

Counter-protester fined after parking truck at Occupy Calgary

Local blogger launched counter Occupy Calgary protest Sunday

BY SEAN MYERS, CALGARY HERALD NOVEMBER 6, 2011

Presented By:



Counter-protester Cory Morgan, left, talked with Occupy Calgary protester Christopher McMillan at Olympic Plaza on Sunday.
Photograph by: Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

CALGARY — Protesting the protesters got Cory Morgan ticketed and towed within two hours of his arrival Sunday at the Occupy Calgary encampment at Olympic Plaza.

Morgan arrived in his diesel four-wheel-drive GMC pickup at about 12:30 p.m. with signs designed to mock the demonstrator's slogans.

He parked on the pathway in the park close to the tents and put the truck on idle. He had slogans affixed to his vehicle that read: End marmot tickling and More sunny days in July.

Bylaw officers swooped in within half an hour of his arrival, followed by police.

Morgan refused to budge and was ultimately given a \$200 bylaw ticket for illegally parking his vehicle in a park and his truck was towed.

“Apparently bylaws can be enforced in this park,” said Morgan, who paid \$201.39 in towing and impound fees to get his truck back but plans to fight the bylaw ticket in court. “I hope that precedent has been set.”

Police and bylaw said he could've remained if he'd moved his vehicle into a legal parking stall, but he refused.

“Your right to drive a vehicle in a park is not constitutionally protected,” said Bill Bruce, head of the city's bylaw department. “If he wants to walk in there and protest, yeah, he would be constitutionally protected.

“There's a lot of reasons we don't let vehicles in parks on the pathways.”

Morgan could've even erected his own tent alongside the others as long as it was part of a peaceful protest, said Bruce.

Morgan and his wife Jane have launched a petition calling on the city to evict the Occupy Calgary protesters from the park through enforcement of existing bylaws that prohibit camping overnight at Olympic Plaza. They claim to have gained about 1,350 signatures online and plan to bring it to city council today.

They hope to coincide with a motion Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart plans to table regarding the protesters during the meeting.

Mayor Naheed Nenshi said last week that the protest is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which supersedes municipal bylaws.

Other bylaws have been enforced at the plaza including protesters who've had open liquor or were found smoking, said Bruce.

“I have not one complaint that somebody's lawful access was restricted by the protesters. Not one complaint,” said Bruce.

“For the average Calgarian, this is not an issue as long as they're peaceful and there's no harm.”

He said he has heard from about 100 Calgarians who are unhappy they are there.

It would take a legitimate complaint that someone's access to the park was impeded for bylaw to investigate, said Bruce.

“But it better be a solid complaint, not a bogus one, because it’s against the law to file a false complaint,” said Bruce.

Meanwhile, some of the Occupy Calgary protesters said Morgan would be welcome to attend one of their general assemblies or set up a tent.

Morgan, a blogger, was founder and leader of the separatist Alberta Independence Party, and has run for the Separation Party of Alberta and the Wildrose Alliance.

A few protesters mocked him as a “red neck” while he was there but Christopher McMillan, a self-identified spokesman for the group said he’d like to buy Morgan a cup of coffee.

“He has a right to protest the same as we do,” said McMillan.

“I’d like to have a conversation with him. It doesn’t do a lot of good if the only discussions you have are with people who agree with you.”

The faction of Occupy Calgary set up on St. Patrick’s Island has said they would be gone by today after the largely homeless group negotiated a settlement with the Calgary Homeless Foundation.

Occupy Saskatoon has also agreed to break camp as the temperatures plunged below zero.

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