

ESQUIMALT TOGETHER AGAINST GRAFFITI

DECEMBER 9, 2024

BACKGROUND

Esquimalt Together Against Graffiti (ETAG) was a program involving the Victoria Police Department (VicPD), staff and a group of community volunteers who cleaned up graffiti in Esquimalt. The program began over 15 years ago and successfully managed graffiti in Esquimalt for many years. The key to ETAG's success was dedicated volunteers who quickly removed graffiti once it was identified. Many ETAG volunteers contributed a significant amount of time and energy to this initiative. As time passed, the amount of work required to keep up to the group's established high standards took its toll on the volunteers and the number of engaged volunteers dwindled. ETAG has not been active for a several years due to a lack of volunteers and staff capacity.

At the July 11, 2022 council meeting, Council considered a framework to revive ETAG, as described in staff report EPW-22-011. In response to this, Council directed staff to:

- a. initiate a call for volunteers to re-establish ETAG;
- b. continue to remove graffiti from municipal infrastructure; and
- c. bring forward a budget request for 2023 budget deliberations to hire a contractor to remove graffiti from private property.

At that time, staff anticipated the above direction would be implemented immediately, but due to unforeseen staff turnover, actions a and c above were not initiated. Since then, the project has remained as a Potential Future Project in the Council Priorities Plan.

Staff have continued to remove graffiti from municipal infrastructure (action b above), but over time, staff's capacity and an increase in graffiti, has resulted in a growing amount of graffiti throughout the Township.

PROJECT SCOPE

The desired final outcome of this project is reduced graffiti throughout the Township and revival of ETAG. Staff recommend the following scope of work to meet the desired outcome and address the growing graffiti in Esquimalt:

- New Public Works staff as part of the 2025 budget process to increase capacity for graffiti management on municipal infrastructure;
- Staff to develop informational material for potential volunteers;
- Staff to coordinate materials and safety information for volunteers;

- Staff to initiate a call for volunteers in Q3/Q4 2025; and
- Staff to manage ETAG on an ongoing basis through volunteer coordination and provision of materials.

Staff do not recommend addressing graffiti on private property at this time. This could be added as a future phase of this project, but is currently considered out of scope. The level of effort and costs for the Township to contribute to graffiti management on private property are significantly higher than on municipal property. With the growing volume of graffiti, the staff recommendation is that efforts should focus on municipal property first, before considering future initiatives on private property.

Historically, Public Works staff had more capacity to manage graffiti on municipal property, but as other workload increased, the capacity to do graffiti management has decreased. This has coincided with an increase in graffiti throughout the Township. Staff will provide further information on staffing requests for Public Works as part of the 2025 budget process that would result in an increase in capacity for graffiti management.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Increasing Public Works capacity to complete graffiti management is subject to the 2025 budget process, which finishes in Q2 2025. Staff expect any increase in capacity to result in a corresponding reduction in graffiti in the following quarter.

To revive ETAG, staff expect to have capacity to organize informational materials starting in Q2 2025. A call to volunteers would follow in Q3/Q4 2025.

STAFF IMPACT

The expected time to manage ETAG will depend on the volunteers recruited. Most of the work will be completed by Public Works staff, primarily the Public Works Manager, Public Works Technical Support person, and Purchasing Clerk. At this time, staff expect to manage this process within existing resources. Staff will annually re-assess impacts on staff to manage ETAG as the program progresses.

To successfully manage graffiti on municipal infrastructure, staff recommend increasing Public Works capacity as part of the 2025 budget process by adding staff, starting with a Labourer II and Truck Driver III in 2025. Staff currently have limited capacity to do this work as other demands on Public Works have increased over the years and restricted Public Works ability to do graffiti management. These new positions will help free up capacity for Public Works to focus on operations and maintenance, including graffiti management.

In addition, staff recommend moving towards a separate staff person and new equipment in Public Works to manage bus stop and park garbage as part of a multi-year plan. This person would have

specialized equipment and additional capacity to maintain bus shelters at a higher standard than currently provided. More details will be shared as part of the 2025 budget process.

STAKEHOLDERS/POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS OR DEPENDENCIES

Staff will complete the scope of work, as described above. Staff will work with the City of Victoria to understand current practices with Victoria Together Against Graffiti (VTAG). Staff will work with VicPD and the Block Watch Program to complete a Call for Volunteers. Assistance will be provided by the Manager of Communications when the Call for Volunteers occurs.

The previous success of ETAG was based on the efforts of the volunteers, who are key stakeholders in this project. As the end user of a community with reduced graffiti, the public will benefit from these efforts.

PROJECT RISK MANAGEMENT

The following are potential risks for this project, along with impacts and mitigation strategies:

- Staff and ETAG do not have capacity to manage graffiti, resulting in continued increase in graffiti in the Township:
 - o Mitigation: continually assess the need for additional staff and equipment. Develop a multi-year plan for bus stop and park garbage collection that includes graffiti management.
- Volunteers aren't interested in participating in ETAG, resulting in continued increase in graffiti in the Township:
 - o Mitigation: staff will offset ETAG's capacity by requesting new staff starting in 2025 and will continually assess the need for additional staff.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost to provide materials to ETAG volunteers at this time is expected to be managed within the existing operating budget. As the program rolls out, staff will evaluate the need for supplemental budget requests in future years to purchase materials for volunteers (example: paint).

As described above, an increase in Public Works workload over time has decreased staff's capacity to complete graffiti management. Part of the increase in workload is due to an increase in cost recoverable work (example: development frontage works). This work frees up existing operating budget. As part of the 2025 budget process, staff will be providing a plan to increase Public Works capacity without increasing the existing operating budget because of the increase in cost recoverable work.