

The Regional Municipality of York

Committee of the Whole
Transportation Services
May 4, 2023

Report of the Commissioner of Public Works

Signs on Regional Roads Bylaw Update

1. Recommendations

1. Bylaw 2015-36 regulating signs on Regional roads be amended to incorporate the following provisions:
 - a) An annual business sign permit fee of \$240 be increased to \$300 per sign
 - b) An election sign permit fee of \$300 with no additional fee for each sign
 - c) Business and elections signs only be permitted at designated intersections listed in Attachment 1
 - d) Bag, flag and banner sign types are not permitted on Regional roads
2. The fees set out in this report be removed from Bylaw 2015-36 Schedule B Fees and included in the Fees and Charges for Services and Activities Bylaw 2020-04.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to Clerks of all local municipalities.
4. The Regional Solicitor and General Counsel prepare the necessary bylaws.

2. Purpose

This report proposes amendments to the Signs on Regional Roads Bylaw [2015-36](#) (Sign Bylaw) to promote safe management of Regional roads and recover sign removal costs.

Key Points:

- Revisions to the Sign Bylaw are necessary to increase compliance and maintain public safety
- Local municipal bylaw staff have been involved in updating the Region's Sign Bylaw
- Increased sign permit fees are proposed to manage sign program
- Permitted signs at designated intersections must be within specified dimensions and composition to ensure public safety
- Changes to the Sign Bylaw will be communicated using various channels

3. Background

Revisions to Sign Bylaw are necessary to maintain public safety through increased compliance

Non-compliance is an increasing concern with business and election signs which may negatively affect public safety. Signs installed contrary to the Sign Bylaw impede sightlines at intersections and interfere with transit stops, sidewalks and utilities (Figure 1). Sign types such as bag, flag and banners are concerning due to environmental impacts, more prone to blowing away or installed using thin wire frames which are hazardous when left behind for grass cutting operations.

In 2022, the Region and some local municipalities partnered sporadically to manage signs on Regional roads as resources permitted at a total cost of about \$265,000. Costs have been increasing since the last bylaw update in 2015.

Figure 1
Examples of Signs Impeding Sightlines



Sign Bylaw currently permits business and election signs only at regional intersections on Regional roads

Currently, business signs may only be installed if a permit has been obtained at a cost of \$120 per sign for a period of six months. Business signs are permitted on weekends only from Friday to Monday and at intersections and are not permitted along the Regional road allowance. The Sign Bylaw stipulates detailed dimensions and specific locations where signs can be installed relative to the intersection. Only one sign per applicant is permitted at each intersection. Signs installed in contravention of the Sign Bylaw may be removed by the Region or local municipality. The owner may retrieve non-compliant signs for a fee of \$60 per sign.

Election signs are subject to the same regulations with respect to dimensions, placement and quantity at intersections. Election signs are permitted seven days per week, from four weeks prior to election day to 72 hours following close of polls. Election signs installed in contravention of the Sign Bylaw may be removed by the Region and retrieved after election day. Currently, an election sign permit fee of \$290 is applied to offset sign removal costs.

Sign information and permit application are available on the Region's website

Information on all aspects of the Sign Bylaw including placement, duration and costs can be found on york.ca. A printable election guide is also available. The permit request process is paperless, providing an environmentally friendly, efficient and expedient experience for users. Applicants can save time, stay up-to-date on the status of their application and make payments online.

4. Analysis

Local municipal bylaw staff have been involved in updating the Sign Bylaw

In recent years, local municipalities have raised concerns with non-compliant signs and an increasing number of real estate signs on Regional roads. In 2022, the Region invited local municipal staff to participate in four workshops to review all aspects of the Sign Bylaw.

Primary concerns received from local bylaw staff included:

- Increase in non-compliant signs including an increase in real estate signs
- Lack of resources and insufficient cost recovery to remove signs on Regional roads
- Safety concerns with bag, flag and banner type signs

This report focuses on updating the Sign Bylaw to address concerns raised by local staff who are supportive of the proposed changes.

Permitting signs on Regional roads help ensure safe sign placement and encourages compliance

Prohibiting all signs from the Regional road allowance was considered. Most local municipalities (Table 1) and bordering regions currently allow signs. Prohibiting all signs will likely increase sign pollution, unsafe placement and provides no mechanism to recover costs for sign removal.

Table 1
Sign Types Permitted on Roadside Boulevards

Municipality	Business Signs*	Election Signs
Town of Aurora	Yes	Yes
Town of East Gwillimbury	No	Yes
Town of Georgina	No	Yes
Township of King	Yes	Yes
City of Markham	No	Yes
Town of Newmarket	Yes	No
City of Richmond Hill	Yes	Yes
City of Vaughan	Yes	Yes
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	Yes	Yes
York Region	Yes	Yes

*Most local municipalities allow real-estate signs

Increased permit fees are proposed to offset sign removal costs

A business sign permit fee increase from \$120 per sign for six months to \$300 per sign annually is proposed to allow signs at designated intersections from Friday to Monday. This proposed fee increase aligns with local municipal fees (Appendix A).

An election sign permit fee increase from \$290 to \$300 is proposed to allow signs at designated intersections, seven days per week, from four weeks prior to election day to 72 hours following close of polls. This proposed fee increase aligns with local municipalities (Appendix B). This is a proposed flat rate fee with no additional fee for each sign placement.

Fees associated with sign removal were last increased in 2015. Proposed sign permit fees are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Proposed Sign Permit Fees

Sign Type	Existing Permit Fee	Proposed Permit Fee
Business signs	\$240 per sign	\$300 per sign
Election signs	\$290 (flat rate)	\$300 (flat rate)

Permitted signs at designated intersections must be within specified dimensions and composition to ensure public safety

Business signs (A-frame wood or plastic) and election signs (corrugated plastic with wooden stakes) must be of acceptable composition and within specified dimensions and placement. Over time, there has been an increase in the amount of non-compliant signs which cause public safety concerns. Sign types such as bag, flag and banners are concerning due to environmental impacts, are more prone to blowing away and installed using thin wire frames which are hazardous when left behind for grass cutting operations.

As the Region continues to urbanize, intersections are becoming increasingly constrained and have insufficient space for safe pedestrian movement and signs. Staff have completed a review of all intersections and propose restrictions that include:

- Rapid transit corridors due to hardscape features
- 80 km/h speed limits and high collision frequency intersections for public safety
- Tightly spaced intersections with limited boulevards

Staff propose permitting placement of business and election signs at designated intersections only to manage and control sign placement and quantities for public safety. Attachment 1 includes a list of designated locations in each local municipality. Maps of these designated locations will be available on york.ca.

Various strategies to be used to communicate Sign Bylaw changes

Recognizing residents and businesses may not be familiar with the Sign Bylaw, communication strategies will emphasize increasing public awareness and the process to obtain a sign permit. A range of communication channels will be used to educate and inform residents and businesses about changes to the Sign Bylaw, including newsletter, social media and york.ca.

5. Financial

The Region spends about \$100/hour including labour, vehicle, fuel, etc. to remove, store, dispose and/or recycle non-compliant signs. The cost to manage signs on Regional roads is \$165,000 annually and \$265,000 during election years. Based on the updated business sign permit fees it is projected that \$165,000 will be collected annually with an additional \$100,000 collected during election years. The proposed cost recovery outlined in Table 3 funds management of the sign program and removing non-compliant signs.

Table 3
Sign Permit and Removal Cost Recovery

Cost	Amount
Projected New Business Sign Permit Fee Collections (annually)	\$165,000
Projected New Election Sign Permit Fee Collections (during an election year)	\$100,000
Total Projected Fees Collected (during an election year)	\$265,000
Projected Sign Removal Costs (during an election year)	(\$265,000)

6. Local Impact

Local municipal bylaw staff are supportive of the recommendations in this report. Revisions to the Sign Bylaw will help increase compliance and maintain public safety.

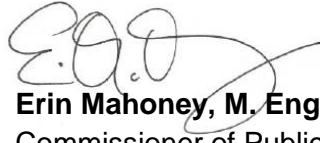
7. Conclusion

In 2022, the Signs on Regional Roads Bylaw was reviewed with local municipal bylaw staff. Main concerns raised included insufficient cost recovery for sign removal, sign types, quantities and their placement. Staff propose increasing fees for all signs to manage sign program and designate permitted locations for sign placement and sign types for public safety.

Subject to Council approval, the Regional Solicitor and General Counsel will prepare the necessary bylaws to amend Bylaws 2015-36 and 2020-04.

For more information on this report, please contact Joseph Petrungaro, Director Roads and Traffic Operations at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 75220. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by:



Erin Mahoney, M. Eng.
Commissioner of Public Works

Approved for Submission:



Bruce Macgregor
Chief Administrative Officer

April 13, 2023
14612574

Appendix A – Business Sign Fees by Local Municipality

Appendix B – Election Sign Fees by Local Municipality

Attachment 1 – List of Designated Intersection Locations by Local Municipality

Business Sign Fees by Local Municipality

Municipality	Business Sign Fees Per Sign
Town of Aurora	\$120 per year
Town of East Gwillimbury	\$129.60 per year
Town of Georgina	\$200 for 90-days
Township of King	\$138 for 30-days
City of Markham	\$198 for 21-days
Town of Newmarket	\$122.76 per year
City of Richmond Hill	\$123.12 for 21-days
City of Vaughan	\$222 for six months
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	N/A
York Region	\$240 per year

Election Sign Fees by Local Municipality

Municipality	Election Sign Fees
Town of Aurora	No fees for election signs
Town of East Gwillimbury	No fee for election signs
Town of Georgina	\$250 for all registered third parties
Township of King	\$107 fee \$268 deposit \$21 per sign infraction
City of Markham	\$272 fee \$27.50 per sign infraction
Town of Newmarket	\$50 fee \$250 deposit \$25 AMPS fee
City of Richmond Hill	\$286
City of Vaughan	\$50 - \$300 depending on candidacy
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	\$276
York Region	\$290