



## **Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting**

**Date of Meeting:** December 6, 2023

**Report Number:** SRCS.23.21

**Department:** Community Services  
**Division:** Community Standards

**Subject:** **SRCS.23.21 Sign By-law Amendment – Election Signs**

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### **Purpose:**

To respond to the September 6<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Whole direction regarding Election Signs and present revised Election Sign amendments to the Sign By-law, for approval.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- a) That Staff Report SRCS.23.21, regarding Election Sign amendments to the Sign By-law, be received.
- b) That By-law No. 126-23 (Attachment 1 to staff report SRCS.23.21) be enacted to amend the Election Sign component of the Sign By-law No. 52-09 (Municipal Code Chapter 740).

### **Contact Person:**

Don Guy, Director Community Standards, extension 2427

### **Report Approval:**

**Submitted by:** Tracey Steele, Commissioner of Community Services

**Approved by:** Darlene Joslin, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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### Background:

The Sign By-law governs various types of signs including permanent signs (such as Ground and Wall signs) and temporary signs (such as Mobile and Portable signs). On May 10, 2023 Council approved a 4 year schedule for by-law reviews (SRCS.23.13), which identified that the first phase of the comprehensive review for the Sign By-law would be initiated in 2023.

Election Signs were prioritized in the review as the City had received many complaints about them both during, and directly following, recent past elections; and, staff had identified several administrative and enforcement aspects of the regulations recommended for update. The primary goals of the update were to implement a simpler more straightforward framework that would reduce the number of signs on public property and be easily enforceable.

Public consultation was conducted in May 2023 regarding Election Signs, Highway Signs and Digital Signs. Listed below are the main concerns from the community regarding Election Signs:

- Clutter caused by signs during or after an election (76%)
- The number of election signs by one candidate (55%)
- Visibility and safety restrictions caused by signs (52%)
- Placement of signs on public boulevards (41%)

Further, over 65% of survey respondents indicated that Election Signs should be placed only at campaign offices or on front lawns of private property with the owner's consent.

At its June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 meeting, Committee of the Whole ("COW") received the first phase of the Sign By-law review (SRCS.23.14) recommending amendments to the Sign By-law including new provisions for Election Signs.

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Council referred the proposed Election Sign amendments back to staff to further consider:

- Allowing larger signs on commercial and industrial properties,
- Allowing more than 1 sign per candidate on multi-tenanted/multi-residential properties (it was suggested to allow one sign per "premises" rather than 1 sign per "property"),
- Allowing larger signs on residential properties on arterial roads,
- Giving corner residential lots a "partial exemption" that would allow them to have 2 signs per candidate (one on each abutting street).

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 COW received staff report SRCS.23.17, which responded to Council comments and recommended a revised by-law amendment that would allow larger election signs on commercial properties and permit one sign per premises. Staff continued to recommend against special allowances for residential properties on arterial roads or corner lots. In response to SRCS.23.17, COW approved the following motion:

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That Staff Report SRCS.23.17 - Sign By-law Amendments for Election Signs, be referred back to staff to report back with a revised draft By-law that includes the following changes:

- 1) That one Election Sign per candidate per frontage be permitted; and,
- 2) Election signs be permitted on the public boulevard adjacent to private property.

### **By-law Amendment**

By-law No. 126-23 (Attachment 1) will amend the Sign By-law consistent with the direction provided by COW on September 6, 2023. It will allow one Election Sign per candidate on each street frontage associated with a private property. Additionally, it will allow Election Signs to be installed within the public boulevard directly adjacent to private property provided that the sign is located a minimum of:

- 2 metres from a street curb, paved portion of a street, or centre-line of a ditch;
- 1 metre from a sidewalk (and always on the private property side of the sidewalk), and
- 5 metres from a fire hydrant or transit shelter.

It is the understanding of staff that the intent of allowing signs in the public boulevard is to mitigate installation and enforcement challenges resulting from difficulty determining the precise location of the property line between the boulevard and adjacent property. The criteria outlined above and entrenched in the proposed by-law amendment will ensure safety, unencumbered access to public infrastructure, and direct association of each sign with an adjacent private property. Effectively, the locational criteria is intended to result in Election Signs either being located on private property, or appearing to be located on private property (even though they may technically be located in the boulevard). In all cases, permission of the private property owner will be required and only one sign per candidate per property street frontage is permitted.

It should be noted that while this report recommends an amending By-law (No. 126-23), which will allow one sign per candidate on each frontage for lots that have multiple street frontages (for example, corner lots), staff continue to believe that the more equitable approach would be to allow one portable sign per candidate per lot.

### **Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:**

There are no financial or staffing implications associated with this report.

### **Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities 2020-2022:**

The recommended Election Sign amendment to the Sign By-law is consistent with the Strategic Priority of Strong Sense of Belonging as it permits residents, property owners and businesses to display signs to support election candidates of their choice while controlling visual clutter and promoting safety.

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### **Climate Change Considerations:**

Climate change considerations are not applicable to this staff report.

### **Conclusion:**

On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023 COW directed staff to report back with a revised Election Sign amendment to the Sign By-law, which will allow one Election Sign per candidate per street frontage and allow Election Signs in the public boulevard adjacent to private property. It is the understanding of staff that the intent of allowing signs in the public boulevard is to mitigate installation and enforcement challenges resulting from difficulty determining the precise location of the property line between the boulevard and adjacent property.

By-law No. 126-23 (Attachment 1) is consistent with the September 6<sup>th</sup> direction from COW, while minimizing the number of signs in boulevards consistent with public feedback, and ensuring safety and access to infrastructure.

### **Attachments:**

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Attachment 1 – By-law No.126-23 to amend the Sign By-law No. 52-09 (Municipal Code Chapter 740) with respect to Election Signs.

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### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCS.23.21 - Sign By-law Amendment - Election Signs.docx
Attachments:	- V2 By-law No. 126-23 - Amendment Election Signs on Boulevards.docx
Final Approval Date:	Nov 23, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

**Don Guy - Nov 23, 2023 - 10:26 AM**

**Tracey Steele - Nov 23, 2023 - 12:27 PM**

**Darlene Joslin - Nov 23, 2023 - 2:55 PM**