



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 27 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** May 17 2021
From: Mayor Helps and Councillor Alto
Subject: Permissive Property Tax Exemptions of Parking Lots, Existing Properties

BACKGROUND

On May 6th Council added ethnocultural facilities as a new type of property eligible for a permissive tax exemption. As part of the decision, Council directed that beginning in 2023, any ethnocultural facilities that become eligible for an exemption in 2022, would be 100% exempt in that year, but that beginning in 2023 – for properties where a surface parking lot covers more than 50% of the lot – the property tax exemption for the parking lot portion of the lot would be phased out by 20% per year over a five-year period.

At this Council meeting, some councillors raised concerns that this new policy direction would unfairly disadvantage this new category of exempt property and it was suggested that all currently exempt properties where a surface parking lot covers more than 50% of the property should be subject to this same policy. This report recommends that Council make this change.

Permissive tax exemptions should be used to incentivize and support the kinds of activities that provide public benefit. Currently parking lots serve as an important adjunct to the function of some community halls, churches and other exempt properties. With transportation mode shifts and accessibility improvements continuing in the coming decades, and in a fully built out city with limited land for important community amenities like childcare and affordable housing, there are likely some exciting opportunities to explore between the owners of exempt properties, the City and other potential partners like BC Housing or the CRHC to make better and higher use of these surface parking lots. Reducing the tax exemption for parking lots (where the lot covers more than 50% of the property and therefore may be a more viable redevelopment site), could help stimulate these partnership-building conversations to happen.

RECOMMENDATION

That the exemption for the parking lot portion of all properties subject to a permissive tax exemption be reduced by 20% each year over a five-year period, beginning in 2023, where surface parking lots are 50% or more of the total property area.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Helps".

Mayor Helps

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Alto".

Councillor Alto