

July 15, 2021

Mayor Guthrie and City Councillors:

Thank you for taking a serious look at all aspects of Guelph's Sign Bylaw Review. Questions need to be asked all way round. As much as you can look at a mobile sign as another "thing" on the street, behind that, it represents much more.

Please Note:

- Mobile signs are only permitted in commercial and industrial areas.
- Mobile signs bring attention to local businesses.
- To be effective, advertising must be seen repeatedly.
- Compare Guelph's permits with local cities, not far flung locations.
- Increased spacing between signs does not increase visibility.
- Fluorescent lettering is a minor player among the signs.
- Mobile signs are not new to this city.
- Businesses need to advertise effectively to remain in business.
- Local businesses create a local economy.

*Mobile signs are only in commercial and industrial areas.* They are not in residential zones. The integrity of our residential areas remains intact. Our commercial areas are just that. For commercial use, and all the trappings that come with it. Signs in industrial areas are generally used for attracting new workers. Both are speaking to different target markets, but very local targets.

*Mobile signs offer many businesses a chance to bring attention to their name* while potential customers are in front of their place of business. This is critical, not only to attract new customers, but to remind established customers of their presence. There is a reason why Coca Cola still advertises. They are the most recognised brand name in the world, but still need to remind people to be top of mind. Coke's market is on a much larger scale than our local retailers, as is their marketing budget. Mobile signs would generally do little for Coke, but to a site specific retailer, it does a lot.

*The mantra of advertising is "Repetition, Repetition, Repetition."* A sign up for 14 days is over 50% less effective than one up for 30 days. To be realistic, less than the standard 30 days for a permit is an insult to our businesses in town. It reduces the reach of the number of passersby, as well as well as the strength of the impression on those that do see it. Unless the goal is to eliminate mobile signs completely, (as some wish to do), cutting the exposure time is not a realistic option. It takes the mobile

sign from an effective means of advertising to mere street clutter, the actual complaint being levied against them. As has been mentioned to you before, businesses choose mobile signs as a part of their marketing milieu because they work. They bring results. Because mobile signs work so well for many businesses, many try to find ways to increase their use. They don't use them to spend money; they use them to make money. There are businesses who have found that mobile signs do not work for them. For those businesses it would be just an expense, and they don't use them. Not for aesthetic reasons, but because of their particular return on investment. Municipal, Provincial, and Federal candidates all fully appreciate this fact. You know that. Try to get noticed, (much less elected), with having your election sign up for approximately one day in front of your house only. That is the equivalent exposure.

*Comparing Guelph's sign bylaws to distant cities, (like Vaughn), is like comparing house prices in a different city. Look close by. Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge all offer **6 permits** per year to their businesses. We offer **4**. Each city uses the standard 30 day period for a permit. In Kitchener, they do not charge non-profits a fee to advertise their events. We charge the full commercial amount. In Cambridge, a business does not have to give up one of their permits to host a sign for a non-profit. Let's not worry about how we look to cities far away. Let's try not to look foolish compared to our neighbours. The comparison between Stone Road or Gordon St. to Hwy 24 in Cambridge is a false one. It is much like comparing a house in Mississauga with a similar home in Guelph. The width of Hwy 24, south of the 401, as well as the traffic flow is quite different. It is the old, "comparing apples to oranges". Don't be fooled by false comparisons.*

*Increasing the distance between signs does not increase their visibility.* It does, however, decrease the number of tenants in a plaza that can present their message at any one time. The space available is already at a premium to attract customers. Do we really need to make it harder on our retailers than it already is? There are peak retail periods when businesses need to attract customers. Thinking that they can just spread out their space equally over the year does not make a bit of sense, nor serve them well. When looking at mobile signs, consider that you are looking at a Guelph business trying to capture people's attention out of need. Signage on the building helps pinpoint the location of the store. It does not stand out enough to draw people in. Only the mobile signs do that. Did everyone on Council keep their election signs 50 metres apart? How about 30 metres? 10? Be honest now.

*Neon and fluorescent lettering is eye-catching.* That is the point. Take a serious look around at mobile signs. It is the vast minority of signs that use them. Banning them is as important as banning yellow cars from the road because they are too distracting. It is a small niche in a variety of sign messaging designs. Is it really necessary to go after a minor shareholder in the market? If those are the signs that you have noticed, then they have done their job.

*Mobile signs are not new to this city.* The wide variety of signs available is new, but Guelph has had a mobile sign company operating in town for **over 40 years**. It's reported that one company existed here even before that. Mobile signs are a long established means of advertising, and to take offense to them now is to suddenly take offense of a long established practise. Don't let an obsession by a few make life harder for the majority.

*Economically, we need our businesses to survive and thrive.* Not just because of the pandemic lock-downs, but going forward as well. The lock-downs exasperated a tenuous situation. It is not an easy go out there. Businesses need to compete with not only each other in town, the perceived deals of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Toronto, and especially on-line. We need to help direct people towards local businesses, not with just words, but with actions. Please do not make decisions to the detriment of local businesses. You were supposed to bring an end to the “Guelph Factor”. Instead of being regressive, let’s be progressive. The conversation should be on how to promote our economy, not on how can we restrict business. Let’s not insult our businesses by restricting them further.

On another aspect of the sign by-law revision, I am left scratching my head at the limitation of window “lifestyle” signage. When I look at the slide presentation illustrating the issue, some questions come to mind:

- Do we really think that a wall of brick looks better than a nice graphic?
- Is doing a “nice” window display going to be effective to people driving by?
- Is covering up the window with boxes attractive alternative?
- Is allowing people to look into the back of the store not a security risk? (Please consult with our police department for an authoritative opinion.)
- Having worked retail for many years, I have found a window covering, like the one shown, blocks out a lot of the sun’s rays and keeps the temperature, (read “air conditioning costs”) down. Large windows have a nasty side-effect of being like a greenhouse. Do we not want to be more energy efficient?

Thank you for your time and consideration, (and hopefully for reading through all this). Although it’s not one of Council’s most burning concerns, it is for about **500 businesses** in our city. Do consider their long term needs and start-ups in your decision. They need and deserve your support.

Sincerely,

*John Camelford*

C-Here Mobile Signs