

MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

Committee of the Whole (1)

DATE: Tuesday, April 04, 2023

TITLE: TAKING ACTION TO COMBAT AUTO THEFTS

FROM:

Mayor Steven Del Duca

Whereas, Vaughan has always been a safe place to live and raise a family, and the city's partners at York Regional Police work hard day in and day out, along with our residents, to ensure this remains the case; and

Whereas, a recent scan of York Regional Police's Crime Trend Dashboard indicates that auto thefts have seen a year-over-year increase of 58.3 per cent across the region. Of note, keyless ignition vehicles are now the prime targets of car thieves; and

Whereas, Mayor Steven Del Duca recently wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calling on the federal government to urgently modernize Canada's bail system to ensure that dangerous offenders are kept off our streets from committing crimes ranging from gun violence to home break-ins and auto thefts; and

Whereas, Mayor Del Duca further wrote to Canada's Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino on auto thefts asking what protocols are used by the Canadian Border Services Agency for the screening and/or inspection of exports leaving our country. This correspondence urges the federal government to consider reviewing their processes, in collaboration with Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) police services and other law enforcement partners, to ensure that Canada's approach is consistent with established best practices; and

Whereas Mayor Del Duca advocated in a letter to Ontario's Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy for the province to introduce a Home & Vehicle Security Tax Credit to provide savings for people to make critical investments in security devices; and

Whereas, these letters reiterate the shared goals to protect the property of hard-working Vaughan residents and a determination to ensure it happens; and

Whereas, Vaughan is not alone in the spike of auto thefts occurring across the GTHA. Mayor Del Duca raised the issue of auto thefts with other municipal leaders, including during a recent meeting of the GTHA Mayors and Chairs working group; and

Whereas, it is reported that car thieves across communities conduct what is known as relay attacks – wherein these criminals use vulnerabilities in keyless FOBs to steal vehicles swiftly. Thieves read the radio frequency of the key FOBs in a house and relay that frequency to a car on the driveway, tricking the car into thinking the key FOB is next to, or in, the vehicle; and

Whereas, Faraday bags/pouches are moderately priced items that keyless ignition car keys can be placed inside to block thieves from reading radio frequencies in key FOBs; and

Whereas, the City of Brampton is applauded for adopting a timely and innovative strategy for municipalities to help take action to combat auto thefts, with the adoption of a new pilot program that would distribute free Faraday bags/pouch to select neighbourhoods in that community; and

Whereas, all options must be on the table for every level of government to do their part to combat auto theft, including the implementation of programs from similar jurisdictions; and

Whereas, looking ahead, community safety remains a top-of-mind city-building priority. Council has endorsed creating a new Community Safety Advisory Committee. In addition, as the City continues developing its new 2022 to 2026 Term of Council Strategic Plan, safeguarding the well-being of residents and partnering with critical stakeholders, like first responders, will inform this vital strategy; and

Whereas the City of Vaughan is focused on taking action to combat auto thefts.

It is therefore recommended:

1. THAT the City's Community Services Portfolio, supported by other corporate departments, report back to Council at its Committee of the Whole (1) meeting of Tuesday, May 2, 2023, on options available and recommendations for a pilot program to leverage the potential benefits of using Faraday bags/pouches to help reduce auto thefts in the community; and
2. THAT the City's Community Services Portfolio's report back to Council include recommendations relating to the establishment of a cross-functional working group led by the City's Community Services Portfolio, supported by other corporate departments and community stakeholders, be established to oversee the administration of this pilot program; and

3. THAT the City's Community Services Portfolio's report back to Council include the following considerations:
 - a) THAT expenditures associated with this pilot program be covered through existing operating budgets incurred by the Corporation of the City of Vaughan, with funding for this pilot project of up to \$30,000; and
 - b) THAT Procurement Services undertake the appropriate steps to procure the Faraday bags/pouches for the pilot program, in line with the proposed budget; and
 - c) THAT any implemented pilot project include a City staff report back at a future Committee of the Whole meeting on the results of the pilot program; and
4. THAT City staff work with community safety stakeholders, including but not limited to York Regional Police, to identify neighbourhoods throughout each of Vaughan's five municipal wards for participation in this pilot program, and the appropriate number of Faraday bags/pouches to distribute to these households; and
5. THAT this Members' Resolution be fully endorsed during the April 4, 2023, Committee of the Whole (1) meeting; and
6. THAT this decision be ratified by Council.

Attachments

N/A