

Councillor proposes cutting how long unused vehicles can park on street

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A vehicle covered in snow parked on a Winnipeg street. Coun. Janice Lukes (Waverley West) has proposed reducing the amount of time residents can keep unused vehicles on streets from 21 days to two weeks. PHOTO BY HANDOUT /Winnipeg Sun

The City of Winnipeg, through a motion by Coun. Janice Lukes is discussing the idea of reducing the number of days residents are allowed to keep unused vehicles parked on city streets.

The City's Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works (IRPW) Committee will debate the motion on Tuesday. Reasons for the discussion include Winnipeg is growing in density and newer developments contain less on-street parking. The motion says public streets are not private parking lots. Also, abandoned vehicles are a safety hazard. Currently, towing warnings are issued after a vehicle sits for 21 days. Wrecked or dismantled vehicles can also be towed.

“They park vehicles on streets for weeks and months on end,” said Lukes (Waverley West). “The problem is really amplified in the winter when we are doing residential street plows, because we can’t possibly tow every single vehicle that doesn’t move off the street, because we don’t have enough tow trucks. The plows go around them, and they become covered in snow. This year it was really noticeable the abandoned vehicles, because it snowed so much, and they just got buried. You can’t even tell it’s a car.”

Lukes said the City uses a complaints-based system for managing unmoved cars. Unless someone reports a vehicle, it stays put. If reported, a City employee marks the GPS coordinates of the vehicle. The City waits 21 days before issuing a warning. Then they wait 72 hours before towing. If the car is buried in snow, the operation fails. Lukes would like to see the grace period drop to two weeks.

“It’s most noticeable if there has been any damage on them, like if you see a broken window or a flat tire, that really seems to irk people,” said Committee member Coun. Jeff Browaty (North Kildonan). “It sort of brings down the neighbourhood too, so finding some tools to deal with abandoned vehicles is not a bad idea.”

To become policy, Lukes’ motion must pass votes in committee and council.