



CASE STUDY: MUNICIPAL PARKING

“You ask them to do a job and they do it to the best of their abilities. They are a good, reliable contractor and I have only good to say about them.”

John Hofmann
CITY OF SURREY



CITY OF SURREY OVERVIEW

- > Population of 450,000 in 2007
- > Over 7000 km of streets
- > Enforcing by-law 13007*
- > Employ use of parking meters
- > Parking meter collection and on-street parking enforcement outsourced

*A by-law to regulate traffic, parking and the use of highways, boulevards, sidewalks and public land in the City of Surrey.



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CITY OF SURREY

As the tenth largest city in Canada and the second largest in British Columbia, Surrey offers visitors, residents and business owners a rich blend of diversity and opportunity. It is strategically located on the United States border approximately 45 kilometres from Vancouver. This thriving community offers beautiful urban forests, pristine beaches, championship golf courses, over 6,000 acres of parkland, well designed inviting residential communities and numerous business complexes to accommodate its rapid growth.

CHALLENGE

In 1998 Surrey's municipal by-law enforcement group, responsible for the enforcement of all the city's by-laws, including on-street parking, was faced with the challenge of improving the City of Surrey's disorderly parking practices. "We did not have many parking meters or proper signage. It was not orderly and there was no standard of enforcement," says John Hofmann, the Senior By-law Enforcement Officer for Surrey, who supervises the program.

As part of a desire to evolve along with Surrey's growing development and to promote vehicle turnover and orderly on-street parking, the municipal by-law enforcement group looked at a number of options to begin performing meter collection and parking enforcement earnestly.

One of the biggest challenges was doing this cost effectively. Two city employees were carrying out the task, but according to John Sherstone, Manager, By-law & Licensing Services for Surrey, this model could not be scaled up cost effectively. "We had to cover the entire city. We needed a number of officers. It was challenging to be cost effective using city employees."

SOLUTION

As a result of the challenges, Surrey had decided to outsource their parking enforcement services to Commissionaires BC. In 1998 the City of Surrey approached Commissionaires exclusively to begin working with them. The contract was given to Commissionaires based on their reputation and ability to tailor services to meet the needs of the client.

Today, in addition to the site supervisor, nine Commissionaires enforcement officers act on parking complaints that are called in by the community, as well as enforce the violations they may encounter in their daily patrol covering over 7000 kilometres of Surrey's streets. Meter collection services are also performed, which is part of the city's effort to promote traffic turnover in busy areas.

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One additional Commissionaires enforcement officer currently interacts with parents and students about safe parking practices during school drop off and pick up times. Commissionaires works with about 167 schools in the City, 50 of which are elementary schools involved to various degrees in the The Way To Go! School Program, a program promoting safe alternative transportation sponsored by Autoplan Brokers and ICBC. During the time Commissionaires have been involved with the program, the number of schools participating has risen 25%, according to Sandra Jones, a coordinator for the Way To Go! School Program. Jones says, “Along with our other partners, Commissionaires took on a proactive role of promoting the program and raising awareness, which was excellent and a win-win for everybody. Surrey is really lucky to have them, in terms of having a presence around the school.”

The objective of the parking enforcement program is not revenue based, and the City has kept the number of parking meters to a minimum. The operational goal is to promote traffic safety, and to do so cost effectively, which the City has been able to do by using Commissionaires.

RESULTS

Since Surrey has been using Commissionaires for their parking enforcement, there has been a dramatic turnaround in community attitude and parking practices. Initially, the public greeted increased on-street parking regulations with concern. City employees were apprehensive about the service being outsourced and unsure of how Commissionaires would fit into the municipal culture.

Today, this concern is all but gone, according to Sherstone. “The commissionaires work very well with employees here. They cover the entire city and we rarely, if ever, get complaints about them from the public. It’s outstanding.”

There are also more concrete indicators of success. With improved regulatory signage, public education and the work of Commissionaires enforcement officers in the community, the number of violations remains fairly steady from year to year, despite the City’s increasing development and population, which is currently estimated at 450,000 people in 2007.

The best way to determine if the program is a success, however, is to gauge the formal response, according to Hofmann. “The public is our best thermometer. First, it would be the number of complaints received about parked vehicles. Second would be complaints about commissionaires being overly zealous, and the third would be the quality review of the tickets written and the number of subsequent appeals.”

Judging by these criteria, the program is a big success. Enforcement remains constant in relationship to the growth in the community. The number of complaints reflects the growing public awareness of parking by-laws. The tickets are well-written and thanks to an innovative approach to appeals, are often settled quickly by the municipal office.

The City of Surrey is currently examining ways they can expand the program and increase the number of commissionaires used. Sherstone credits this to the performance of commissionaires. “They look the part and they are very professional. They are well turned out in their uniforms. They are properly managed. We have little or no complaints about their performance. They have done a very, very good job here.”