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# Sorry, says parking firm

## Debt collection policy to be reviewed

### Aggressive phone calls sparked furor

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CITY HALL BUREAU CHIEF

The parking firm that sparked a storm of controversy over the aggressive way it collects unpaid tickets has backed down.

Just two days after a story in the Star, Imperial Parking announced it will conduct a full review of its debt collection practices, which have included people being called multiple times a day, for months on end.

While the review — expected to take at least 30 days — is under way, its collection agency won't be allowed to phone any drivers with overdue fines, Gordon Craig, regional vice-president for Imperial Parking (Impark), said in an interview yesterday.

Impark, Toronto's largest private parking lot company, will also be hiring an independent ombudsperson to review disputes, Craig said.

The controversy began with Monday's story of Peter Thompson, a Barrie lawyer who said he received 500 calls from Impark's collection agency over a \$69.55 ticket.

He got it at a Toronto hospital the day he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and returned to his car 31 minutes late.

For 18 months calls continued, he said, until he got an unlisted number a few weeks ago.

After Thompson's story ran, the Star received dozens of calls and e-mails.

The callers had similar stories of being harassed for unpaid tickets that many believed had been unfairly issued in the first place.

The Toronto police say they get 500 complaints a month over private parking tickets.

"We deeply regret the inconveniences to Mr. Thompson and all other persons who have not been satisfied with (the) process," Craig said in a letter to the editor.

Having said that, Craig maintains Impark's collection practices are fair and completely in line with provincial rules.

"We're not doing anything improper; we're just doing stuff that doesn't play too well," Craig said.

For example, Impark's collection agency, Canadian Bonded Credits Ltd., begins its automated phone calls at 7 a.m.

"We're legally allowed to do that, but maybe it's not the best thing to do," Craig said.

But Impark won't be giving up on going after people who park for longer than they pay for or don't pay at all.

"Our intention is to do what we need to do to collect on legitimate debt," Craig said.



Lawyer Peter Thompson has been battling Imperial Parking for 18 months over a ticket.

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