

REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: August 9, 2021

FROM: Roads and Works Operations

DATE: June 22, 2021

SUBJECT: Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program – Proposed Improvements

LOCATION: Residential Community Areas

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the staff report, *Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program – Proposed Improvements* from the Roads and Works Operations Department, dated June 22, 2021, be received.
2. That the options to improve/expand the Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program set out within this report, be referred to the Budget Committee for consideration as part of the 2022 budget process.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- Fallen leaves within the community area are collected and managed in a variety of ways:
 1. Residents and/or private landscaping firms deliver them to the Region of Halton Waste Facility at 5400 Regional Road 25, Milton for composting.
 2. Composted by residents at their private property.
 3. Collected by the Region of Halton through the yard waste (bagged) program (delivered to the Regional Waste Facility).
 4. Collected by the Town of Oakville's Bulk Loose Leaf Collection program (delivered to the Regional Waste Facility).
- The Town's Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program provides service to areas where fallen leaf volumes are high; exceeding the relative useful capacity of the other leaf disposal options.

- The Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program currently provides a six (6) week fall collection program and a two (2) week spring collection program.
- Approximately 4,000 tonnes of leaves are collected in the fall program and 100 tonnes in the spring program.
- As Oakville’s urban forest continues to age, its canopy will grow; bringing forward an increased demand for the Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program.
- At the December 21, Council Meeting, staff were requested to: *“report back to Council on opportunities to improve and expand equitable access to the Town’s loose leaf collection program. This report should consider the variability of the time of leaf drop by a) seasonal and/or climate change effects and b) by species, and include forecasts of the impact on scheduling, areas served, and costs of keeping the program coordinated with the Town’s planned canopy growth.”*
- The report provides the following options for improving/expanding the Town’s Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program:
 1. Provide bulk loose leaf collection service to areas/roadways adjacent to mature woodlots.
 2. Provide bulk loose leaf collection service to areas based on a defined service level matrix that introduces service and increases the service in response to canopy growth/leaf fall volume.
 3. Remove the spring loose leaf collection program in favour of an ad-hoc spring pick-up if/when the fall program service level is not met.
 4. Increase our communications/marketing efforts.
- **UPDATE:** During the July 5th, 2021 Council meeting, wherein the original report on this matter was presented, Council deferred their decision to the next Council meeting. During this deferral period, staff were asked to consult with Council for input on this subject. Staff completed Council consultations and the summary of questions, suggestions and staff response thereto are set out in Appendix F of this report.

The options set out herein are framed within a proposed level of service. Adopting this proposed level of service will have financial implications, hence the options (or level of service) is being referred to the 2022 Budget Committee for consideration as part of the 2022 Budget.

BACKGROUND:

The Town’s Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program provides leaf pick up services to select areas of the community – specifically those areas with mature, large canopy trees. These areas generate leaf volumes that tend to exceed a resident’s ability to simply rely on other leaf disposal services/options such as:

- Self-delivery to the Regional Waste Disposal site in Milton
- Home composting
- Region of Halton Yard Waste (Bagged) Program

Oakville is not alone in its provisioning of a bulk loose leaf collection service. The following table is a comparison of the town’s loose leaf practices with some other municipalities.

	Oakville	Burlington	Guelph	Mississauga	Cambridge
Schedule	Mid-October to end of November	Late October to early December	Mid-November to end of November	Late October to early December	Early November to early December
Duration	6 weeks	4 weeks (reduced from 6 in 2021)	2 weeks	6 weeks	4 weeks
Service Coverage	11 zones - Neighborhoods older than 25 years	4 zones – only south of Highway 407/Dundas	City-wide with the exception of new developments	3 collection areas - Neighborhoods older than 35 years (140 streets added in 2020)	City-wide with the exception of new developments
Collection Frequency	8 zones – 3 collections 3 zones – 1 collection	3 zones – 1 collections (reduced from 2 in 2021) 1 zone – 1 collection	1 collection	2 collections per collection area (typical)	1 collection
Fall 2018 Tonnage	4,650	Not provided	1,900 (2017 data)	Not provided	3,670
In-house or Contracted	Primarily in-house augmented by contractor	Primarily in-house augmented by contractor	Half in-house, half contracted	Primarily contracted (16-21 crews) augmented by in-house	Primarily in-house augmented by contractor
Equipment	Leaf vacuums and tandem trucks; Loader crews as necessary	Loader crews with backhoe/skid steer, tandem trucks	Loader crews with Trackless machines, tandem trucks	Contractor supplied Leaf box trucks and City leaf vacuums	Loader crews with backhoes, dump trucks
Winter Maintenance Impact	Leafing program suspended during winter operations	Leafing program ends following first plowing operation	Leafing program suspended during winter operations	Leafing program suspended during winter operations	Not provided
Bagged Yard Waste Curbside	Starting March 6, bi-weekly collection until December 20	Starting March 6, bi-weekly collection until December 20	New in 2021, starting March 15, bi-weekly collection until the fall	Starting September March 8, bi-weekly collection to Sept 30, weekly collection until Dec 8	Bi-weekly from March 29 to November 30

The above comparison indicates that the town’s Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program is generally comparable to those offered in nearby communities, with a slightly higher level of service in the more mature areas (3 collection visits as opposed to 1 or 2) and the only municipality to offer a spring collection program. Cambridge and Guelph, are the only municipalities that offer community-wide service, as opposed to a focused service based on need.

The town’s Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program is provisioned by a combination of Town forces/equipment and contract service.

Over the past number of years there has been some debate and discussion on how the program should/could be expanded into other areas of the community. As part of the 2021 Budget approval, Council added a few community locations where they felt leafing volumes demanded the service.

Further to this, Oakville Council, at its meeting of December 21, 2020 approved the following motion:

“That staff be requested to report back to Council on opportunities to improve and expand equitable access to the Town's loose leaf collection program. This report should consider the variability of the time of leaf drop by a) seasonal and/or climate change effects and b) by species, and include forecasts of the impact on scheduling, areas served, and costs of keeping the program coordinated with the Town's planned canopy growth.”

This report is presented in response to Council’s direction.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

Evaluation of Climate Change Impact

Our literature review of climate change impact on the “senescence” of leaves (i.e. the dying of the leaves) does not suggest any appreciable increase or lag in leaf drop times. Climate change however has increased the unpredictability of weather patterns as well as increased the severity of storms. The need to interrupt our fall leafing operations in order to respond to any early onset of winter will always be a risk that will sometimes materialize – given how the seasons fold into each other. While this risk will always be present in the program, the current fall program schedule (end of October to the first week of December) and the way that it is delivered has proven successful in most years.

Spring Program Evaluation

Staff recommends that the spring program be eliminated as staff finds that this service is of value only when the fall program is challenged by the risk such as early onset of winter. If/when the fall program is delivered successfully (full six weeks with no winter impacts), the spring program is of little value. In an effort to improve opportunities for our residents to dispense of their collected fall leaves, the Region of Halton has extended the bagged yard waste curbside program by two weeks. In 2021, the Halton bagged yard waste curbside program will run from April 6, 2021 through to December 20, 2021. This extended program will also aid in reducing the need for a spring collection program. Eliminating the spring collection would result in cost savings of approximately \$28,000 per year.

Current Fall Program

The current fall program includes:

- 6 week program beginning Mid-October – End of November
- 8 zones – 3 collections (Canopy generally 60 years or older)
- 3 zones – 1 collection (Canopy generally 25 years or older)

Appendix A shows the current zones receiving bulk loose leaf collection service.

Evaluation of Fall Program

1. Tree Leaf Drop Evaluation

As referenced in the Oakville Strategy for Biodiversity (OSB), maintaining a high tree canopy cover in urban landscapes provides numerous benefits to both maintain and enhance biodiversity and to create more liveable spaces for residents. Using a diversity of tree species for planting street trees reduces their susceptibility to native and non-native pests and disease. Diversity also adds to the ambiance of the community, providing a range of tree shapes, fall colour and shade blends. The canopy and eventual leaf drop of each species of tree responds to the onset of fall differently. Some drop their leaves early, while other drop later. Having a diverse mix of trees means our community leaf fall will span a period of time.

Given the vast diversity of tree species across the Town, it is not possible to completely align the service with the timing of leaf drops. Staff, however do adjust commencement of the service based on observation of in-field service demand on an annual basis to provide a better overall alignment with the demand for the service. Therefore, it is not recommended to adjust the fall program duration (6 weeks) based on timing of the leaf drops. Further, should the fall program be impacted by winter, the missed service would be provided later in the winter season

(should conditions become favourable) or undertaken in the spring should winter be more or less continuous from its onset.

2. Tree Canopy Age Evaluation

Staff recommend introduction of a third level for canopy between 40 to 60 years of age. This new service level would receive 2 service visits, which compliments the current 1 or 3 service visits. Introducing tiered visits based on canopy age allows for a balanced approach in providing additional service. The following table shows various service levels based on canopy age:

Table 1

PROPOSED SERVICE LEVEL MATRIX

	DESCRIPTION OF AREA CANOPY	SERVICE LEVEL/FREQUENCY	
		REGIONAL PROGRAM	TOWN (BULK) PROGRAM
INCREASE IN CANOPY COVER/LEAF VOLUME	Area canopy is less than 25 years old	Yard Waste Bagged Program (April to December)	NOT PROVIDED
	Area canopy is 25 years old but less than 40 years old	Yard Waste Bagged Program (April to December)	LEVEL C 1 Service Visit
	Area canopy is 40 years old but less than 60 years old	Yard Waste Bagged Program (April to December)	LEVEL B 2 Service Visits
	Area canopy is greater than 60 years old.	Yard Waste Bagged Program (April to December)	LEVEL A 3 Service Visit
			INCREASE IN SERVICE
SERVICE EXCEPTIONS			
	Select streets adjacent to a MATURE woodlots	Yard Waste Bagged Program (April to December)	LEVEL C - 1 Service Visit (Service increased to LEVEL B when the communal area ages to 40 years)

NOTE: The service levels defined above are triggered by canopy age. The Town’s data banks do not have canopy age or tree age specifically, hence a proxy of tree age was used. The Town does have a data set that contains subdivision assumption year. Respecting that trees within our residential subdivision areas are planted approximately two (2) years prior to assumption, the assumption year plus two (2) years was used as a proxy for the age of trees within our subdivision areas.

A brief explanation of the additional program expansion is set out below.

Provide Fall Service to New Areas at 25 years – Level C Service

For areas that currently do not receive service, a fulsome review was conducted based on a street-by-street analysis (not based on zones) for new areas to be introduced on an annual basis when the age of canopy is expected to reach the 25-year threshold. The table below provides a summary of the estimated annual service expansions (km) and required annual budget increases associated with expanding service in 2022 and beyond. The budget impact for 2022 is estimated at \$13,750.

Table 2

Additions Based on Service Level	Year	Service (km's)	Budget Increase
Areas/street age – 25 years	2022	25	\$13,750
Areas/street age – 25 years	2023	0	\$0
Areas/street age – 25 years	2024	21	\$11,550
Areas/street age – 25 years	2025	0	\$0
Areas/street age – 25 years	2026	10	\$5,500
Areas/street age – 25 years	2027	25	\$13,750
Areas/street age – 25 years	2028	14	\$7,700
Areas/street age – 25 years	2029	32	\$17,600
Areas/street age – 25 years	2030	40	\$22,000
Areas/street age – 25 years	2031	52	\$28,600

Appendix B is a map identifying all proposed new service areas for the Fall 2022 program and highlighting the evolution of the loose leaf program over the next 10 years for areas and streets meeting the 25-year threshold.

Provide Increased Service as Canopy Grows – Level A and B Service

Expanding the service frequency at 40 and 60 years respectively allows the program to properly respond to the increase in leaf volume and related increase in service demand. This tiered level of service provides an equitable program that is driven by service demand. Staff have analyzed the data to estimate the resulting service increases (areas moving from Level C to B or Level B to A) over the period 2022 to 2031 based on the proposed service level criteria. The review finds that some community areas will begin a second service visits around 2028 with regular increases thereafter.

The following table identifies the expected service level increases by year and the required annual operating budget increases to support this proposed level of service in those future years.

Table 3

Service Frequency Changes Based on Service Level	Year Increased	Service km	Budget Increase
2nd Service visit added	2028	41	\$20,500
	2029	42	\$21,000
	2030	51	\$25,500
	2031	10	\$5,000
3rd service visit added		0	\$0

Increases/expansions to the program would be addressed through the use of contracted services. The Town's current contracted resource agreement for this service allows for the provisioning of additional crews and equipment at the same agreed hourly rate.

UPDATE: During the Council consultation period (July 5th to July 20th), staff received a request to set an optional service level that would result in an earlier introduction of Service Level B and Service Level A from 40 years and 60 years, to 34 years and 50 years. Appendix F – Consultation Item 1 provides a discussion on this request along with an alternate Table 4 to demonstrate the budgetary requirements for supporting this service level change.

3. Streets Adjacent to Mature Woodlots to Receive Level C Service

A comprehensive review was conducted to identify locations/streets abutting mature woodlots and which are currently outside the existing service areas. A total of 21 service km were identified as potential additions to the 2022 Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program (*Refer to Appendix C*). It is estimated that incorporating areas adjacent to woodlots would cost an additional \$11,550 per year.

4. Proposed Increased Marketing and Enhanced Communications

The current communications efforts related to the Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program include newspaper ads, the town's website, electronic message boards at town facilities as well as use of the town's social media channels. Staff recommend that an enhanced communication strategy be adopted to include a media campaign, with literature and a video to demonstrate the correct placement of leaf piles as well as identification of items that result in contamination of leaf piles. In addition, crews would utilize door hangers as a means of making residents aware of why a particular leaf pile was not collected (e.g. presence of parked vehicle). It is estimated that these communication enhancements would cost an additional \$5,000 per year.

As noted in the 2021 Digital Plan, an online leafing program tracker will be launched in the fall of 2021. This will provide a similar service to the snow plow tracked so that residents can access regular updates on the Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program in all applicable zones.

Proposed Service Level Improvements/Expansions Summary

The proposed improvement options outlined in this report will result in an overall increase of \$2,300 to the 2022 operating budget if all options are selected. The potential 2022 Bulk Loose Leaf Collection Program service areas are mapped in Appendix E. The required modification to the 2022 budget includes the elimination of the spring pick-up program which aids in off-setting the increases proposed. Moving

forward, the estimated annual budget increases are modest in nature until the year 2028 wherein the impact of further service level increases are expected due to the increasing age of our canopy.

The 10-year forecast is included in the table below and identifies the incremental increase to the annual budget as a result of the recommended options and program changes set out herein.

Table 4

IMPROVEMENT OPTION	Details	BUDGET IMPACT	FORECAST								
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Proposed Service Level	1. Provide Fall service when area/street is 25 years (outside of existing service areas)	\$13,750	\$0	\$11,550	\$0	\$5,500	\$13,750	\$7,700	\$17,600	\$22,000	\$28,600
	2. Provide Fall service to areas adjacent to Mature Woodlots (outside of existing service areas)	\$11,550	-	-	-						
	3. Expand Service Frequency at 40 + 60 yrs	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$20,500	\$21,000	\$25,500	\$5,000
Move to AD-HOC Spring Program	Spring Program only provided if/when the fall program is unable to be fully executed due to the early on-set of winter. No budget impact; operation change	-\$28,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increase marketing/communications	Increase communication via leaflets, door knockers, social media, etc.	\$5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL BUDGET IMPACT	\$2,300	\$0	\$11,550	\$0	\$5,500	\$13,750	\$28,200	\$38,600	\$47,500	\$33,600

UPDATE: During the July 5th, 2021 Council meeting, wherein the original report on this matter was presented, Council deferred their decision to the next Council meeting. During this deferral period, staff were asked to consult with Council for input on this report. The summary of those consultations are set out in Appendix F. Within Appendix F – Consultation Item 1 provides a discussion on the request to advance the introduction of Service Level C and B to areas not yet receiving this service level. This Appendix also provides an alternate Table 4 to demonstrate the budgetary requirements for supporting this service level change.

The adoption or approval of any or all proposed service improvements/enhancements – including the adoption of a defined service level standard has financial budget implications, and is recommended for referral to the 2022 Budget Committee for consideration.

Staff commit to re-evaluate areas that qualify for the fall program on an annual basis and make minor adjustments to the new serviced areas as required.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

The town has been providing bulk leaf collection service to the heavily treed, mature residential neighborhoods for many years. The program is intended to provide efficient collection of leaves where leaf drop volumes are high, and where it is not convenient to bag and collect leaves through the Region's curbside yard waste collection program.

(B) FINANCIAL

Financial impacts of the proposed service increase/enhancements/ reductions are provided within the body of the report.

Any modifications of the bulk loose leaf collection service and associative budget implications, need to be approved through the 2022 budget process prior to implementation.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Future program communication plans would be adjusted to accommodate any changes to the current loose leaf collection service.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Continuously improve our programs and services
- Provide outstanding service to our residents and businesses
- Be valued/celebrated for outstanding service

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

This matter does not impact climate change.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Current Loose Leaf Collection Zones

Appendix B: 2022 - 2031 Area/Street Age at 25 years

Appendix C: 2022 Adjacent Areas to Mature Woodlots

Appendix D: 2028 - 2031 Proposed Service Frequency Changes

Appendix E: Potential 2022 Bulk Leaf Program (for consideration)

Appendix F: Memo on Additional Information from Council Consultations

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