

OPS won't enforce overnight parking ban over holidays

By Tabitha Wells

If you're worried about leaving your car somewhere or having to draw your festive activities to a close before midnight this holiday season, those fears will see a reprieve. The Orangeville Police Service says it is granting an amnesty on winter parking restrictions from Dec. 21 to Jan. 2, weather permitting.

The decision was made by Police Chief Wayne Kalinski, with endorsement from Mayor Jeremy Williams as chair of the Police Services board, to offer residents a short reprieve from the usual Town of Orangeville ban on on-street parking between 11:30 p.m. and 7:30 a.m. The idea was presented to the Chief by Mayor Williams, with the details of the amnesty hashed out over the weekend.

"This has been a long-time thorn in the side for Orangeville residents," said Mayor Williams. "We preach about not drinking and driving, then force visitors to drive home from parties. It's a dyslexic policy at best. The amnesty is a way to address the problem in the short term."

The winter parking bylaw prohibits vehicles from parking on any street (highway) in the Town, or utilizing municipal property and parking lots between the hours of 11:30 p.m. until 7:30 a.m. from December 1 to March 31 each year.

"Given the long-range weather forecast showing temperatures to be above zero degrees during the holiday season and an influx of visitors to our Town, we felt that temporarily suspending the overnight parking restrictions was the right thing to do," explained Chief Kalinski. "We continually promote against drinking and driving and this amnesty will help people make the right decision."

Mayor Williams added that officers have been asked to use their discretion to not write tickets for overnight on-street parking during the amnesty, given that the mild weather continues, and that an amnesty is not a complete overturning of the bylaw itself.

"The by-law remains in full effect, and will be enforced if the weather turns nasty," he said.

All other appropriate Town of Orangeville by-laws, including parking on a boulevard or over a sidewalk will continue to be enforced by Orangeville police. The police also ask that members of the public remember that this does not include private property.

According to Mayor Williams, the idea was originally 'floated' to him by two residents who posted the suggestion on his Facebook page earlier this month.

"It made sense, the weather co-operated, and Chief Kalinski and I came up with a great solution. I like to think of it as the Orangeville Police Service's Christmas gift to residents," said Mayor Williams.

And while the amnesty may only be temporary, Mayor Williams fully intends to bring the issue forward to come up with a better option for residents, the Town, and the plowing situations.

"As for a long term solution to the no-parking/no-drinking paradox, I will be bringing this to Council early in the New Year to allow an overdue re-think on it."