

STAFF REPORT



To: Mike Pilon, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Samantha Willock, Municipal Planner & Melanie Ducharme, Municipal Clerk

Subject: Zoning By-law Update – Camping Trailer Regulation Considerations

Date: April 1, 2026

Overview:

At the March 23rd Special Council meeting, Council discussed the proposed Zoning regulations for the use of camping trailers. The April 1st Special Council meeting has been scheduled as an extension of this discussion. The regulations which Council proposes will be incorporated into the second draft of the Zoning regulations, which will be provided to the public for their input.

This report highlights some of the implications of introducing these regulations which Council may wish to consider, and briefly summarizes the approach other nearby and/or comparable Municipalities are utilizing.

Current Regulations:

Zoning By-law 2014/45:

4.22.1(g) No recreational vehicle or travel trailer shall be used within the Municipality for a period of more than 90 days within a 12-month period for living, sleeping or eating accommodation, unless it is in a recognized trailer park.

Proposed Regulations:

Version 1 Regulations as Recommended by the Planning Advisory Committee:

- a) No travel trailer shall be occupied in any zone between November 15th and May 15th of the following year for living, eating or sleeping purposes.
- b) On a vacant lot zoned Shoreline Residential (SR), Rural Residential (RR), or Rural (RU), the following provisions shall apply to the use and occupancy of travel trailers:
 - i. No more than four (4) travel trailers shall be permitted on a lot at any one time;
 - ii. Of the four (4) travel trailers permitted under subsection (i), no more than two (2) may be permanently situated on the lot.
 - iii. Any travel trailer not permanently situated in accordance with subsection (ii) shall not remain on the lot for more than fourteen (14) consecutive days.
 - iv. No travel trailer shall be located closer to any lot line than the minimum required setbacks for the principal use permitted in the applicable zone;
 - v. No travel trailer shall be permanently situated on a lot unless adequate sanitary services are provided in the form of a Class 4 septic system, or a privy or outhouse constructed and maintained in accordance with the Ontario Building Code.
- c) On a lot which contains a principal dwelling in the Residential One (R1), Residential Two (R2), Shoreline Residential (SR), Rural Residential (RR), Rural (RU), and Agricultural One (A1) zones,

the following provisions shall apply to the use and occupancy of travel trailers:

- i. No more than two (2) travel trailers shall be permitted to be used or occupied at any one time;
- ii. Every travel trailer shall be located in accordance with the minimum setbacks set out in section 4.30.1;
- iii. No travel trailer shall be permitted to be used or occupied for more than fourteen (14) consecutive days.

Implications of Camping Trailer Regulations for Consideration:

Planning:

- **Permitted/Prohibited Uses:** Zoning By-laws are permissive by-laws, meaning if something is not specifically listed as permitted, it is prohibited. If the Zoning By-law is silent on camping trailers, it automatically means they are not permitted whatsoever.
- **Development:** Zoning regulations exist to ensure orderly development. Residential dwellings are subject to multiple zoning provisions (e.g., number of units, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.) but no regulations exist for camping trailers. By not providing camping trailer regulations in the Zoning By-law, trailers, many of which are occupied full time in summer months, do not have to abide by the same rules as adjacent dwellings.
- **Neighbourhood compatibility:** Zoning by-laws also exist for the purpose of ensuring that property development is compatible with adjacent land uses. Without regulation, camping trailers may become a nuisance (excessive noise, traffic, etc.) to adjacent residential properties.
- **Accessory Structures:** Accessory structures are only permitted as accessory to a principal use. Since the current by-law does not identify a camping trailer as a permitted principal use, no accessory structures are permitted. In short, a property with only a trailer on it is not permitted a shed, deck, gazebo, or other such structures. If Council wishes to allow trailers as a permitted use, direction is requested on the allowance of accessory structures.
- **Dwelling Size:** The proposed by-law has been amended to remove the minimum dwelling sizes, meaning a dwelling could be constructed at 17.5 sq.m. (188 sqft). This is an affordable, safe alternative to trailers which would ensure zoning compliance and adequate servicing.
- **“Grandfathering” and Legalizing:** Trailers are not permanent and are not considered structures, as such there is no way to deem them legal non-conforming (‘grandfather’ them). Where someone wishes to have more trailers than allowed by the regulations, a Zoning By-law Amendment or Minor Variance application will be required. The applicable planning application will depend on the number of trailers and if other variances (e.g., setbacks) are required.
 - A minor variance would generally be used if there was a minor increase in the number of trailers (1-2 additional) and there were very limited other variances required. **This process takes approximately 2-3 months and has a fee of \$700.**
 - A zoning by-law amendment application would be required if the request was more substantial (i.e., more than 2 trailers above the permitted limit, additional variances required). Depending on the location of the property and the use of the land, the property could either be rezoned to a rural or shoreline residential site-specific zone with provisions for the number of trailers, or could be rezoned to the Tourist

Commercial (C3) zone if an active commercial activity is being carried on. **This process takes approximately 3-4 months and has a fee of \$1,250.**

Environmental:

- **Sewage Disposal:** The current regulations make no mention of requirements for sewage disposal. Without specific regulations, a permit, or any inspections, we have no ability to confirm how grey and black water is being disposed of. This may result in trailers discharging directly into waterbodies. The North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority has no authority over trailers as they are deemed to have self-contained systems. They do, however, regulate proper systems such as field beds, pit-privies, etc.
- **Watercourses:** Without setback requirements from watercourses, the trailers are permitted to be located directly abutting the shoreline. This can cause shoreline erosion and destruction of natural vegetative buffers.
- **At Capacity Lakes:** There are currently no regulations that restrict trailers on identified lakes which are at capacity. The regulations prevent an additional dwelling unit from being located on an at-capacity lake, but there is nothing to prevent multiple trailers from being set up on these properties.

Health & Safety:

- **Flood Plain:** The Zoning By-law requires the doors and openings of all habitable structures be located above the flood elevation. Without regulations pertaining to trailers, there is no method of preventing them from being located in a floodplain. This may result in emergency services being unable to access the trailer during a flood event.
- **Emergency Service:** As permits are not required for trailers, the Municipality has no record of their location. Emergency services may be unable to locate the trailer in the event of an emergency, or be insufficiently informed of the situation they are attending to.
- **Off-Season Occupancy:** The current zoning by-law does not prohibit using trailers in the winter. Most trailers are not constructed for winter occupancy. This results in a variety of unsafe heating methods being used, which can cause fires or carbon monoxide poisoning. As previously stated, 'tiny homes' are now permitted, which can be a safe yet affordable alternative.

Financial:

- **Assessment:** Property Taxation is the Municipality's principal source of funding and taxation is based on property assessment. As trailers are not structures, they are not assessed by MPAC. This means that a property may have multiple trailers with full-time use, but the owners are paying property taxes for vacant land. Notwithstanding, these properties are utilizing municipal infrastructure such as landfills, roads, and emergency services. This results in an inequitable situation, where home owners are essentially funding infrastructure which is being enjoyed by those not paying for it.
- **Tourism:** The lack of regulations for trailers creates undue hardship on the tourism industry. Trailer parks which are spending the money to run a commercial campground responsibly are losing clientele to people buying vacant land and setting up multiple trailers on their property.

Licensing:

The licensing of trailers cannot be imposed through the Zoning By-law; this would need to occur through a separate trailer licensing by-law. The Zoning By-law regulations would work in tandem with a licensing by-law by providing the permitted zones and setbacks. The introduction of a trailer licensing by-law has

been discussed since 2019 and has been brought back to Council on numerous occasions. In July 2025, Council directed this by-law to be put on hold until Spring 2026, after budget deliberations were held regarding by-law enforcement.

Of the 14 municipalities listed below, half allow the use of camping trailers in some capacity (see notes below). Of those seven (7) municipalities which permit campers, only one (1) does not have a licensing by-law. Those with licensing by-laws charge between \$400-\$1000 annually per trailer. These fees assist with offsetting the tax revenue lost from these lands being assessed as vacant.

Comparable Municipalities:

Municipality	# Permitted on Vacant Land	# Permitted on Land with a Dwelling	Licensing By-law	Annual Licensing Fee
North Bay	0	0	No	
Sudbury	0	0	No	
French River	0	1-2	Yes	\$400
Killarney	0	1-2	Yes	\$400
St.-Charles	0	1	Yes	\$400
Timmins	0	0	No	
Callander	0	0	No	
Elliot Lake	0	0	No	
Espanola	2	1-2	Yes	\$700
Powassan	0	0	No	
Seguin	0	0	No	
Magnetawan	1	1	Yes	\$700
Kirkland Lake	1	1	No	
Strong	1	1	Yes	\$1000

Notes for Clarification:

- French River & Killarney:
 - Waterfront residential: 1 trailer
 - Rural and Rural Residential: 2 trailers
 - Residential One containing a single detached: 1 temporary (14 days in a year)
- Espanola:
 - Two permitted on Rural lot over 1 hectare, regardless if vacant or not
 - One permitted on a lot with a primary residential use for 10 days
- Magnetawan:
 - Only permitted in the Rural, Agricultural, and Rural Residential zones
- Kirkland Lake
 - Only permitted in the Rural zone

Conclusion:

Staff are seeking direction on the draft zoning regulations pertaining to the use and occupancy of camping trailers. The input received from Council will be integrated into the second version of the draft Zoning By-law. This version will be presented to the public and form the basis of the discussions at the upcoming Public Open House.

Prepared By:

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Attachments:

None

Reference Material:

Zoning By-law 2014/45