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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. OPS24-016

Subject: Windrows Pilot Program Extension – Service Delivery Options

Prepared by: Luigi Colangelo, Manager of Public Works

Department: Operational Services

Date: July 2, 2024

Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS24-016 be received; and
2. That the continuation of the Windrow Removal Pilot Program for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities for the 2024/2025 winter season, to be funded from the Tax Rate Stabilization reserve, be approved; and
3. That, if approved, direction be provided to staff on the service delivery models presented.

Executive Summary

This report incorporates feedback from public engagement of the program participants for the 2023/2024 Windrow Removal Pilot Program for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities and explores options to deliver the service with financial impacts:

- Town of Aurora adopted the 2023/2024 Windrow Removal Pilot Program as endorsed by Council in September 2023.
- Survey results indicate 96 per cent of the 460 respondents would like to see the Windrow Removal Pilot Program continue in the future.
- Service delivery to extend the Windrow Removal Pilot Program for one additional year based on three possible options.

Background

Town of Aurora adopted the 2023/2024 Windrow Removal Pilot Program as endorsed by Council in September 2023.

As stipulated by the Municipal Act, 2001, the Town of Aurora is entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining road and sidewalk networks to ensure the safety and accessibility of our community members. Recognizing the unique needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, the Town approved the Windrow Removal Pilot Program in September 2023 to address the specific challenges seniors and individuals with disabilities encounter during winter weather conditions.

Staff reported back to Council in April 2024, with the recommendation to extend the Windrow Removal Pilot Program for one additional year as the 2023/2024 winter season was an unseasonably warm making it difficult winter season; therefore, not possible to gauge the total effect on Operational Services staff and other administrative support divisions. Not only is there a financial impact due to staff complement, but other operational impacts such as increased fuel consumption, vehicle maintenance etc. require evaluation. It is important to fully understand all factors to determine the viability and potential adoption of this program which can only be achieved by experiencing a more common winter weather season.

Analysis

Survey results indicate 96 per cent of the 460 respondents would like to see the Windrow Removal Pilot Program continue in the future.

Staff generated a survey to gauge continued interest and satisfaction with the Windrow Removal Pilot Program which was distributed to all 1,100 windrow participants. Operational Services received 460 responses. Demonstrated in Table 1 and Table 2 below, over 83 per cent of participants were satisfied with the program, and 96 per cent wanted to see the program continue in the future.

Table 1: Windrow Satisfaction Survey

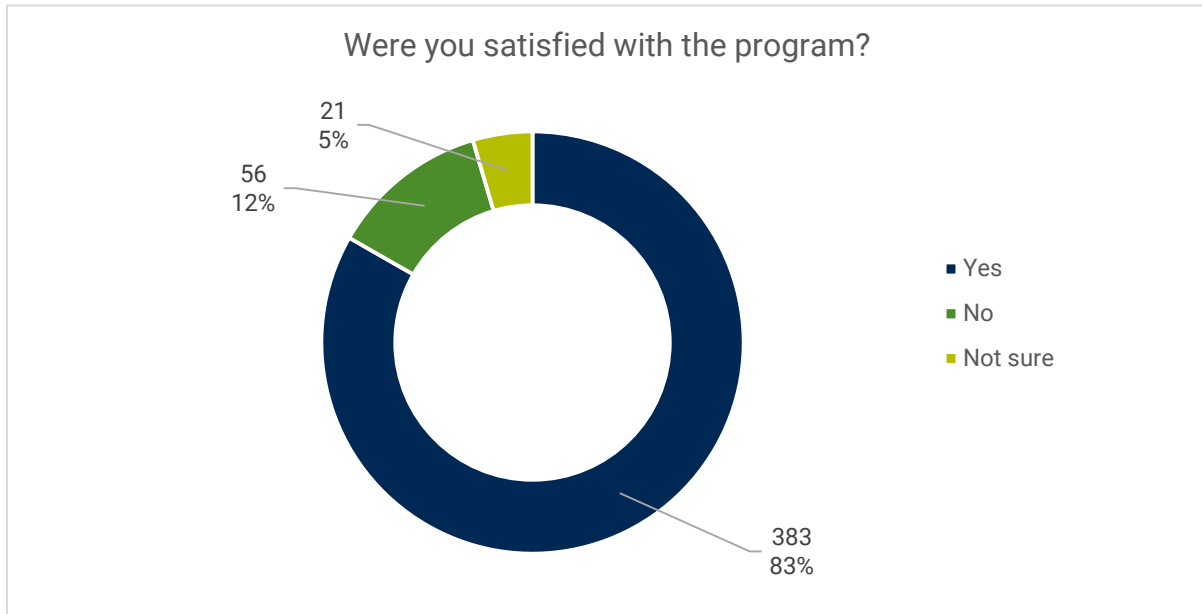
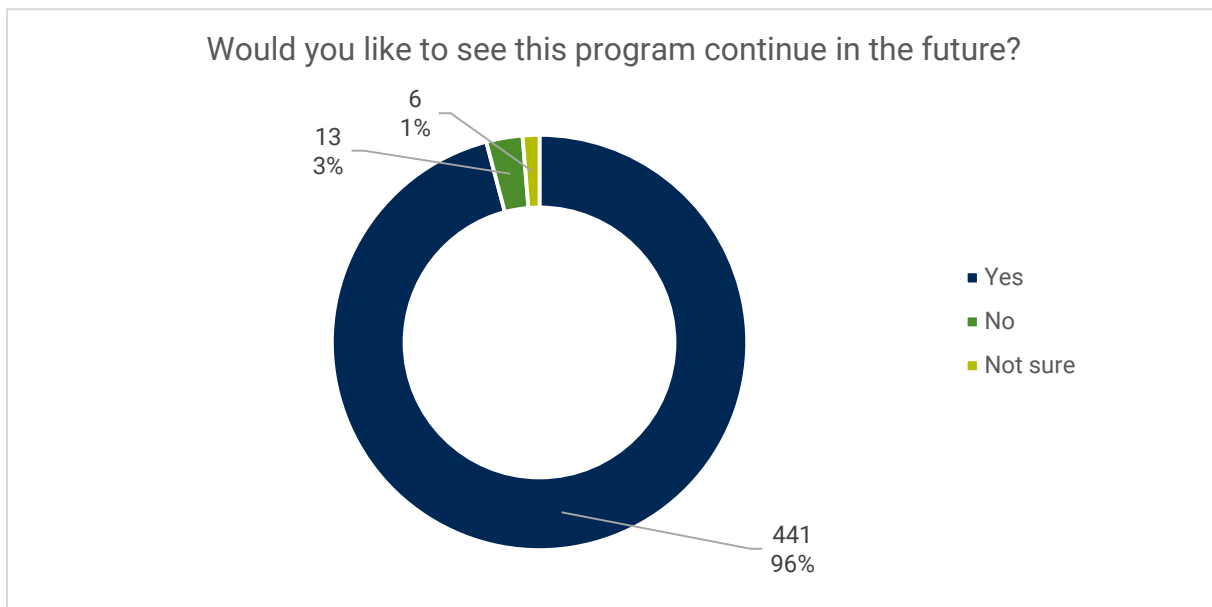


Table 2: Windrow Continuation



A majority of respondents indicated they would not participate in the program if there was a fee between \$75-150 with 41 per cent not comfortable with paying any amount, and 56 per cent of respondents comfortable paying a mean of \$70 annually.

Table 3: Windrow Satisfaction Survey

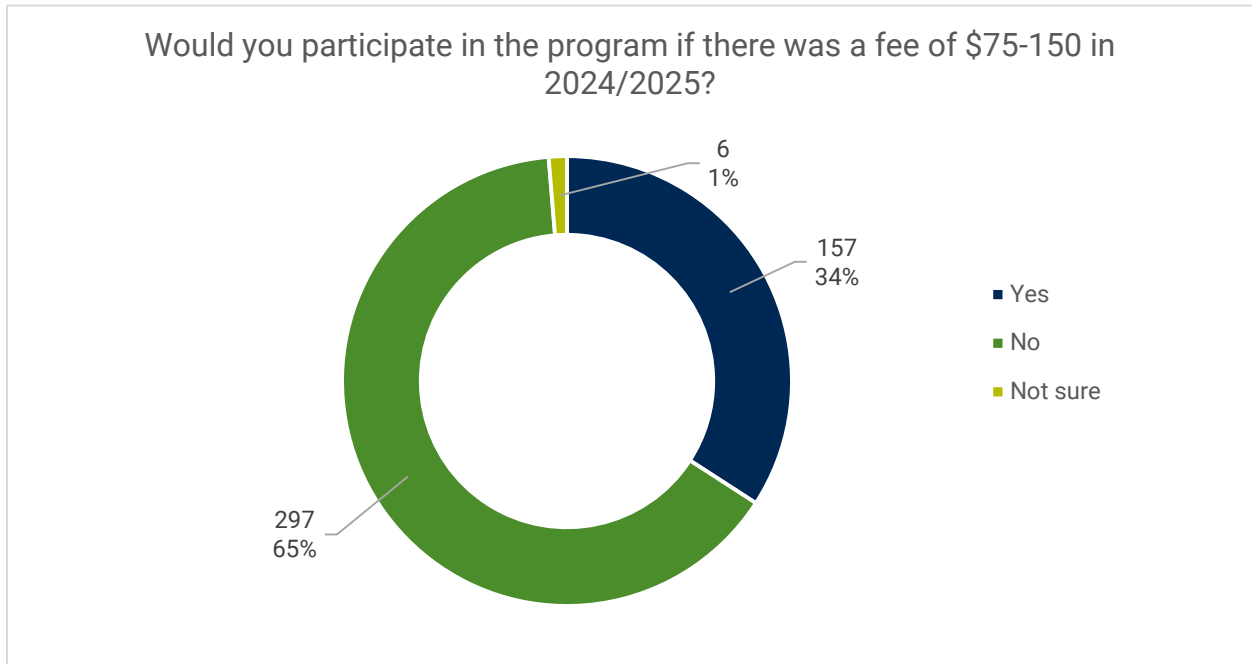
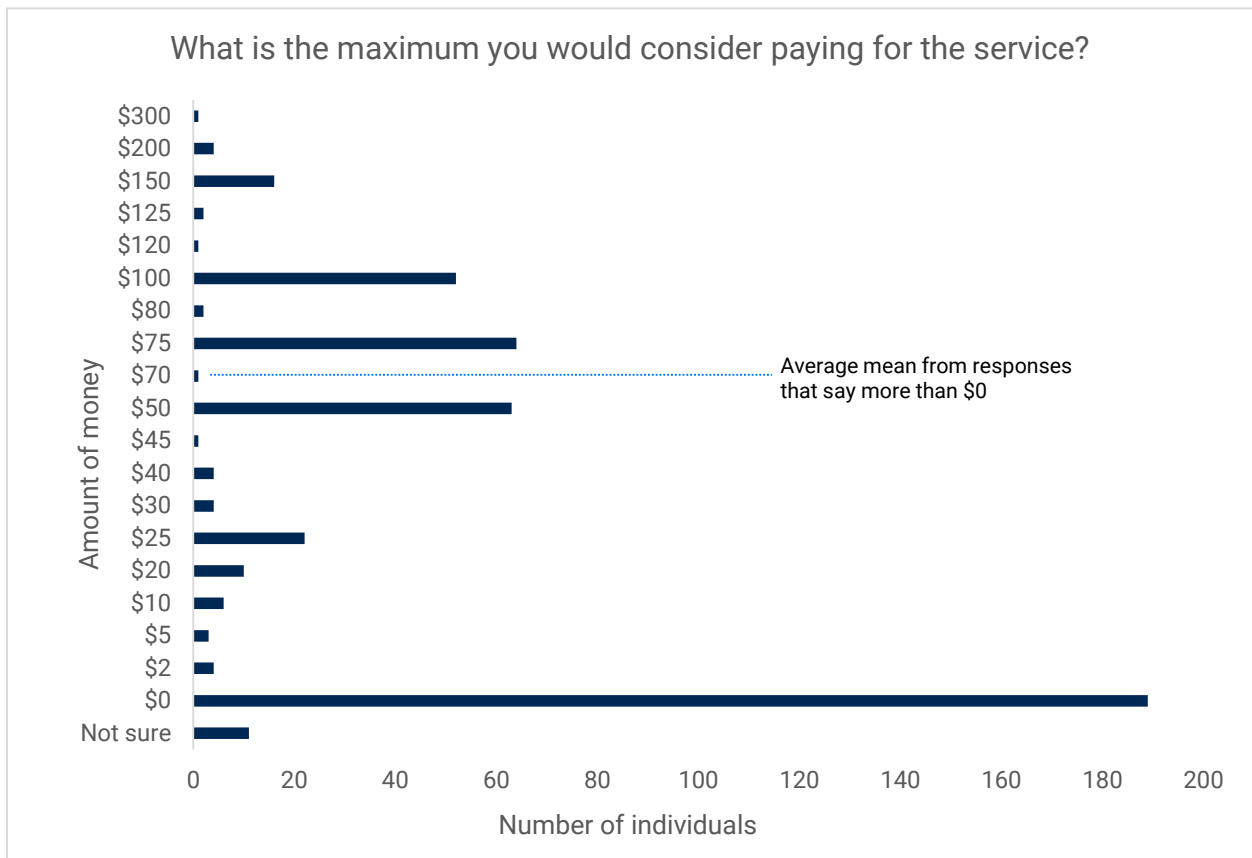


Table 4: Considered Cost by Participants



Service delivery to extend the Windrow Removal Pilot Program for one additional year based on three possible options.

Three potential service delivery methods as recommended by staff are options available to repeat the Windrow Removal Pilot Program for one additional year:

- Option A: Town staff can deliver the program internally with the hiring of six additional seasonal staff.
- Option B: the Town may procure a contractor to deliver the service on its behalf.
- Option C: the Town may implement a partial cost recovery rate to be applied to participants who enroll in the Windrow Pilot Program.

Option A would be a repeat of the service delivery method in 2023/2024. Under this method, the cost to deliver does include the added benefit of having staff on hand to conduct other duties whilst not performing windrow removals. Staff were actively involved in various essential parks maintenance tasks, including but not limited to:

- block pruning and municipal tree maintenance
- outdoor rink set up and ongoing maintenance
- park infrastructure repair and maintenance
- other duties in preparation of the summer outdoor maintenance season such as picnic table and waste receptacle restoration

Given the number of outdoor amenities/assets are annually increasing with new trails, parks and added outdoor temporary rinks, the addition of six seasonal staff were well utilized despite the lesser than predicted windrow removals. In 2023/2024 the cost to perform Option A resulted in a total amount of \$253,000 or \$230 per program participant household.

Option B would have the Town procure a contractor to perform windrow removal on its behalf. Recently staff released an RFQ for the service that requested costs, including clearance of windrows for different enrollment levels of participants e.g.: 700, 100, 1,500 etc. and all associated costs for vehicles/equipment, staffing and remediations. Based on a sample of 1,000 participants, costs are estimated to be \$325,000 for the service, or at a sample of 1,500 participants at an estimated cost of \$404,000. Under this model, a contractor would leave six vehicles or equipment at the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) similar to a sidewalk contractor. Operators would be on-call during snow events and a service standard of thirteen hours should be maintained as per the contractual agreement.

Option C is a cost recovery model, where the Town would either perform the service in-house, as described in Option A, or procure a contractor to deliver the service (Option B) with the adage that a cost-recovery charge be passed onto program participants. In this model, staff recommend a recovery charge of \$100 per participating household, which could lower the overall cost to the Town.

In all three models, the eligibility criteria would remain the same, expecting between 1,000 and 1,500 total range of participants with understanding of more awareness of the program offering as a reason for a slight potential increase. Table 1 presents the estimated financial impacts of each option.

Table 1: Option financial comparison

Option	Estimated Net Cost to Town
Option A: Town staff program delivery	\$253,000 (2023 cost based on 1,100 households)
Option B: Town contracted program delivery for 2024/2025	\$325,000** (1,000 households) \$404,000** (1,500 households)
Option C: Partial user cost recovery*	\$143,000 (In-house service) \$225,000 (Contracted based on 1,000 households) \$254,000 (Contracted based on 1,500 households)

*Assumes a \$100 cost recovery rate.

**Based on season 1 rates.

Advisory Committee Review

None.

Legal Considerations

Continued implementation of a windrow clearing program could lead to additional claims being made against the Town in relation to property damage or personal injury, which may have an impact on the Town's insurance premiums and the Town's insurance related budget lines. If a windrow clearing program is continued, waivers of liability should continue to be included in the application process to limit claims and potential damages.

Financial Implications

Should the continuation of the existing 2023/2024 Windrow Pilot Program be extended into the 2024/2025 winter season, the total estimated cost of this program is anticipated to be similar to the past season being \$253,000. If an alternative service delivery model is selected, the pilot's total estimated cost will differ.

If approved, the 2024/2025 windrow pilot program's net operating costs would impact both the 2024 and 2025 operating budgets with roughly one third of that impact falling within 2024 and the remaining two thirds impacting 2025. It is recommended that these program costs continue to be funded from the Tax Rate Stabilization reserve.

Should this program become permanent, its ongoing net operating requirements would need to be addressed as an incremental burden on the tax levy in 2025 and 2026.

Communications Considerations

There are no communications considerations because of this report. But Communications will ensure that residents are aware of the decision of Council regarding if and how this pilot program will continue in the future and how to participate.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations have a minor impact on greenhouse gas emissions; however, when staff review future windrow clearings, green procurement will be considered as it plays an important roll mitigating the impacts of a changing climate, from air quality, stormwater management to counteracting the effects of the heat island.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Windrow Pilot Program supports the Strategic Plan goal of Strengthening the Fabric of our Community through its accomplishment in developing a plan to review and realign service levels to reflect current and future demographic trends.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council does not continue with the Windrow Removal Pilot Program going forward.
2. Other options ss directed by Council.

Conclusions

After surveying participants of the initial Windrow Removal Pilot Program, an overwhelming response of almost 42 per cent of all program participants was received. It is evident that most program participants were satisfied with the Pilot and would like to see the program continued in 2024/2025. As requested by Council, three options are presented for consideration, including repeating the in-house model, procuring a contractor to perform the service, a cost-recovery model, with the eligibility criteria remaining the same. Staff are seeking direction from Council on which model is preferred, if any, for the 2024/2025 winter snow removal season.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

OPS23-020, Potential Snow Windrow Removal Assistance Pilot Project, September 19, 2023

OPS24-004, Windrow Pilot Project-Update, April 2, 2024

OPS24-007, Windrow Pilot Project – Additional Information, April 23, 2024

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on June 12, 2024.

Approvals

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer