

Priorities Committee Meeting_Apr08_2025

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Strathcona County panhandling update 2025

Report Purpose

To provide an update to Priorities Committee on the impact of the County's approach to panhandling.

Our Strategic Goals

Goal 2 - Healthy and Safe Community

Goal 2 Priority - Social supports that enhance community well-being and safety, and build community connection

Report

In 2023, Council directed Administration to develop a standardized approach to panhandling that connected individuals with supports available through Family and Community Services (FCS).

FCS, Enforcement Services and the RCMP worked collaboratively to formalize a coordinated approach to panhandling. Officers approaching individuals panhandling offered to connect individuals with additional supports and services offered through FCS, while simultaneously requesting that panhandling cease. Where individuals were willing to connect with supports, officers connected with FCS to attend on site, as available. Where interactions took place after hours, officers provided an FCS resource card designed specifically for individuals panhandling.

The impact of the coordinated approach on panhandling has been significant, with a reduction in panhandling complaints to Enforcement and the RCMP from 17 in 2023 to six in 2024. Similarly, in 2024 FCS received one call from officers about individuals panhandling, compared to five in 2023.

This proactive approach has been successful at discouraging panhandling in the County as an ongoing source of income for individuals and reduced the number of repeat incidents. It has also balanced the safety-focused enforcement of bylaws with connection to appropriate supports and services.

For those who continue to panhandle in the County, they are often doing so to meet basic needs. FCS continues to provide support accessing resources to meet basic needs and is working in partnership with community to explore future opportunities.

Council and Committee History

- September 19, 2023 Council approved: THAT Administration develop a standardized approach to the way that officers engage with panhandlers in the County using current legal tools, including when and how referrals to Family and community Services will take place; and
- March 14, 2023 THAT Administration prepare a report with an update on panhandling in Strathcona County by the end of Q1 2025, be approved.
Council approved: THAT Administration prepare a report for Councils consideration by the end of Q3 2023 with options, including but not

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limited to potential bylaws, fines and community support services, to deter, assist and promote the safety of individuals engaged in panhandling in Strathcona County.

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Financial/Budget: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: n/a

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Enclosure

1 Strathcona County panhandling update 2025 presentation