



To: General Purposes Committee
From: Carli Edwards, P.Eng.
 Manager, Customer Services and Licencing
Re: **Policy for Language on Signs**

Date: August 10, 2017
File: 01-0005-00/Vol 01

Staff Recommendation

That the new Council Policy titled “Language on Regulated Signs”, which encourages the cooperative use of the English language on all regulated signage, be approved.

Carli Edwards, P.Eng.
 Manager, Customer Services and Licencing
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Att. 1

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Community Bylaws Policy & Procedure Subcommittee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: CJ	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

At the Council meeting on June 12, 2016, Council adopted the following resolution:

That staff propose policy options encouraging the cooperative use of the English language on all signage, including an analysis of the current policy and report back.

This report introduces a written policy to formalize and reinforce the practice of encouraging the inclusion of wording that is at least 50 percent English on all types of signs regulated by the City of Richmond.

Findings of Fact

On July 10, 2017, Council adopted the Sign Regulation Bylaw. The new bylaw modernizes regulations related to signage, addresses a variety of concerns related to clutter and visual pollution and provides enhanced education and enforcement tools. As part of the approval process, City staff were also directed to further study and report back on policy options to encourage the use of English on signs.

Analysis

The current practice regarding language on signs is a result of Council direction given in October 2014 that:

As a priority, staff consult with the sign owners to encourage more use of English language on their signs.

Since this time, staff who review permit applications and enforce sign and business bylaws have been encouraging the inclusion of a minimum of 50 percent of English content on all business signs. Despite the fact that there has never been a bylaw requirement or written policy related to the use of language on signage, this educational approach has led to 100 percent compliance for business signage in Richmond.

Sign Permits

Historically, the City of Richmond receives approximately 300 sign permit applications per year. However, this has been increasing since 2015. In 2016, 468 applications were received and 325 have already been received in the first half of 2017. This number is expected to further increase with the adoption of the new Sign Regulation Bylaw which includes requirements for additional sign types to obtain permits (i.e. window signs and construction signs). As part of the sign permit process, staff have been able to educate applicants to include English on business signs.

Complaints related to Signs

While the City continues to receive inquiries and complaints, the types of inquiries are changing from predominately language related to “nuisance” related. All complaints have been reviewed and addressed in a timely manner. The City received:

- 110 sign complaints in 2015;
- 178 sign complaints in 2016; and
- 308 sign complaints in the first half of 2017.

The largest increase in complaints has been related to real estate signs and signs on City property. In many cases, complaints received about language on signs are also related to signs that are prohibited in the bylaw. For example, the Sign Regulation Bylaw does not permit most types of portable signs. If a complaint is received about a portable sign that does not contain English, the enforcement officer will ask for the sign to be removed, and take the opportunity to educate the business on both the bylaw and reasons for including English. In most cases, the approach to these complaints is to first request voluntary compliance and then to issue tickets for non-compliance with the bylaw. This approach has proven effective achieving compliance.

Policy Options

Option 1: Status Quo

The current policy is to rely on Council's direction to staff to encourage and educate businesses to include English language on regulated signs. The concern with continuing this approach is that the practice is not documented or formalized.

Option 2: Written Policy (**Recommended**)

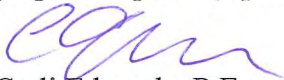
Moving forward, it is recommended that this policy be formalized in writing to ensure that the practice remains in place over time, as staff and organizational changes occur. The approval of the proposed policy will strengthen the City's position to encourage the inclusion of a minimum of 50 percent English on business signage.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

To date, the educational approach to encouraging the use of 50 percent English on signs regulated by the City of Richmond has been 100 percent effective for all business signs. The proposed option (Option 2: Written Policy) further strengthens this approach.



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Att. 1: Proposed Language on Regulated Signs policy



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Adopted by Council: Date		

POLICY <POLICY NO.> :

Staff have been working with businesses to promote the use of English on signage since October 2014, and have successfully encouraged the business community to include English on signage to promote community harmony. These practices are being formalized in this Council policy that:

1. Richmond is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Canada. Consequently, the City supports the intercultural vision “to be the most welcoming, inclusive and harmonious community” in the country.
2. The City will take a proactive educational approach to encourage the inclusion of wording that is at least 50 percent in the English language in all types of signage regulated by the City of Richmond.