

Inappropriate Public Behaviours

Updating the City's Violence Prevention Program to
Ensure a Respectful and Safe Work Environment for Employees

City Council Presentation

RTS # 16197

Office of the Chief Safety Officer

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1 Public Service Interactions: Public Behaviour Continuum

Public service interactions are vital to our work

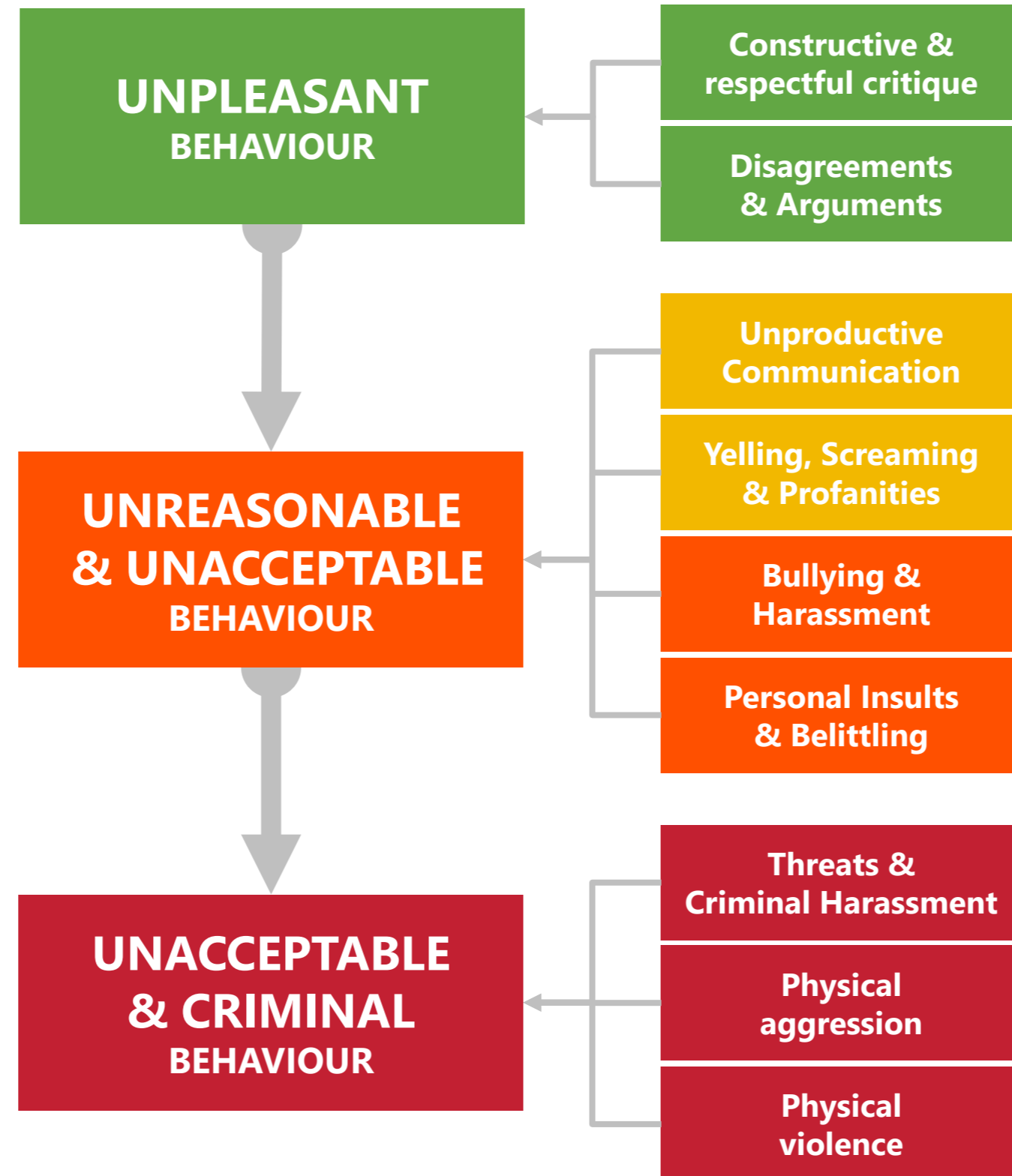
The “public” is anyone who is a non-employee interacting with COV employees including residents, business owners and their employees, visitors, service users, and/or clients.

Most COV staff interact with the public everyday in person, by phone, by email and through social media.

The work of COV can often be consequential for residents and businesses so we value our interactions with the public and are open to respectful and constructive feedback.

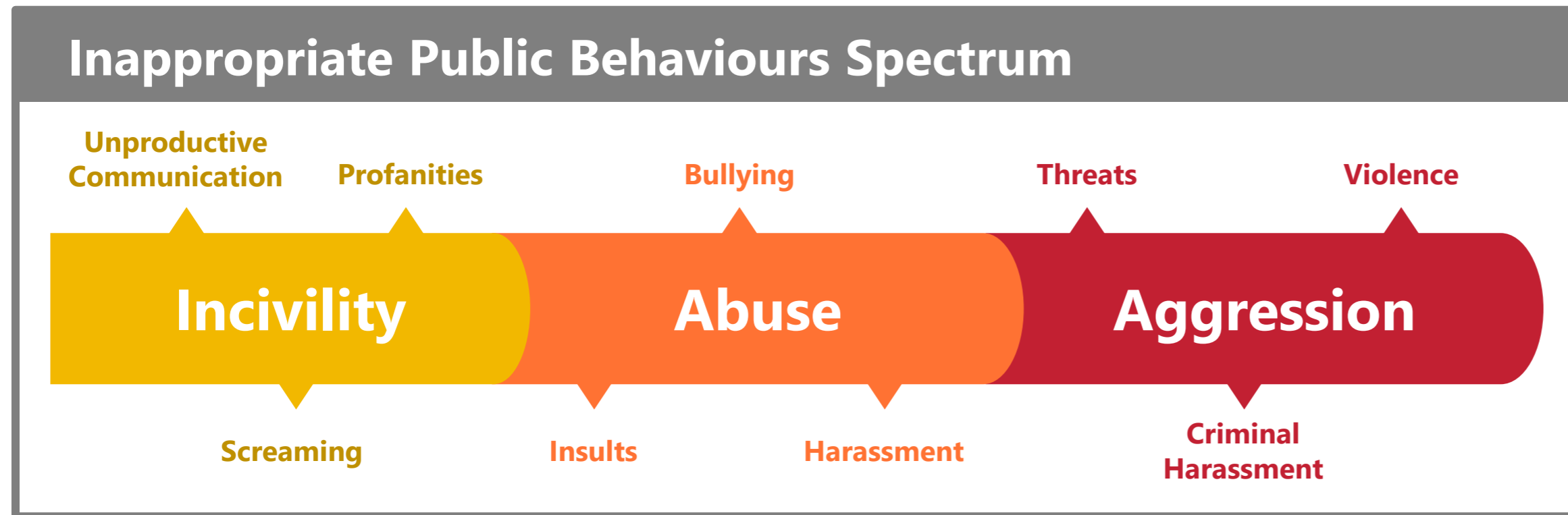
However, **incidents of inappropriate public behaviours are increasing in:**

- ▲ **Frequency**
- ▲ **Complexity**
- ▲ **Intensity**



- ➔ Some interactions, due to the nature of the topic, can be unpleasant for staff
- ➔ As public servants, staff must be open to a certain level of critique about their work
- ➔ Stakes are often high for the public and emotions can run high
- ➔ Unproductive communication is conduct not considered productive, such as repetitive complaints, badgering, etc.
- ➔ The interaction becomes disrespectful and unacceptable
- ➔ Does not meet the threshold to lay a charge under the Criminal Code
- ➔ Significant impact on staff
- ➔ Causing fear
- ➔ Meets the threshold to lay a charge under the Criminal Code

2 Increase in Inappropriate Public Behaviours



Unproductive Communication

Example behaviours:

- Badgering.
- Repeated contacts, inquiries or complaints on matters that have previously been responded to conclusively.
- Refusal to accept an answer.
- Excessive demands on the time and resources of staff including:
 - Lengthy and/or frequent phone calls;
 - Voluminous and/or frequent correspondence;
 - Demanding immediate attention; and/or
- Refusal to answer relevant questions or provide information necessary to analyze or respond to the individual's complaint or inquiry.



Workers across wide-ranging industries are experiencing escalating inappropriate public behaviours



Workers report experiencing lower or deteriorating moods with increased exposure to inappropriate public behaviours






Acts of violence on Workers have increased by 25% in BC between 2018-2022

Source: [WorkSafe BC](#) (Mar 2023)

“Canadian intelligence officials say threatening rhetoric is increasingly seen as a legitimate way to express frustrations, grievances and dissent, fueling a surge of often violent threats against elected and public officials.”

Source: [Global News](#) (Jul 2024)

3 Relevant Laws, Regulations & Policies

Jurisdiction	Law, Regulation or Policy	Description	Considerations
	Canadian Human Rights Act	Designed to ensure equality of opportunity by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, age, sex and a variety of other categories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects individuals from discrimination and promotes equality at the federal level and for federally regulated sectors
	Criminal Code of Canada	Defines criminal offenses, sets out the procedures for prosecution, and establishes the penalties for those convicted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate behaviour reported to police often does not meet threshold to lay a charge
	BC Human Rights Code	Law in BC that aims to protect individuals from discrimination and promote equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects against discrimination and ensures equal access to services available to the public and applies to individuals and entities within British Columbia.
	Workers Compensation Act	Sets out the general duties of employers, workers and supervisors to ensure or protect the health and safety of workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the legal authority and framework for WorkSafeBC CoV has a legal obligation to address harassment and violence in the workplace that puts our employees at risk.
	Occupational Health & Safety Regulation	Contains legal requirements that must be met by all workplaces under the inspectional jurisdiction of WorkSafeBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers must have policies and procedures in place to protect workers from the risk of violence, and to provide instruction to workers. Employers must implement controls to eliminate or minimize risks. WorkSafeBC is proposing to replace current regulations with a single comprehensive framework
	Respect in the Workplace	Policy is to support a work environment in which every person is treated with respect and dignity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not apply to the public. Does not address inappropriate public behaviour. CoV can not require the public to participate in an investigation
	Departmental or Operational policies	Many departments have developed Behavioral Expectation requirements for the public when using public facilities. (e.g., social operations, shelters, recreation centres)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, service-area focused and does not address behaviour in the public realm (i.e., sidewalks, via phone and online).

4 5 Key Public Behaviour Concerns from Staff

Inappropriate public behaviours are experienced across entire organization

Example Public Facing Teams

- Animal Control Officers
- Park Rangers
- Sanitation Workers
- Parking Enforcement Officers
- 3-1-1 Contact Centre
- Social Operations Centres
- Fire & Rescue Services
- Homelessness Services
- Non-Market Housing Operations
- Building By-law Inspectors
- Civic Engagement Team
- Revenue Services
- Permitting Services
- Planning Department
- Privacy Office
- ...and many more



What we heard

1. Incidents are **increasing in numbers and severity**
2. Incidents are impacting **physical and psychological health**
3. Incidents are impacting **personal lives**
4. Incidents have become **regular occurrences.**
5. More **guidance needed** for difficult situations

Common behaviours experienced:

- ➔ Unproductive communication
- ➔ Intimidation
- ➔ Verbal aggression
- ➔ Humiliation
- ➔ Threats
- ➔ Physical Violence

Through all contact channels:

- ➔ In the field and in the public realm
- ➔ At service counters
- ➔ During public consultations
- ➔ During Council/Board meetings
- ➔ On the phone
- ➔ Through email conversations
- ➔ Through social media posts

5 Staff Stories of Inappropriate Public Behaviours

Animal Control

- ▶ Unpredictable dogs and dog owners not respecting their work
- ▶ Explosive behaviour of dogs and more aggressive dogs

Sanitation

- ▶ Experiencing anything from harassment to thrown items and chokeholds
- ▶ Veiled threats online referencing staff's obituaries

3-1-1 Contact Centre

- ▶ Aggressive callers, swearing and making derogatory comments about staff
- ▶ 2 Individuals calling 241 resp. 443 times in 2024 with limited business value.

Park Rangers

- ▶ Negative postings online and on posters containing personal information
- ▶ Two violent incidents per month during first half of 2024

Parking Enforcement




- ▶ Frequent (daily) verbal abuse or threats while on patrol
- ▶ 1 assault every 2 weeks in 2023 and increasing

Fire & Rescue Services

- ▶ A firefighter's attempt to help turned into an attack by the person they were assisting.
- ▶ Urban Compliance team members are often subject to racist remarks from residents when doing fire inspections.

Note: Representative examples of types of incidents occurring across the organization

6 Updating our Violence Prevention Program

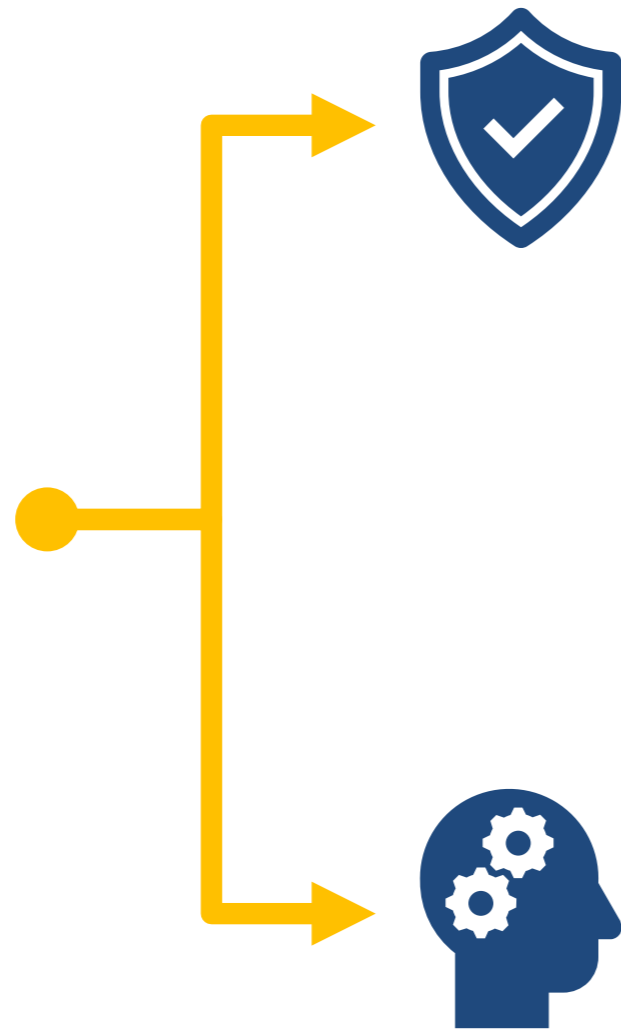
WORK TYPE	✓ RECENTLY COMPLETED	🔄 UNDERWAY	🕒 PLANNED
 <p>Regulations & Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rolled out updated <i>Respect in the Workplace</i> policy <i>(update combined the Respectful Workplace Policy and the Human Rights and Harassment policy into one policy)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing and implementing behavioural expectations across all areas of public service ▪ Updating bylaws or creating new bylaw to address expectations of public behaviour toward staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update <i>Respect In The Workplace Policy</i> ▪ Update <i>Prevent Violence In The Workplace Policy</i> ▪ Update By-laws ▪ Incorporate upcoming WSBC requirements ▪ Provide staff with disengagement guidance and support ▪ Expand implementation of procedures for staged warnings before service impacts (e.g., access restrictions, service refusals, etc.)
 <p>Preventative Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Removed staff directory from public website (QuickFind) ▪ Implemented screening at City Hall ▪ Educated specific customer groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Piloting different uniforms ▪ Exploring feasibility of body worn camera pilot ▪ Enhancing security at City Hall ▪ Increasing situational awareness ▪ Ongoing training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update and expand current training materials ▪ Assess and evaluate new equipment and technology
 <p>Response & Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Added additional departments to centralized reporting software ▪ Provided access to Connect-to-Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhancing staff support ▪ Monitoring cases through the courts ▪ Expanding and aligning incident reporting & records keeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardize metrics across City departments ▪ Continue to use data analysis to support program adjustments ▪ Enhance standard response procedures across City ▪ Improve current training materials

7 Improving Safety for Staff: What the Public will see



Addressing the Issues

1. Incidents are **increasing in numbers and severity**
2. Incidents are impacting **staff physical and psychological health**
3. Incidents are impacting **personal lives**
4. Incidents have become **regular occurrences**
5. More **guidance needed** for difficult situations



PREVENTION

- ◆ Clarification of **public behaviour expectations** across all public facing services in Bylaw and/or Policy, whether the service is offered in a City facility or not.
- ◆ Clear expression of **potential consequences** of inappropriate conduct or treatment of COV staff.
- ◆ Increased **disengagement by staff and intervention** by management and/or security services.
- ◆ Increased **measures to ensure staff safety**, such as security presence, body-worn cameras, administrative consequences



RESPONSE

- ◆ Expanded implementation of **administrative consequences** of non-compliance.
- ◆ Procedurally-fair, **staged approach to inappropriate customer behaviour**: i.e., stepped warnings/notices, similar to what is already implemented in many public facilities and services.
- ◆ Consequences could include a **range of impacts**: restrictions on contact with certain staff, access restrictions, denial of service, or pursuit of legal remedies. Appeal process will be provided.

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