



## Report to Council

Department: Infrastructure Services

Division: Infrastructure Services

Date: September 21, 2020

Prepared by: Kevin Girard, P.Eng, MBA  
Director, Infrastructure Services

Report Number: Infrastructure Services-2020-08

Subject: Policy for Vulnerable Children Warning Signage

Number of Pages: 10 (including attachments)

### Recommendation(s)

**That** Infrastructure Services – 2020-08 entitled, “Policy for Vulnerable Children Warning Signage” prepared by Kevin Girard dated September 21, 2020 be received, and

**That** Council adopt Infrastructure Services Policy #039 titled, “Vulnerable Children Signage Policy”.

**That** Council authorize and direct the Infrastructure Services Department to only install ‘children at play’ signs, or variations thereof, within community areas such as parks, schools, and other institutions whose main purpose is to provide services for children.

### Purpose

To address concerns for children who are near or adjacent to roadways and relating to children with disabilities. The approach includes the installation of a ‘vulnerable children warning sign’, a

new symbolic traffic sign to warn motorists of vulnerable children within residential neighbourhoods.

## Background and Discussion

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Council received Infrastructure Services Report number 2020-07 entitled “Vulnerable Children Signage Requests”. Upon receiving this report, Council by resolution further directed that a policy on the installation of vulnerable children and children at play signage be brought back to Council for consideration using the criteria that was referenced within that report. Examples of these signs, or variations thereof, are displayed in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Examples of Vulnerable Children Warning Signs

### Policy for Vulnerable Children Warning Signs

As requested, a policy has been drafted and is appended to this report. To remain consistent with other public agencies and municipalities that have decided to continue to install these signs, this policy was drafted to require the following of applicants who make a request for a sign:

- A completed application form as appended.
- A physician’s statement identifying the extent of the disability.
- Concurrence from the parents of their understanding that the sign will only remain in place for a predefined period of five (5) years, will be removed when the child reaches the age of thirteen (13) years, whichever comes first, or when no reconfirmation from the

parents requesting the sign has been received after the initial five (5) year installation period.

- Written acknowledgement from the parents of their understanding that the sign is no guarantee of their child's safety and that they remain responsible for the monitoring of their child's activities.
- A commitment to notify the Town in a timely manner of any positive changes in their child's impairments (for example, cochlear implants, use of a hearing aids etc. for children with hearing impairments).
- A commitment to notify the public agency in a timely manner of any relocation to another place of residence.

Accordingly, it is recommended that Council adopt this policy as appended.

### **Playground Ahead or Children at Play Signage**

At its July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting, Council discussion was primarily focused on vulnerable children signage, but in addition to these signs, the Town receives many requests with respect to 'playground ahead' signage, commonly called 'children at play' signs, or variations thereof, as displayed in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Playground Ahead or Children at Play Sign**

The purpose of the Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) is to provide information and guidance for transportation practitioners and to promote uniformity of treatment in the design, application, and operation of traffic control devices and systems across Ontario.

As per the OTM, the purpose of the Playground Ahead signs are to provide advanced warning of a locally designated playground that is located adjacent to a downstream section of road. The presence of children on or near the road travelling to or from the playground may present an unexpected hazard to motorists unless they are warned in advance by the Playground Ahead sign. The OTM further states that the location criteria for installing these signs is that they must be used directly at the painted crosswalk, one on each side of the roadway, for both directions of travel.

It has become a common practice for residents and parents to request these signs, or variations of, in neighbourhoods that do not conform to the criteria listed above.

It is recommended that Council support the discontinuing of the installation of 'playground ahead' signs, or variations thereof, in cases where the installation of such signs would not comply with the Ontario Traffic Manual's purpose, description, and location criteria.

## **Financial Impact**

This policy will result in an administrative expense for processing applications. Being that this is a new process, the time required to process applications is unknown.

A successful application for a vulnerable child warning sign would result in a cost to the Town of approximately \$300 for materials which would include the signs and posts. In addition, there is a cost for Public Works employees and equipment to install the sign which typically takes 1-2 hours including driving time.

## **Consultations**

Norman Nussio, Manager of Operations and Drainage

Robert Auger, Town Solicitor, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk

Kate Giurissevich, Manager Finance and Business Services

## Link to Strategic Priorities

- Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Policy for Vulnerable Children Warning Signage.docx
Attachments:	- Vulnerable Children Signage Policy DRAFT for Council.pdf - Vulnerable Children Signage Policy_Appendix A_DRAFT for Council.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Sep 14, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Nepszy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

**Chris Nepszy, Chief Administrative Officer - Sep 14, 2020 - 5:48 PM**