

Veteran Parking Program

ISSUE

The Veteran Parking Program (Parking Program) was established to provide recognition of the service local Veterans provided to the country. The Standing Policy Committee on Transportation has recently discussed a modification to the Parking Program.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

1. That a 15-month pilot program which permits any driver with a valid SGI Veteran licence plate to park in Saskatoon pay parking zones free-of-charge within the posted time restrictions, be approved; and
2. That the City Solicitor be requested to prepare proposed amendments to Bylaw No. 7200, Traffic Bylaw, 1991, effective November 1, 2022.

BACKGROUND

At the September 7, 2021 meeting of the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation, it was resolved:

“that the Administration report back with potential changes to the Veterans Parking Program, that allows all Veterans, whether they live in the city or not, to park for free either through applying for the program or through the use of Veterans’ plates including any cost implications.”

This report outlines proposed changes to the Parking Program that would allow all Veterans, whether they reside in Saskatoon or not, to park for free either through applying for the program or by obtaining Veteran license plates through Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI).

The Parking Program was established in 2005 as a pilot and in 2008 was subsequently approved to continue as a permanent program. Parking Program application forms are available on the City of Saskatoon (City) Veteran Parking Program webpage (www.saskatoon.ca/veteranparking) and can be submitted for review by a member of the Parking Services team. Physical permits are not issued for the Parking Program. Approved licence plates are updated in the Parking Services database that is referenced when scanned or searched by Parking Services staff.

If the applicant is deemed eligible based on the criteria, an approval letter is sent informing the applicant their licence plate is now part of the Parking Program database. If the application is denied, a letter is sent to the applicant informing them of the reason behind the application denial.

Veteran Parking Program

Presently, 226 vehicles are listed in the Parking Services Parking Program database. In 2021, 12 new Parking Program applications were processed. No administrative fees are charged for processing or administration.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Currently, SGI's criteria for Veteran licence plate issuance is broader than the Parking Program's criteria. SGI's Veteran eligibility is administered by the Saskatchewan Command of the Royal Canadian Legion in accordance with the following criteria:

- 1) Served in WWII or in Korea during the Korean War, as a member:
 - a) of the Canadian Forces;
 - b) of an Allied Force; and/or
 - c) of the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command.OR
- 2) Served a minimum of 3 full-time paid years in the Canadian Regular Forces or have 1,095 paid days of Reserve Force Service.
OR
- 3) Served in NATO operations or as a United Nations peacekeeping force member, either in:
 - a) the Canadian Forces and Reserve Force;
 - b) the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
 - c) another Canadian Police force; or
 - d) an Allied force.

According to SGI, as of February 1, 2022 there were 1,695 registered Veteran licence plates in Saskatchewan with 338 located in Saskatoon. Veteran plates cannot be transferred to subsequent registered owners following cancellation by the original registered owner.

As outlined in Section 56.1 of Bylaw No. 7200, Traffic Bylaw, 1991, (Traffic Bylaw) an applicant is eligible for a Veteran parking permit if they:

- 1) Have a registered Veteran licence plate through SGI;
- 2) Served overseas as a member of the Canadian Forces, an allied force, the Merchant Navy or Ferry Command in WWI, WWII, the Korean War or with the United Nations Peacekeepers;
- 3) Reside within a 30-kilometre radius of the Saskatoon city limits; and
- 4) Are the owner and principal operator of the vehicle for which the permit is being sought.

An approved applicant is limited to one non-transferable Parking Permit which permits on-street parking only and is valid within the maximum allowable parking time indicated by signage.

Veteran Parking Program

Public Consultation

Consultation was completed with Veterans Affairs Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Anavets (Army, Navy and Airforce Veterans), and the North Saskatchewan Regiment based in Saskatoon. General themes emerged with stakeholders expressing frustration on differing allowances between cities, and on the City's definition of a Veteran versus the definition established by the Legion and Veterans Affairs; a summary of this consultation is included in Appendix 1.

External Scan

Prince Albert, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Windsor, Ontario each allow free parking for Veterans using the respective provincial Veteran License Plate program. Edmonton, Kelowna, Victoria, and Halifax do not provide a program for Veteran parking. Winnipeg and Calgary have a Veteran's Parking program but limit the amount of free and/or complimentary parking per month to those qualifying for the program. In Winnipeg, veteran plates are entitled to complimentary parking at meters on April 9 (Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge) and June 6 (Anniversary of D-Day). Each year, registered owners of veteran license plates are entitled to up to 20 hours of complimentary on-street parking per year. Calgary has a similar program where veterans with a valid veteran's licence plate can receive up to \$10 per month in free parking. Veterans living in Calgary that do not have a veteran's plate are required to provide documentation on proof of service to be eligible for this program.

In October 2021, Vancouver updated their bylaw to permit those operating a vehicle with a Veteran license plate to be exempt from paying fees for on-street metered parking and off-street City of Vancouver-owned parking facilities. This update followed a one-year pilot project in Vancouver where it was determined that granting free parking permissions to drivers with Veteran licence plates had limited impact on parking demand and did not lead to a negative impact on parking revenues; further information has been included in Appendix 2.

Pilot Program

Modifying the current Parking Program, as outlined in this report, would shift control, of the eligibility criteria and review for Veteran parking, from the City to SGI. A modification of the Parking Program would mean the City of Saskatoon would adopt the definition of veteran from the Royal Canadian Legion and would need to outline eligibility criteria and other requirements in the Traffic Bylaw. This move is consistent with approaches in other Saskatchewan municipalities. Further information is included in Appendix 2. One note to highlight related the proposed change, is that Administration is aware SGI and the Royal Canadian Legion are currently considering broadening the eligibility requirement to allow members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to be included in the criteria for eligibility of a Veteran license plate. This change would broaden the number of people eligible for Veteran licence plates, which will add additional demands on City parking inventory. Should this change occur, further reporting and consideration would be required.

A 15-month pilot program is a logical step in evaluating the financial and parking demand impacts associated with adjusting the Parking Program. Without an evaluation period, it

is difficult to gauge what the impacts will be. The proposed pilot project would allow for any vehicle with a valid SGI Veteran plate to park for free in pay parking zones within the posted time restrictions. Having a valid SGI Veteran plate is already a criterion for the current Parking Program. Under the pilot project, the City Parking Program would be changed such that no formal application would be required. This pilot project can be administered in-house by Parking Services staff with existing resources.

The pilot program will provide Administration with an opportunity to gain data on revenue and parking supply impacts through potential methods including license plate scans and Veteran's membership surveys to properly assess the potential impacts of a long-term program shift. The pilot program will also provide an opportunity to validate findings in other jurisdictions, most notably Vancouver, when it comes to impacts on parking revenue impacts, misuse, and user feedback.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Parking revenue impacts resulting from removing the Parking Permit and relying on SGI Veteran license plates would allow a relatively greater portion of vehicles to park for free in metered areas, within posted time limits, on Saskatoon streets. However, without knowing how parking behavior will change, it is difficult to gauge the financial impact. Additionally, Administration does not have data on paid parking trips utilized by Veterans.

Given that no administrative fees are charged to users of the current Parking Program, no decreases in fee-generated revenue would result from this change to the Parking Program. Furthermore, as no physical permits are printed and application review time for staff is negligible, there are no notable cost savings realized.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, environmental, social, or other implications.

NEXT STEPS

Should Committee and ultimately City Council approve the proposed recommendations, the City Solicitor's Office will draft the necessary bylaw amendment which will be tabled at a future City Council meeting anticipated in Q3, 2022. It is recommended that the bylaw amendment come into effect on November 1, 2022 to allow time for adequate project planning and for date significance (the same month as Remembrance Day). Participating stakeholders will also be updated as this item progresses.

APPENDICES

1. Veteran Parking Program Consultation Summary
2. Municipal Scan – Veteran Parking

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Mitch Nemeth, Policy and Permitting Manager
Reviewed by: Wayne Sum, Parking Services Manager
Matt Grazier, Director of Community Standards
Approved by: Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services

SP/2022/CS/Transportation/Veteran Parking Program/gs