

A Request to Add Supplementary Parties to the List of Residents Eligible To Receive Parking Passes in the Town of the Blue Mountains

Submission Abstract:

At the inception of Paid Parking circa June 2020, the Town of the Blue Mountains (TBM) voted to issue two, rearview-mirror hanging tags to each resident household. There is no recollection that these tags were vehicle specific, but were considered as a household gratuity available for use by any member of a resident family as a 1-tag per 1-vehicle-at-a-time free parking pass.

In 2024, the TBM Council recently approved a revision to the existing program that now requires specific vehicle registration linking it to an identified resident, qualified by a stringent list of eligibility prerequisites that on its face-value interpretation, excludes the spouse / partner of the property owner and all members of the property owner's immediate family.

It is understood and accepted that the Town now wishes to create a more cost-effective parking enforcement and revenue generating business model, however, there are numerous extenuating circumstances that had been included in the former tag system that now are not incorporated into the new program. This submission wishes to address some of these and requests that an exemption and reinstatement process now be integrated into this program.

Historical Background:

We built our family chalet at [REDACTED] in Craigeith in 1985 and with our 3 children have been weekend residents both summer and winter ever since. Besides paying our taxes, we have supported local service businesses and tradespeople, retail stores, community charities, the Harbour, ski clubs and have partaken of and enjoyed all that the area has to offer for over 39 years. My wife and I are now in our 80's and our children are in their 50's. We have instilled in them and all our grandchildren the tradition of weekendening and vacationing at "Blue".

When the Town first issued designated resident Parking Passes, the usual procedure for us and I assume most other households was to leave them by the front door so that a tag would be available for any family member planning to visit one of the designated locations. Under the new system, the Parking Pass Regulations contains both incremental restrictions and introduces discriminatory elements in its functional application.

Restrictive Eligibility:

The Town's webpage, on its *Frequently Asked Questions* section clearly restricts the eligibility to receive a Parking Pass exclusively only to approved "Residents" of the TBM.

In its expanded context a "Resident" is defined as being one or more of:

- Individuals who are permitted to vote in The Blue Mountains Municipal Elections
- Property owners and residential tenants
- A person with an approved photo ID that includes a TBM address or another acceptable document
- A child of a resident who is eligible to vote in The Blue Mountains
- One who can prove their TBM residency through approved documentation

Under these specific and restrictive conditions, since our chalet is registered under my wife's name, I am ineligible as the spouse of the property owner as are my adult children to receive a parking pass for our respective vehicles.

In discussion with some of my up-north friends and neighbors, I have learned of their dissatisfaction with this new regulation. For example, the program excludes and discriminates against the following:

- A Thornbury friend recently has transferred the ownership of his chalet to his oldest son for estate purposes but he and his wife still retain regular use of the property.
- A neighbour's sons and their young families take turns having a weeks' vacation at his chalet both summer and winter.
- One of my sons stays at our chalet during winter to ski and summer to bike and hike with his family each year. (For context, this son was 10 years old when he helped me physically build the cottage and at the same time, create indelible memories that he too values and wants to share with his young children.)

I have requested from Members of our street Association that they also voice their opinions and comments as to how this regulation policy either excludes or impact them. In addition, I have been made aware of another TBM resident who no longer drives but has in the past enjoyed the occasional summer outing with his caregiver driven in her car to local parks and the Harbor.

Under the restrictions of this new program all these people no longer qualify for a parking pass.

In addition, the Town has assumed that everyone owns a smart phone or even carries a phone with them when they visit the beach. The requirement to use the "HonkMobile app or call-in" to pay for parking discriminates against those citizens who do not own the appropriate technology and disadvantages primarily those seniors who may lack the technical skills to use them for this purpose.

Existing Program Application:

In actual practice, the Town is already making discretionary exceptions. Further to correspondence I had with your Mr. Corey Ellis pertaining to my personal eligibility regarding a second car, he courteously suggested that I send him a copy of my Property Tax Bill along with the registration for both my wife’s and my vehicles. Just hours later, I received a terse “DoNotReply” email from Laserfiche.com stating, *“Your licence plates have been successfully registered for the 2024 year.”*

Suggested Exemption Proposal:

It is understood that the Town wishes to manage parking and where possible, increase revenue through day-trip visitor and tourist-paid parking fees. However, as a past precedent, each resident household has received free household parking passes funded through their property tax contributions.

In discussion with some of my neighbours and our Association a simple solution might be:

Allow each household to add the licence plate number of any immediate family member, a pre-designated caregiver, or other acceptably authorized individual up to a maximum number of ____ per resident property. This option could easily and inexpensively be included in the Registration Webpage and requisitioned by a simple, low-data entry format that identifies the relationship of the applicant to the Roll No. owner ie: son, daughter, companion, caregiver, long-term renter etc. There could be an attestation checkbox that confirms that *“The information provided is certified to be true.”* including the signature of the registered owner.

The potential for abuse under this revised program is no greater than that of the old physical mirror tags or by a resident loaning their car to another family member. Should the Town wish to be more restrictive, the additional plate authorizations could be limited to a maximum number per household, exclude short-term renters, be specific to calendar periods and/or automatically expire on an annual basis.

Conclusion:

TBM and businesses in the surrounding area increasingly reap the benefits from the revenue brought in from both tourism and weekenders in addition to what is generated by the permanent residents. The restrictive structure of the current parking pass program is in our opinion, short-sighted and appears to be viewed through a lens that fails to recognize the full economic value of a transitory weekend population.

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