

## DRAFT RESOLUTION

Re: Complimentary City Parking for Veterans

THAT Council directs staff to review and report back to Council on options to grant year-round complimentary parking to vehicles bearing a “veteran” license plate for all City of Kelowna on-street parking.

### BACKGROUND:

Councillor Cannan indicated their intent to bring forward a resolution regarding year-round complimentary parking for veterans on all City on-street parking on November 4, 2024.

### COUNCILLOR CANNAN’S COMMENTS:

Councillor Dehart and myself have been approached by various members of the community, including Kelowna Legion Branch #26, requesting the city provide year-round complimentary parking to our Veterans (Legion letter attached).

The actual number of vehicles registered in Kelowna displaying BC Veterans license plates was 391 as of the end of December 2023 (see attached ICBC report for more details).

Of those 391 vehicles, a portion of those veterans will also have accessible parking permits which already provides for free parking in accessible on-street stalls and City parking lots. I submit that the proportionate numbers of veterans who have accessible parking permits will be relatively similar across BC.

For example, the City of Surrey which has a population about four times the size of Kelowna, has approximately 1,600 veteran's plates registered to vehicles with addresses in Surrey. The City of Surrey has had a complimentary parking policy for veterans since 2008.

This parking policy would reciprocate the complimentary veterans parking already offered in numerous other cities in BC. In addition to the City of Surrey, other BC municipalities providing free parking to Veterans includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Penticton
- Vernon
- Kamloops
- White Rock
- Surrey
- Port Moody
- New Westminster

- Richmond
- Coquitlam
- Vancouver
- Prince George

In 2005, in recognition of the federal government's declaration of that year as the "Year of the Veteran," Kelowna City Council approved a temporary no-charge parking policy for veterans. While the measure was extended until May 2006, it was later rescinded and has not been reintroduced. It appears there was no significant impact on parking meter revenues in 2005 in comparison to previous or subsequent years.

#### **ELIGIBILITY:**

To be eligible for free parking, veterans need to have a **Veteran's License Plate**, which is available through the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) in collaboration with the BC Veterans Commemorative Association.

#### **POLICY RATIONALE:**

Supporting a policy that provides complimentary parking for veterans can be seen as a way to honor their service and sacrifice while also addressing practical needs. Here are several reasons why such a policy could be beneficial:

##### **1. Recognizing Service and Sacrifice**

- **A Gesture of Gratitude:** Veterans have often risked their lives and limb for defense of the country. They have fought to provide freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law for all Canadians. Providing complimentary parking can be a small but meaningful way to express appreciation for their sacrifices. It's a visible acknowledgment that our community and society values their service.
- **Symbol of Respect:** Rather than one day a year at Remembrance Day, free parking can be part of a broader effort to honor veterans for their contributions to national security and public service. It shows that we recognize their unique role in society.

##### **2. Practical Benefits for Veterans**

- **Convenience:** Many veterans may have mobility challenges or health conditions stemming from their service. Complimentary parking, especially in key areas, makes accessing services, healthcare, and businesses easier for them.  
**This is addressed primarily through accessible parking passes and accessible on-street parking spots (handicap stalls).** However, there is a limited number of designated handicap stalls on each block. Providing complimentary on-street parking for all veterans would expand the free parking options for those veterans with accessible parking passes when the designated handicap stalls are occupied in any given block.
- **Financial Relief:** Many veterans live on fixed incomes or receive disability benefits. Providing free parking can help reduce their living expenses, particularly in areas where parking fees are high.
- **Access to Services:** Veterans often require frequent medical appointments or other services. Free parking ensures they have easier access without the added burden of parking costs.

##### **3. Promoting Inclusivity and Equal Access**

- **Support for Disabled Veterans:** A significant number of veterans live with disabilities, which can make even routine activities, such as visiting a store or healthcare facility, more difficult. Providing free parking near these venues can reduce some of the challenges they face.
- **Encouraging Participation in Civic Life:** Veterans who may face barriers to transportation or parking fees might be less likely to engage in community events or other public activities. Complimentary parking can help ensure they are able to take part in both civic and social life without undue hardship.

#### 4. Encouraging Public Recognition and Community Building

- **Setting a Positive Example:** Offering free parking is one way to foster a sense of community and collective responsibility. It sets an example of how a society can care for those who have served it. It can inspire other communities or businesses to implement similar supportive policies for veterans.
- **Building Trust and Support:** Veterans and their families might feel more connected to their communities and government when they see tangible, thoughtful policies being enacted in their favor. It fosters goodwill and reinforces a culture of respect and support for veterans.

#### 5. Promoting Awareness of Veterans' Needs

- **Public Education:** By offering complimentary parking to veterans, our local government and businesses can help raise awareness about the challenges veterans face in civilian life. It brings attention to issues like disability, mobility limitations, and the transition to civilian life that some veterans experience after their service.
- **Building Relationships with Veterans' Groups:** Supporting policies like free parking can strengthen the relationship between veterans' organizations, local governments, and the general public, creating a stronger network of support for veterans' needs.

#### 6. Cost-Effective Public Policy

- **Minimal Financial Impact:** Providing complimentary parking will be a relatively low-cost for our local government. The policy can be implemented in a way that balances the need for respect and support with responsible budgeting.
- **Encouraging Economic Participation:** If free parking is offered at all metered parking locations, veterans may be more likely to visit the Downtown and South Pandosy business establishments, boosting local businesses and contributing to the economy.

#### CLOSING COMMENTS:

In summary, I believe the City of Kelowna has a strong history of supporting our veterans. The exceptional community turnout at our recent Remembrance Day ceremony services was a prime example.

By Council implementing a policy of complimentary parking for veterans is another simple yet respectful way to show appreciation for their service. This policy is also a practical means of helping veterans lead more convenient, accessible, and financially sustainable lives. After all, many veterans are living on a fixed income and are struggling due to inflationary pressures.

This parking policy is a relatively modest yet powerful gesture that can enhance the well-being of veterans while fostering a culture of respect and recognition in society.

LEST WE FORGET!

Date: November 18, 2024