



300 Dufferin Avenue
P.O. Box 5035
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London
CANADA

March 28th, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, the CORE promotion for 2-hour free parking in the Core Area concludes on March 31st. Since this upcoming change has been widely communicated within our community, numerous local businesses have reported their concerns about the impacts they'll face.

The CORE promo has proven to be a crucial investment for enhancing our core's vitality, significantly contributing to drawing in visitors for dining, attending appointments, enjoying parks and streetscapes, and shopping both downtown and in the Core Area. Largely consisting of small businesses, the downtown area welcomed over 50 new merchants in 2023, benefiting from the availability of 2-hour free parking and proving its importance in sustaining and growing clientele.

From our recent discussion on the Mobility Master Plan 2050 Mode Share Target, it has become clear that our planning, operation, and infrastructure with respect to the various mode shares are due for evolution to meet the city's demands. While I look forward to a future where our reliance on personal vehicles and subsequent parking requirements decrease – and sooner rather than later – London's contemporary environment sees personal vehicles with the largest share of mobility at 77%. My concern is that removing free 2-hour parking raises a new barrier to a critical stream of potential visitors downtown due to the parking costs, which will impact patron access to merchants.

The Downtown Parking Strategy Update did not receive funding in the 2024-2027 Multi-Year Budget, and at present, there is an absence of any prescribed policy that manages parking and its integration Downtown and in the Core Area. An updated strategy may have considered the current downtown parking environment and its influence on revitalization. For instance, there are privately owned surface parking lots downtown that are unaffordable in price, yet they remain because demand exists translating into profit and their continuation. Further, most merchants downtown do not have spaces in front of their shops like other parts of the city with free parking, leaving the only options available to come at a cost. In our current environment, a policy that promotes cheaper options for people visiting by car lowers the average cost of parking in the Core Area as a whole and creates downward pressure on profitability in the private surface level parking lot market. This would be a push in the right direction when incentivizing such properties to convert land use for downtown revitalization.

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I fear the removal of 2-hour free parking in the Core Area will inadvertently create a new obstacle for merchants who are still grappling with the aftermath of the pandemic and are facing unique challenges not encountered by most of the city. This new obstacle will put pressure on local merchants and increase the likelihood of moving the needle towards more closures in the core. There are multiple levers Council can use to promote our Downtown and Core Area, attract people, and foster its revitalization. We must take every possible step to nurture a vibrant Downtown and Core Area as it reflects the broader well-being of the city and is foundational in London's identity. At the request of local merchants and for efforts in Downtown and Core Area revitalization, while recognizing our current environment, I am seeking your consideration and support for the following motions:

That Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to issue two-hour free parking

- a. in the Core Area for all on-street parking
- b. Municipal Parking Lots 1, 2, 3e, 3w, and 12

That Civic Administration **REPORT BACK** on the impacts and cost effectiveness of two-hour free parking in the Core Area and Municipal Lots in Q2 2025.

Respectfully

David Ferreira
City Councillor, Ward 13