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Halifax Regional Council  
May 13, 2003

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque".

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Labrecque, Director, Real Property & Asset Management

**DATE:** May 1, 2003

**SUBJECT:** Parking Improvements - Grand Parade

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

A request from Councillors to address unauthorized parking in the Grand Parade

## BACKGROUND

The Grand Parade is the historic heart of the Halifax. Firmly established as the center of the city in the original town survey of 1750, it continues to function as a military parade ground, public gathering spot, location for special events, and as a setting for City Hall and St. Pauls Church.

The issue of parking within the parade has been dealt with by successive councils. City of Halifax Ordinance 10A - Respecting the Grand Parade emphasizes the right of the municipality to regulate parking of vehicles on the Grand Parade.

Several long standing regulatory practices exist with regards to vehicles in the Grand Parade;

1. **Accommodation of vehicular needs of St. Pauls Church.** These needs include parking for the Rector of St. Pauls Church, accommodation for ceremonial vehicles associated with Church events including weddings and funerals in St. Pauls Plaza. In addition parking for elderly and disabled parishioners is permitted for Sunday morning services. This practice stems from the closure of St. Pauls Hill (Street) immediately in front of St. Pauls in the early 1970's and inclusion of these lands into the Grand Parade. This resulted in the loss of vehicular access and parking for the Church.
2. **No vehicles are to be parked in front of the Cenotaph.** As a symbol of respect for those who served and those who died, the cenotaph is not to be blocked by vehicles parked directly in front of the Cenotaph.
3. **Special events and a pedestrian environment are a priority in the Civic Plaza.** No vehicular parking is permitted in the Civic Plaza when events are scheduled. An Argyle Street entrance to the City Hall Plaza was created several years ago to eliminate the need to drive through the Civic Plaza. This served to reduce vehicle pedestrian conflict and interruption to special events. When larger events require the entire Grand Parade parking is eliminated from all areas including the City Hall Plaza.
4. **No events are scheduled for the afternoon or evenings of regular Regional Council Meetings.** Regular meetings of Regional Council generally take precedence over other events in the Grand Parade. This practice allows council to conduct the business of the municipality without the distraction or noise from events in the Grand Parade.
5. **Councillors and Senior Staff are permitted to park in the City Hall Plaza at the north end of the Grand Parade for city business.** There are limited parking spaces available to accommodate the Mayor (2), 23 councillors, Rector of St. Pauls, CAO (2), and Deputy CAO. The Municipal Clerk is permitted to park in the Grand Parade on Council nights for safety and security reasons, and one pass is issued for the Councillor Support Office. No other staff are permitted to park in the City Hall plaza with the exception of maintenance crews outlined below.

6. **Maintenance crews and contractors associated with the Grand Parade and City Hall are accommodated when space permits.** Crews and contractors who maintain the Grand Parade and City Hall are permitted to bring vehicles into the Grand Parade for those purposes. Crews and contractors are encouraged to conduct their business prior to noon to reduce congestion in the Grand Parade. A loading zone was established on the southeast corner of Duke and Argyle to help accommodate crews and city hall deliveries during short duration visits . A second loading zone is located on the north side of Argyle Street to serve the WTCC and City Hall.

## **DISCUSSION**

Currently two questions exist regarding vehicles in the Grand Parade;

### **Should vehicles be parked in the Grand Parade on a regular basis?**

Any examination of parking in the Grand Parade must balance the desire for a fully pedestrian environment with the functional requirements of City Hall and St. Pauls Church. Council has a tacit obligation to allow vehicular access to St. Pauls Church due to the elimination of St. Pauls Hill and the expansion of the Grand Parade. Meeting this obligation has not been onerous and has not met with a great deal of public concern.

The primary concern has been the issue of safety and enjoyment of the Parade for pedestrian users. To this end, the 1995 improvements to Parade Square included the creation of three separate functional areas within the square designed to accommodate competing needs. The improvements also sought to maintain the cohesiveness of the entire Parade and ensure the flexibility to join all three areas when circumstances require use of the entire square (i.e., Royal Visits etc.). The 1995 improvements also recommended an entrance to the City Hall Plaza from Argyle Street to eliminate the need to travel through the Civic Plaza to access City Hall. This was implemented in 1999. Overall these improvements have proven successful, however, these improvements are dependent on adherence and enforcement of the regulations. When properly regulated to eliminate unauthorized parking the square functions quite well. The primary issue then becomes one of aesthetics. While having vehicles park adjacent to City Hall is not a desirable aesthetic for the building, it is a necessary functional aspect of the operation of City Hall. A Centralized Councillor Support and office system, committee, council and private meeting schedules held at a range of meeting locations require convenient parking to allow councillors and senior staff to meet their obligations.

Alternatives to parking in the Civic Plaza include finding or creating nearby alternate parking. Alternate parking accommodations in the location closest to Grand Parade would cost just under \$30,000 annually. Creation of a parking area under the Grand Parade is estimated to cost millions of dollars if it was found to be physically feasible. A further alternative may be to partner in future building/parking developments in a one to two block radius of City Hall to procure adequate parking accommodation.

**If vehicles are permitted in the Grand Parade, who is permitted to park there? and how can parking best be controlled?**

Parking regulations for the Grand Parade were updated in 1997. Since that time, minor adjustments have been made in recognition of changes in administrative structure and office location. Parking is currently provided for the Mayor (2), Council, Rector of St. Pauls, the CAO (2), Deputy CAO and limited parking for the Municipal Clerk, and the Councillor Support Office.

There has been a tendency for persons not authorized to park to take advantage of empty spots within the City Hall Plaza, and for leakage of vehicles from the City Hall Plaza to the Civic Plaza, including directly in front of the Cenotaph. Periodic restatement of parking regulations has been necessary and has proven successful for a time. Invariably unauthorized vehicles creep back in. This often starts in the evenings associated with events at the Metro Centre and WTTC and during times when Council is on hiatus.

To control and enforce parking in the Grand Parade, it is the intention of staff, unless otherwise directed by Council, to install a card reader gate at the Argyle Street entrance. This solution would include:

1. Installation of a card reader gate at the Argyle Street entrance near City Hall. The appearance of the reader would be sympathetic with the historic context of the Grand Parade.
2. One access card would be issued to persons authorized to park in the City Hall Plaza. The card reader gate would be disabled and left in the closed position during special events or other times when parking is to be eliminated from the City Hall Plaza.
3. Access for maintenance crews and deliveries would be conducted through the duty commissionaire at City Hall who would have control over the gate. Maintenance crews, deliveries, and media vehicles will be encouraged to use loading zones on Duke and Argyle streets for short duration needs.
4. Access regulations and controls to St. Pauls and the Civic Plaza will remain as is however the removable bollards and lockable gates from Argyle and Barrington Streets will be checked for functionality.
5. Removable bollards will be reinstated at the north end of the travel lanes to prevent City Hall parking from leaking into the Civic Plaza.
6. During Tuesday Council sessions media equipment vehicles and senior staff will be permitted to park in the Civic Square for the purposes of attending council.
7. Notwithstanding any of the above regulations "No Parking" in front of the Cenotaph will be strictly enforced.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Cost for the installation of a card reader is approximately \$12,000. Funds are available from 03/04 Capital Account CBR 00050 Facilities Upgrade General.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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