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The power to build business

BIAs fight parking decision

By Krystle Chow, Ottawa Business Journal Staff

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Seven of Ottawa's business improvement areas (BIAs) have banded together to protest a recent city council decision to raise parking rates and extend metered hours downtown.

The Bank Street Promenade, ByWard Market, Downtown Rideau, Preston Street, Chinatown, Sparks Street and Vanier BIAs are calling the decision "disappointing" and have criticized council's failure to consult its business advisory committee and larger business community on the issue.

"Without question, the punitive measures adopted by council are ostensibly prejudicial towards business located in commercial areas and especially those in the downtown core," said Bank Street BIA executive director Gerry LePage in a Monday evening press release. "This will have an extremely negative economic impact on our business members.

The BIAs have put their support behind a motion by Capital Coun. Clive Doucet and Kitchissippi Coun. Christine Leadman, which calls for increases in the parking rates and hours to be deferred until the city develops a city-wide parking policy that is acceptable to the community.

"It's ironic that the city has decided to charge the public more for parking, when their BIA has repeatedly been denied on-street parking on Rideau Street and side streets that would be new revenue for the city's parking program," said Peggy DuCharme of the Downtown Rideau BIA.

She added that the combination of this decision with the move to decrease evening transit service to the core would not only hurt retailers but also "significantly negatively impact cultural, entertainment, dining and residential uses whose clientele or visitors rely on evening parking when transit is not available or not an option for some demographics."

The coalition said BIAs operating outside the downtown core are "sympathetic" to their plight and said they would "join in the effort to fight for amendments and enhancements to the parking meter decision."

The city council decision, which was approved in December during budget deliberations, was to raise parking meter rates across the city by 50 cents to \$3 an hour and extend the hours affected by parking meters into the evening.

Mr. Doucet and Ms. Leadman will present their motion during a meeting of the city's transportation committee on Wednesday.

