

Municipal Scan - Unpaid Parking Tickets in Saskatchewan

Three questions were asked of bylaw enforcement areas for each Saskatchewan municipality:

- 1) How do you approach unpaid parking tickets?
- 2) What are the specific challenges related to enforcing unpaid parking tickets?
- 3) Would you support changes to provincial legislation to make it easier for cities to recoup unpaid parking tickets?

Multiple efforts were made to contact each urban municipality in Saskatchewan on this topic. As of March 9, 2022, Martensville, North Battleford, and Warman have not responded.

Estevan

Two weeks after a ticket is issued, the fine increases and a notice is sent to the registered owner of the vehicle to notify them that payment is due within two weeks. If the ticket remains unpaid after that, the owner is contacted by phone, giving them at least another week. If at that time the ticket remains unpaid with no communication, then a summons is generated. After the summons is approved, a final courtesy call is made to the owner informing them of the summons. The summons is served with the information that should the ticket be paid prior to the first appearance the matter will be withdrawn from court proceedings.

Specific challenges Estevan faces are out-of-province vehicles. Most out-of-province offenders who are charged under the Traffic bylaw do not pay. A lot of time and resources are spent in the effort to find them and hold them accountable for the unpaid fines. Having to rely on a third-party company to serve a summons for the tickets can be difficult and challenging as well.

Estevan bylaw enforcement would be in support of expanding legislative options as it will make it easier to collect fines.

Humboldt

Once a ticket is issued, depending on the offence, the offender has 72 hours to pay a reduced amount, or the full amount is due within 10 days. If the offender doesn't pay within 10 days, a reminder letter is sent out at the end of the month stating if they do not pay the full amount, a summons will be issued. If the ticket is still unpaid at that point, the City of Humboldt's (City) Solicitor sends out a letter compelling the offender to pay by a certain date, or a summons will be issued.

Court capacity is the primary challenge for Humboldt's enforcement. The City currently uses the Solicitor to address unpaid tickets in court with costs for the City often exceeding the fine amount. Establishing a bylaw court administered through a justice of the peace may be an effective way to deal with this challenge.

Humboldt bylaw enforcement would be in support of expanding legislative options.

Meadow Lake

A ticket is issued on a violation notice. The offender has 30 days to pay or dispute the ticket. If the ticket is unpaid, the City of Meadow Lake issues a summons to have the ticket addressed by traffic court/bylaw court which is presided over by a Justice of the Peace (occurs once per month). If the offender fails to attend, a default conviction is asked for and usually obtained. A trial may occur with a plea of not guilty.

The main challenge for Meadow Lake is that municipal tickets are dealt with through the court process, but it is up to the municipality to collect payment. The latter poses challenges for Meadow Lake administration.

Meadow Lake bylaw enforcement would be in support of expanding legislative options, especially as it relates to how fines are collected.

Melfort

The City of Melfort is now going through its Solicitor's office to receive unpaid violations through the collections process. They are now including warning text on each ticket to inform offenders that the ticket will be forwarded to collections agencies if it remains unpaid.

Challenges include a lack of serious consequences for offenders that do not pay their fines.

Melfort bylaw enforcement would support moving to a system that makes enforcement and fine recovery easier.

Melville

The current approach for unpaid parking tickets is as follows:

- A ticket is issued and a reminder letter sent after 15 days.
- Should the ticket remain unpaid:
 - If the vehicle location is known, a tow notice is placed on the vehicle and it can be seized to the impound lot as per the *Cities Act*.
 - If the vehicle location is not known, the ticket is usually written off.

Challenges include the enforcement of unpaid fines on out-of-province vehicles. Anyone with non-Saskatchewan plates can simply not pay the fine and nothing can be done. A Bylaw Court has not been established in the Melville area.

Melville bylaw enforcement would support changes to legislation to make fine collection easier.

Moose Jaw

Typically, City of Moose Jaw (City) parking tickets move from court to a default conviction. After this point, the fine collection ends. Moose Jaw also has an alternative measures approach where offenders can work off their parking tickets through community service.

Challenges in Moose Jaw involve the enforcement process.

Moose Jaw Bylaw Enforcement would be in support of expanding legislative options.

Prince Albert

Prince Albert's enforcement section tows any vehicle belonging to a registered owner once a ticket under that registered owner's name reaches an enforcement-required status.

Prince Albert's biggest challenge is the enforcement-required status is typically on vehicles from outside the city of Prince Albert. The manual process of finding other vehicles under a registered owner is tedious. Typically, vehicles that have a parking ticket are registered under license plates in the registered owner's name for a short duration.

Prince Albert bylaw enforcement would support a change to legislation as the method of towing or liens does not result in much success.

Regina

While the City of Regina has further regulatory options to address unpaid parking tickets, Regina City Council has opted for the collection agency route and offering payment plans, but in some extreme cases, vehicle seizure has been explored.

Regina City Council has generally been apprehensive to choose harsher enforcement approaches. Regina has utilized payment plans and lien cards, both of which did not work. In approximately 2016, there was a call to collect unpaid parking fines. At this time, approximately 20,000 accounts were sent to a collection agency. This step had some success initially, but the process lost its effect during COVID. Regina was going to move forward with vehicle seizures; however, COVID stopped that plan. Regina has never seized or sold a vehicle for parking tickets. They no longer use the lien approach. Collection agencies are still used but are no longer very effective.

Swift Current

Approximately once per year, the bylaw enforcement department focuses on searching for vehicles belonging to individuals with outstanding fines. Vehicles are towed and impounded, and the individual is required to pay all outstanding parking tickets before they are able to pay the towing/storage fees to reclaim the vehicle. Letters are sent to individuals listing their outstanding fines and fees, and that their vehicle may be seized at any point in the future if they don't pay by a certain date. The letters are intended to provide an opportunity for the registered owner to pay, but also to help eliminate arguments once their vehicle is towed; however, these letters are largely unsuccessful.

Limited resources and capacity are cited as the main challenges for the City of Swift Current's efforts to recoup unpaid parking fines. Enforcement officers must spend a lot of time to locate vehicles belonging to individuals with outstanding fines. Officers must manually check the last known address, places of work, social media, etc. for signs that the individuals may still be in the Swift Current area. If there is no information suggesting the person is in the Swift Current area, no attempts are made to locate the individual/vehicle.

Swift Current Bylaw Enforcement would be in support of expanding legislative options.

Weyburn

Once a parking ticket is issued and goes unpaid after 10 days, a final notice goes out. If another 10 to 20 days pass and the ticket is still unpaid, a letter is sent to the registered owner. If it remains unpaid, it goes to court summons. No attempts are made to boot or tow vehicles for unpaid parking tickets. In some cases, vehicles are towed if the vehicle is unregistered and has more than one ticket. Once at court summons, dependent on the judge, warrants may be issued or unpaid fines may get sent to collections, etc. Any unpaid tickets for registered owners from out of province are usually cancelled.

Receiving a summons from the court is often a challenge, especially if the vehicle is from outside of Weyburn.

Weyburn Bylaw Enforcement would be in favour of improving the legislation, especially if it includes license non-renewal.

Yorkton

After a ticket is issued, the offender has 10 days to pay at a reduced fine. Two to four weeks later, a reminder notice is sent for payment of the ticket's full amount. Two weeks after this, a summons is issued for the offender to appear at provincial court. The City of Yorkton is hoping to bring in a Justice of the Peace and create a bylaw court just so they can continue prosecuting parking tickets and not have to go through provincial court.

Provincial courts often do not accept summons. The COVID pandemic presented additional challenges as parking related summons are not a high priority for the provincial court.

Yorkton Bylaw Enforcement would be in favour of improving the legislation.