities have effectively halted the erection of temporary election signage on public property by severely restricting the placement of all signage on public property, regardless of whether not the content is political: Kingston and Brampton in Ontario, and Surrey in British Columbia. The City of Toronto is also investigating the issue of election signage placement on public property.

Oakville, ON is the only municipality contacted that requires a candidate/campaign to register to place election signs on public property. An initial deposit of \$215 is required (2023 rate), which is refundable following the election. Any fees incurred due to the removal of illegally placed signs are deducted from the deposit or invoiced as needed. The town charges \$54 per impounded sign during the election period.

Enforcement

Different municipalities split up temporary signage enforcement work in different ways.

- Many municipalities take a generalist enforcement approach similar to Calgary's, where a group of enforcement officers are responsible for a wide range of bylaws and regulations.
- The City of Vancouver, BC assigns any enforcement work taking place on streets (from patios to RoW signage) to a streets-specific enforcement team. Winnipeg, MB also uses a similar idea of "streets constables."
- Toronto, ON divides work geographically and by subject area. Temporary signs are generally handled by the parks & green spaces enforcement team. During election sign season, resources are drawn from other enforcement teams.
- Ottawa, ON undertakes summer signage enforcement blitzes where a large portion of the sign collection work (though not ticket writing) is performed by summer students.
- Several municipalities in other provinces have their Roads/Streets staff collect and destroy "disposable," low-cost temporary signage, often without detailed documentation and no impound period.
- Municipalities that reported low volumes of annual signage being impounded tended to lack detailed data on the number of small "disposable" temporary signs that were removed and immediately destroyed.