



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: June 13, 2016

SUBJECT: Winter Maintenance Windrow and Pathway Winter
Maintenance Review
PREPARED BY: Morgan Jones, Manager-Roads Operations

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the report titled “Winter Maintenance Windrow and Pathway Winter Maintenance Report Review” be received; and,
- 2) That the existing practice for clearing snow from windrows of qualified residents be continued; and,
- 3) That the existing practice for winter snow clearing maintenance of pathways be continued; and,
- 4) That the 2017 budget for the windrow clearing program be increased by \$37,000 from \$237,270 to \$274,270 to accommodate growth; and
- 5) That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

At the September 28, 2015 Special General Committee Winter Maintenance Workshop, Council directed staff to report back on the merits of providing a City snow windrow clearing rebate program in lieu of the existing removal program. Also, staff was to report back on potential service level changes and related impacts relative to snow clearing on pathways in parks and other locations.

BACKGROUND:

Existing Windrow Clearing Program

The current windrow clearing program is designed to provide assistance to seniors and residents that are not able to clear their windrows due to medical reasons. To qualify for this program, all individuals residing in a household must be 60 years of age or older (proof of age is required) or younger than 12 years of age. If any member of the household is between the ages of 12 years and 60 years, a current and valid doctors certificate confirming they are physically unable to clear snow must be provided.

The City currently utilizes 12 contracted units to clear windrows throughout the City. The service standard requires the contractor to clear at least one car width of the snow windrow and our target service standard is to clear the windrow within 8 hours of completion of the road fronting the residence being plowed. The 2016 budget included \$237,270 to remove windrow at 3,200 properties, which equated to approximately \$74 per qualified household.

The service is challenging for contractors to manage due to efforts needed to coordinate synchronized timing for 12 driveway clearing units with 44 road plowing units, clearing driveways intermittently scattered across the City.

Additionally, staff effort and cost is expended to redeploy staff to investigate resident complaints. Customer expectations, including full width of driveway clearing, sidewalk windrow clearing, and immediate windrow clearing following road plowing, often strain the City's capability to meet resident wishes.

DISCUSSION:

Staff undertook a review of current operations with the intent to provide an option for Council consideration that would be cost-neutral, without potential tax levy impact. The cost to provide this service per eligible household has been calculated at approximately \$74. Hence the proposed rebate would be rounded to \$70 per household. The number of driveways if a pilot proceeds would be capped at 200 to limit size of pilot.

Potential challenges anticipated by providing this pilot program are:

- Increased demand for rebates by residents who formerly did not take advantage of this service, resulting in increased cost to the City.
- Increased administrative costs and staff time spent communicating program details, receiving applications and documentation, and issuing rebates.
- Decreased customer satisfaction: calls from residents who may be unhappy when City plow trucks fill in driveway after hired contractor cleared snow
- Decreased customer satisfaction: residents will be required to provide documentation as proof of services before rebate provided.
- Residents would be required to select, contract and manage their own contractor and expectations for service delivery.
- Some current participating residents may not wish to spend any money for a service they currently receive for 'free'.

In summary, the original intention to increase customer/resident satisfaction and reduce City costs would not be achieved.

SHOULD THE CITY WISH TO IMPLEMENT A PILOT PROJECT, THE FOLLOWING APPROACH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:***Windrow Subsidy Pilot Program Proposal Details***

- The pilot program will be offered in two wards in order to effectively manage contracts.
- In order to qualify for the pilot program, residents must have been a 2015-2016 program registrant and meet the City's current windrow clearing program criteria.
- The Operations Department will no longer provide windrow clearing service to qualified residents who choose to participate.
- Qualified pilot program residents will be required to obtain and manage their individual snow clearing requirements through contracted services independent of the City.
- The City will offer a rebate of \$70 per pre-qualified household to those residents who have hired a contractor to provide the service.
- Pilot program to be capped at 200 residents total, across the two wards

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- To receive the rebate, pre-qualified individual homeowners will be required to submit to the City official documentation of final invoice from contractor as proof of professional services rendered, by May 1st of the following year.
 - Residents will be required to hire licensed contractors to be approved as eligible for the rebate program.
 - Pilot program will commence for the 2017-18 season (November 2017 to March 2018) due to contract and ramp up requirements.
 - All residents who qualified and participated in the 2016-17 program from the 2 selected wards will receive a direct mail communication advising them of the pilot program option, and providing them with details.
 - Evaluation criteria will be developed including a survey of participant feedback, to determine the success of the program and provide information for future recommendations.
 - Staff would report back to Council after the completion of the pilot project to provide a recommendation for Council consideration.
 - Cost of the pilot is estimated to be \$14,000 (\$70 x 200 participants), which will be reallocated within the windrow budget. Additional resources will be required in Operations to coordinate program, Accounts Payable to process cheques, Contact Centre to respond to questions and administer applications, and Corporate Communications to develop and deliver a communications plan. These costs will be tracked and monitored as part of the pilot.

Pilot Program Communications Plan:

- Communication messaging prepared for Councillor newsletters in the wards selected for pilot
- Public Information Meetings in the two selected wards;
- Direct mail communication to program participants in selected pilot wards, who participated in the 2015-16 program advising of pilot program option; new application form and contact information for Landscape Ontario would be included.
- FAQs – for Contact Centre staff and portal.

Estimates to provide a snow maintenance removal program from the private sector for a standard subdivision property is approximately \$300 to \$400 dollars for a winter season. The \$70 rebate would simply help offset the cost for the entire driveway. The pilot program would provide a basis for Council consideration should the City wish to implement a City wide program in the future.

BENCHMARKING:

Staff contacted the City of Brampton who provides a rebate program to seniors over 65 years of age and disabled residents based on the following;

- Rebates are offered to applicants at maximum \$200 for regular lot and \$300 for corner lots.
- The rebate fees were recently adjusted through a review of proof of invoicing recognized the fee charges could be as much as \$700.
- The program is intended to offset both windrow and sidewalk maintenance.

- The number of participants' fluctuates between 1,800 – 2,000 residents.
- The total cost to rebate participants was approximately \$360,000 for the 2015-2016 winter season
- The resident only has to submit a receipt, they are not required to hire licensed contractors
- There is no formal screening process required for either seniors or those with a disability.
- Property is qualified as long as the **homeowner** is over 60, notwithstanding there may be other occupants in the property under 60 years of age

RECOMMENDATION WINDROW CLEARING:

That the City continues its current practice of providing windrow snow clearing to eligible residents for reasons outlined on page 2 of the report and moreover it doesn't achieve the overriding outcomes of increased customer satisfaction and financial benefit through increased efficiencies.

PATHWAY WINTER MAINTENANCE BACKGROUND:***Markham Pathway Winter Maintenance Practices***

Pathways are considerably different than sidewalks in terms of use and method of construction. Sidewalks are primarily constructed of concrete and are located within the road right of way throughout the City to provide safe pedestrian transportation to transit, schools, community centre etc. Sidewalks located on all roads within the City inclusive of sidewalks located on the Region of York right of ways are maintained by the City. Additionally, current practice is to plow hard surface pathways that connect street to street, except where the grade is too severe or not properly illuminated at both ends to provide safe pedestrian passage.

Service levels for sidewalks are mandated by the Province, *Ontario reg. 239/02*, which requires sidewalks be cleared within 24 hours after the end of a storm and the City meets this standard. The City aligns service levels on Multi-use Pathways (MUP) to that of sidewalks. Early renditions of MUP were constructed of asphalt but have since been standardized to be constructed of concrete.

There is no provincially legislated service level for maintaining pathways. While the City currently provides safe transportation routes on sidewalks, pathways are often interconnected with other pathways such as those located on school properties which aren't maintained during winter months. City pathways located in parks, valley lands, and those that connect the road network to unmaintained surfaces or private property are currently posted NO WINTER MAINTENANCE PROVIDED. Maintenance is not provided for the following reasons;

- Pathways can be constructed of asphalt, gravel or simply be a well worn path.
- Limestone pathways provide durable, accessible and environmentally sustainable recreational surfaces. Granular surfaces cannot be plowed without extensive surface drainage.
- Pathway widths vary considerably.
- Pathway bedding construction is different than sidewalks as increased bedding is required to support the machines required to provide maintenance.

- Pathways are not marked by visual indicators, and are difficult to determine where they are located when snow-covered.
- Damage to pathway surfacing is probable during winter operations producing trip hazards.
- Positive drainage during freeze/thaw cycles in pathways is inconsistent resulting in puddles that freeze, exposing the City's risk exposure for claims due to slip and falls.
- Pathways are not typically illuminated ensuring safe footing for pedestrian use.
- The cost to maintain the pathway system during winter months would be approximately \$692,197 annually including the cost of snow clearing, surface repairs and turf repairs (refer to table 3 in the Financial Consideration section). Capacity of City facilities to house additional equipment is problematic (lack of yard space). Damage to pathway turf edges will be extensive necessitating spring repair currently not undertaken. Additional staffing will be required to undertake these repairs. Additional cost for soil, seed and equipment will also be required if the increased service level is approved.
- Pathways are uneven, have numerous locations of water ponding posing risk to pedestrian foot traffic.
- Environmental impact of using salt adjacent to water courses contradicts the intent of the City's salt management best practices and sustainable stewardship of parks.
- Pathways often have different surface types from hard surface asphalt to granular materials. This poses risk to the operator.

RECOMMENDATION PATHWAY MAINTENANCE:

Operations staff recommends the City continue its current practice of not providing snow clearing services for pathways throughout the City during winter months for reasons outlined above.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)

The 2016 budget for Seniors Windrow Removal Program was \$237,270 for 3,200 properties. As of May 2016, the number of properties has increased to 3,500. Based on historical trending, staff estimates there could be additional growth of 200 properties to bring the total to 3,700 qualifying for the senior windrow removal program. To accommodate for the additional 500 properties, the budget will be increased by \$37,000 (\$74 x 500). Table below illustrates the total 2017 windrow program requirements based on continuation of the current windrow clearing service. The total cost is estimated to be \$274,270.

Table 1: Current Windrow Program and 2017 Budget Requirements

Current Windrow Budget	12 trucks for 3,200 properties	\$237,270
Growth	Additional 500 properties (\$74 x 500)	\$37,000*
2017 Windrow Program	13 trucks for 3,700 properties	\$274,270*

* Subject to Council approval through the 2017 budget process

Windrow Pilot Program

Staff recommends the City continues its current practice of providing windrow snow clearing to eligible residents due to reasons listed on page 2 of the report. However, should the City wish to implement a pilot project, it is estimated the cost of the pilot will be \$14,000 (\$70 x 200 participants), which will be reallocated within the proposed 2017 windrow budget of \$274,270. Additional resources will be required in Operations to manage the program coordination and Accounts Payable to process cheques, Contact Centre to respond to questions and administer applications and receipts, and Communications to develop and deliver a communications plan. These costs will be determined as part of the pilot.

Pathways Winter Maintenance

Staff recommends the City continue its current practice of not providing snow clearing services for pathways throughout the City during winter months due to reasons listed on page 4 and 5 of the report. Although not recommended, for reference, table 3 below estimates the cost to maintain pathway system during the winter months.

The City has an inventory of approximately 151 kilometres of pathways City-wide. The assumption for pathway repair is that 10% of the total pathway system or 15.1km will need to be repaired annually as a result of the winter maintenance activities. Total cost of pathways winter maintenance is \$692,197, or equivalent to 0.50% tax increase (1% = \$1,394,000).

Table 3: Cost to Clear Snow and Repair Pathways

Snow Clearing	\$ 400,000	Based on sidewalk winter maintenance cost per km of \$2,649 x 151 km of pathways to maintain
Repair Costs/Asphalt	\$ 12,390	Based on 10% of the annual pathway resurfacing program
Turf Repair	\$ 120,649	Based on in-house turf maintenance cost of \$7.99 per meter x 15,100 m or 15.1 km (10% of total pathways)
Limestone Repair	\$ 69,158	Based on in-house limestone repair cost of \$2.29 per m2 x 15,100 m x 2 m wide
Program Oversight	\$ 90,000	
Total Cost	\$ 692,197	

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not applicable.

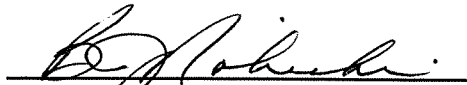
ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Transportation and Transit, Municipal Services, Parks, Public Safety and Accessibility

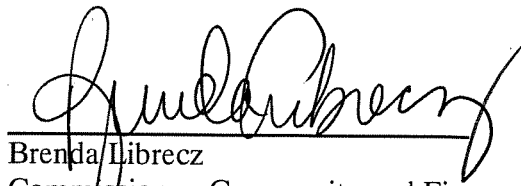
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Financial Service, Communications and Community Engagement, Legislative Services (Contact Centre) have been consulted in preparation of this report,

RECOMMENDED BY:



Barb Rabicki
Director, Operations



Brenda Librecz
Commissioner, Community and Fire
Services

ATTACHMENTS:
NA