

BUDGET COMMITTEE REFERRAL:

That staff report on a windrow program for residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That the information be received.

KEY FACTS:

- Oakville currently has a senior citizen and physically challenged persons windrows removal program, however, does not provide town-wide driveway snow windrow removal service.
- Implementing a full scale town-wide residential driveway snow windrow-clearing program would be a large-scale operation with significant financial implications in the estimated amount of \$4.5M (impact of 2.03% increase on the town tax levy, 0.84% increase on overall tax bill) per year.
- There are additional operational constraints such as limited space to store the additional equipment, and impacts to internal staff resources to ensure sufficient oversight of the contract and address customer enquiries.

COMMENTS/OPTIONS:

The Town is obligated to maintain its road and sidewalk network under the provisions of the Ontario Municipal Act; such maintenance includes winter control services to ensure a minimum level of safety for motorists and pedestrians. Providing a safe road and sidewalk network mitigates liability for the Town and ensures the efficient mobility of persons, goods and services. The Municipal Act does not require a municipality to clear snow windrows at driveways. Though not obligated, a municipality could choose to offer such an enhanced service.

Oakville currently does not provide town-wide driveway snow windrow removal service. However, in July 2008, Council approved the implementation of an annual program to remove driveway windrows for senior citizens and physically challenged persons for a prescribed annual user fee. Today, the user fee is \$110.18 (\$97.50+HST). Participant registration for the 2022/23 winter season was approximately 455 residents. The estimated gross cost of providing this service is approximately \$82,525 per season (based on a 5-year average). Contracted resources are utilized to deliver this program.

Residential Driveway Snow Windrow Removal Program – Pilot Project

Options for expanding the current snow windrow removal program have been raised during previous budget deliberations and was referred to the Budget Committee for consideration of a limited town-wide pilot project as part of the 2010 operating budget. It

was subsequently recommended to defer the driveway snow windrow removal pilot program to the 2011 Budget Committee.

On October, 2009 and January 3, 2011, staff brought forward reports on a pilot project that would be undertaken in three (3) selected residential areas of the town each possessing unique features and characteristics that will help to assess and evaluate operational impacts. The program would be limited to residential driveways only, with each pilot area/plow zone containing in the range of 800 – 1200 driveways.

The following conditions are required for evaluation of operational impacts:

- Roadway cross-section (e.g. urban with curbs vs. rural with shoulders/ditches)
- Driveway spacing (residential lot widths and densities)
- Boulevard width and sidewalk offset from edge of roadway
- Roadway grade (e.g. how a hilly section of road may affect productivity)

The proposed pilot project was not approved at 2011 Budget Committee and did not proceed.

Town-wide Windrow Clearing

Implementing a full scale town-wide residential driveway snow windrow-clearing program would be a large-scale operation with significant financial and service level commitments (there are approximately 59,000 residential driveways in the Town). To accomplish this, the Town would need to contract for 35 additional specially equipped plow units. In this way, each of the current 35 residential plow zones will have a dedicated piece of equipment to remove the driveway windrow as it follows the main plow, without delaying current road plowing service levels. Windrows would potentially be cleared within 12 hours after all roads have been plowed.

The service itself will only remove/clear the windrow to eliminate the driveway blockage, but does not provide for a complete (edge to edge, bare pavement) cleanout to the base of the driveway, comparable to what many residents would undertake themselves. As a result residents will still have some clean-up to complete if they want to make it consistent with the remainder of their particular driveway area, and complaints can routinely be expected due to each homeowner's personal expectations for driveway snow clearing work in comparison to (a) the timeliness of the service delivery, and (b) the perceived quality of the snow removal operation.

The Town does not currently have sufficient space to store the necessary additional equipment resources to implement a full scale town-wide program. The Town would need to lease or acquire suitable land large enough to store the equipment, or contractors will have to provide storage grounds within Oakville at additional cost as part of their unit price.

In addition to the equipment requirements, the co-ordination and timing of such an operation will be challenging; additional seasonal staff resources would be required to coordinate the equipment operation and to address what we expect to be very high

customer service demands associated with providing this service, including coordination with Service Oakville.

Based on the space and operational impact, it is envisioned if town-wide windrow service is to be implemented, the service will be outsourced to a contractor, and additional internal resources to coordinate the contract, address customer service enquiries will need to be added.

The cost of providing a town-wide driveway snow windrow removal program is quite significant; Council has previously been advised in 2008 that estimates to provide such a service are approximately \$1,200,000. For 2023, staff estimates the cost to be approximately \$4,500,000 (impact of 2.03% increase on the town tax levy, 0.84% increase on overall tax bill) for the introduction of a town-wide driveway snow windrow removal program (representing an increase of 65.6% to the current winter control maintenance budget).

Comparison with the City of Richmond Hill

The City of Richmond Hill is comparable to the town of Oakville with respect to its population size and the total number of residential driveways.

The City of Richmond Hill expanded their snow windrow clearing service to include 55,000 local, residential driveways in November 2019. Four alternatives were considered to enhance the City of Richmond Hills's residential snow windrow clearing program for Council's consideration. They chose to proceed with a city-wide windrow clearing program with enhanced service delivered through in-house staff.

This option was deemed to provide greater control of the program, and allowed for year-round service enhancement. These redirected resources were thought to benefit the community in areas where complaints were currently experienced, minimizing the impact of additional contracted services, providing for more resource flexibility and utilization within the department, and enhancing the full-time compliment for better staff retention and resource management.

In 2019, the overall budget requirements for the in-house solution was comprised of the direct costs for the windrow clearing program of \$1.09M and the staff conversion costs related to the service enhancements of \$3.29M for a total budget requirement of \$4.38M. A total of 79 in-house staff help deliver the enhanced windrow program. In 2021, Richmond Hill's approved budget was \$4.09M, and in 2022 the draft budget was \$4.59M. Approximately 44,000 local, residential driveways are currently being serviced and snow clearing begins after road plows begin their routes and may take up to 13 hours to complete after the end of a snowfall.