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# VICTORIA NEWS

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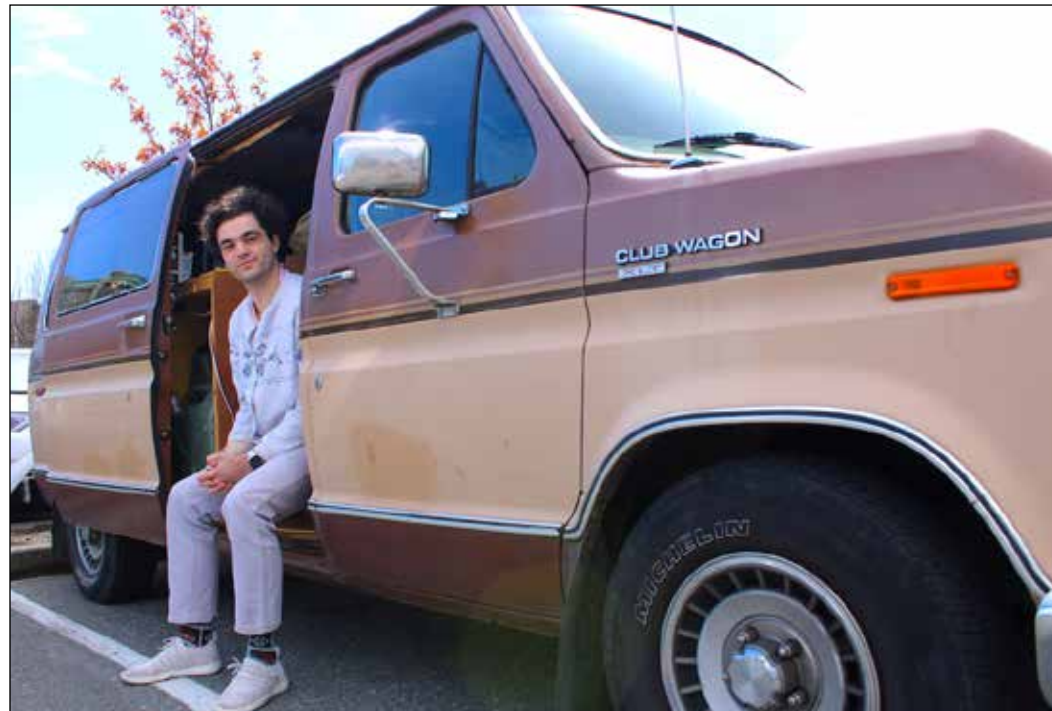
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Braedon Lowey sits in the van he calls home, a lifestyle that has helped him cut costs but is about to get more complicated as Victoria is set to expand paid parking hours on May 1. (Jake Romphf/News Staff)

## Parking changes hitting everyone from van lifers to business owners

Jake Romphf  
News Staff

As a full-time English student, Braedon Lowey spends his days taking his home on wheels between the University of Victoria, coffee shops where he can put in some work for his remote job and cruising downtown for the closing shift at a local board game restaurant.

After moving into his two-toned brown van last summer to save money, Lowey said the lifestyle requires always being prepared for the unexpected.

But his life is about to get more complicated with Victoria deciding to expand paid parking hours to between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., while bumping up rates by 50 cents an

hour citywide, as of May 1.

“Even when something works I have to have a backup plan, but I wasn’t expecting this because it came so fast,” Lowey said.

As he works downtown, the longer hours will prove hard for the 24-year-old due to street parking time limits he’ll have to navigate and his van being too tall for parkades. He’ll be left with few options as the region discourages van life basically everywhere and even if he could leave his home somewhere safe, there isn’t enough transit to get him to and from work.

Lowey turned to van life to save money in a region that lacks affordable student housing, has one of Canada’s most expensive rental markets and its vacancy rate is

still far below what’s considered sustainable.

“With the housing crisis that’s happening frankly everywhere but especially here, these kinds of solutions are necessary for people to survive.”

Expanding the paid parking hours could’ve been workable with adequate transit, but Lowey said busing isn’t a viable option after midnight.

“It’s going to take you forever to get home or you pay for a cab, so that’s really frustrating. I think the people this affects the most are late-night workers downtown, so we need solutions to get home,” he said, noting the parking changes could also discourage some patrons.

*Continued A7*

## Tree, power line concerns don’t upend 21-storey housing project

Jake Romphf  
News Staff

Despite the inability to bury power lines and outstanding concerns for trees, an up-to-21-storey project looking to bring a range of housing, a grocery store and other aspects to north downtown will have its day in front of the public.

Chard Development wants to bring a multi-towered redevelopment with 450 units – including below-market-rate spaces alongside rentals and condos for those with median incomes – above a commercial podium along Douglas Street between Caledonia Avenue and Discovery Street.

“I’m hopeful that this project will create a new community hub in this part of town,” said Byron Chard, president and CEO of the namesake company. “This is a fantastic part of town with everything in walking distance and I think we only add to those services and make this a really attractive area for people to live, work and socialize.”

The project is being considered in conjunction with a BC Housing proposal to build an eight-storey supportive building across the street. Tenants of Capital City Centre Hotel – bought by the province during the pandemic to house people experiencing homelessness – would be moved to the BC Housing site before the hotel is torn down for the new build.

“I’m really proud of our application and the diversity of homes that we’ll be able to achieve,” Chard said, noting the new BC Housing site will include support services the hotel lacks.

*Continued A7*

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