

Does free parking downtown for restricted or closed businesses make sense?

By **Dan Gray** - January 8, 2022 @ 2:09 pm



In a motion which will be before council Monday, there is a push for free parking in the downtown core.

Proposed by Councillor's Shoemaker and Scott, the motion would see the city lose out on any parking income brought in, to support downtown businesses which, for many, have found themselves having to close their doors due to current COVID-19 restrictions.



Whereas on January 5, 2022, the provincial government entered Stage II COVID restrictions requiring, among other things, the closure of indoor dining, and reduced capacity in retail settings until at least January 26, 2022; and Whereas in past lockdowns, the City of Sault Ste. Marie has waived parking fees downtown in an effort to assist business in the downtown core to the greatest degree possible;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that the City of Sault Ste. Marie waive downtown paid parking until the provincial restrictions on businesses are lifted.

As the motion states, bars and restaurants in the core are closed. Many other businesses are restricted due to the provincial mandate.

Sault Police Service just noted that traffic throughout the city was down over the holiday period, and they made the correlation with the ongoing restrictions.

For the 2022 Budget, revenue for parking in Sault Ste. Marie is projected at \$331,757 or over \$6,300 a week.

The same budget shows that parking actually costs the city taxpayer over \$210,000 a year on the tax levy.

Do councillors believe the cost in lost revenue justifies the benefit to the few businesses which are able to continue operating under the current restrictions?

Does free parking downtown encourage you to spend money in the core?

Let us know your thoughts in our community poll and in the comment section.

Do you feel that free parking in the downtown core will benefit businesses, many whose operation is significantly restricted or closed?

- ☐ Yes; any measures will help out
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Undecided

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A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to

bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

