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VanLife & RV Parking Proposal

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REC'D CLERK'S OFFICE

CITY OF MISSISSAUGA

Thank-you for having a look at my document. I appreciate your valuable time and consideration. My purpose in presenting this document is to focus on the ever-increasing number of people who are looking for alternative ways to live as a result of the housing crisis and the inability to find or inability to pay skyrocketing costs for conventional housing solutions. If you aren't already aware, the lowest end of renting is deplorable living conditions. Society does not tolerate puppy mills and yet people are living in conditions as bad as that.

As a result, there are those of us who are choosing to live in RVs & tiny homes made in vehicles. We are generally hard-working, tax paying, responsible citizens who have chosen Mobile living as a way to provide ourselves decent shelter and make ends meet. I personally am in my 6th year living in my tiny home truck. I work for a living at a [REDACTED] gas station, despite some health issues and have never resorted to social assistance programs for income, as a matter of pride. I was able to avoid that by thinking outside the box. It is through my creative solutions that I have avoided being a burden on society and am no longer in debt. I believe strongly that I should work in any capacity that I am able. I pride myself in being a contributing member of society.

Through this document, I am asking you to consider thinking creatively as well.

Many of the people I have met along the way who are also living, pursuing or thinking about this way of living, usually start with the question "Where do you park?" It is hard to leap from a stationary home to a mobile one and where-to-park is the most difficult challenge to overcome.

There are strict by-laws about parking on the street and in city parks parking lots. Many commercial spaces erect signs prohibited overnight parking as well.

This is the subject matter I would like to discuss with you today. I certainly understand the need for the bylaw particularly in winter, as it is necessary to remove snow unimpeded.

It is my hope that creative solutions can be found for all concerned (mobile living and residents & Council members etc.) on this matter. It is my hope that the solution does not have to be a big expensive and time-consuming venture. I am hoping that the solution may be found within the current infrastructure already present.

The following are alternative affordable parking solutions that are cost effective. During these times of lack of housing in general and increasingly unaffordable deplorable housing options, we need to create options for people immediately.

I do not pretend to know best how the city could handle it, but I have listed a few suggestions for your consideration. Perhaps my suggestions are only a benefit as a starting point to get your own creative juices flowing.

1. Possibly a rotating schedule where overnight parking is permitted on certain nights. Perhaps overnight parking at specific city parks where the snow removal is done earlier in the evening or designated spots are vacated during specific hours. For example, say, parking is closed from 6:00pm to 9:00pm for snow removal and could be the first park to be cleared on a snowy night. Perhaps an underutilized city lot that could be used for mobile parking ONLY AT NIGHT, but not in the day.
2. Any new housing developments within the city could potentially be of use. I like to think big, and so I ask you to please imagine if it were a stipulation to get their building permits that they provide a VanLife parking zone. Much like builders are often required to include affordable housing of a certain percent.
3. Perhaps just 1 or 2 allocated spots in each park or city parking lots or city run facilities such as recreation centers, where plowing is not inhibited (ie. say in a corner? Vacated in day?)
4. Special PARKING PERMITS for a reasonable fee could offset any costs to implementing and maintaining a new system. I would also suggest here that there could be specifically annual & monthly parking passes. Also, perhaps permit charges could reflect power/no power, such as camp grounds charge differently for electric sites. I am certain this could be quite profitable for the city in a short time... "If you build it, they will come!" I am certain of that!

5. Specifically for RVs that would need to stay in place for a longer period of time, perhaps it is their responsibility to remove snow from around their units and only a lane plowed by Snowplows.

Please consider that by accommodating people who are finding alternative ways of living such as this, you are helping people to help themselves. If people can see the way, by providing them with a solution to one of the many challenges of living a mobile life, I feel you would have fewer people resorting to living in their cars, and still others who will support themselves in this way instead of waiting till it's too late and now must turn to social services which are already overburdened; OR WORSE, turning to substance abuse or succumbing to depression, which also overburden medical & social systems.

In this way, the city will be helping to ease the housing crisis & medical care crisis. I do not see it as a long-term solution but it IS an immediate and inexpensive solution. If we could catch people BEFORE they fall, how much would taxpayers save, do you think?

Finally, I would like to impart on you some of the experiences I and others have had in the last 5 years as a VanLifer. Generally, we are NO THREAT and are VERY CONSIDERATE of making NO PROBLEMS for others wherever we park. However, there are those who will become concerned with an unfamiliar vehicle appearing in their neighborhoods. Imaginations seem get

the better of some folks. At numerous times, we've had police knocking on our vehicles to make inquiries. It's understandable really, we all deserve to feel safe in our homes! So if there are proper places where we are permitted to park, ALL those involved will have peace of mind and fewer nuisance calls to the police wasting valuable tax dollars.

Ironically, in most places, we have gone to great lengths to better the areas in which we park, often in the form of picking up trash. One place in particular was so badly littered, I organized a community cleanup event through the City of Orillia.

I think you will find that in general RV & VanLife folks are eco-minded. One becomes critically aware of their consumption of water and electricity, as well as how much waste is being produced because one has to stay on top of it daily. When you have to haul your freshwater in and your waste out you are going to try and make it last. Many of us have solar to reduce the need for fuel for generators.

Additionally, where personally I needed to use Food Banks in the past, I am now a contributor to The Sharing Place as a result of my affordable housing solution.

So, my point here is, in general, finding a solution will be advantageous for ALL citizens.

RV & VanLifers in the community are an asset, not a liability!

When I put myself in your shoes, I imagine concern for exactly what you would be getting into by welcoming us into the city.

Perhaps acquiring a special PARKING PERMIT includes proof of toileting facilities (pump out service for RVs/and a heating solution maybe as well?) on board. I am an open book and I will happily share with you my responsible solutions. But I will leave that up to you to inquire after, as it maybe a little too much information for some. I do however assure you, most DO NOT DUMP our waste & garbage by the roadside or irresponsibly in any way. Regardless, perhaps if parking spots were made near facilities where toilets were also available, it would be peace of mind for all. Fortunately, city parks already have garbage and recycling available, so that is one problem solved already.

I would like to address that in the 5 and 1/2 years that I have been living this way have only seen one RV dumping their waste recklessly (directly on a Walmart parking lot). I have a strong suspicion that if a responsible solution were available, this one individual would happily use it! When somebody is approaching the breaking point, it may not be within their abilities to come up with a better solution.

Finally, I would like you to know that much effort has gone into finding a paid parking solution. Unfortunately liability seems to be the underlying issue. Perhaps you have already thought of that as a problem for the city. Consider however how much cleaning up homeless

encampments is costing the city now. Are you going to stop this bleeding patient; stem the flow? Or is it really better just to keep mopping up the blood already spilled on the ground?

I hope you will see that the city has an opportunity to be a LEADER in this matter. Thank you very much for taking the time to read through to the end and allowing me to have my say. I invite you to ask me any questions or discuss further. I am happy to correspond with any of you.

Respectfully,

Valerie Verhey

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