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Town of Aurora  
**Committee of the Whole Report**  
No. OPS24-004

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**Subject:** Windrow Pilot Project - Update

**Prepared by:** Luigi Colangelo, Manager, Public Works

**Department:** Operational Services

**Date:** April 2, 2024

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## Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS24-004 be received; and
2. That the continuation of the Snow Windrow Removal Assistance Pilot Program for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities for the 2024/2025 winter maintenance season be approved.

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Windrow Removal Assistance Pilot Program, which has since concluded for the 2023/2024 winter maintenance season. The Pilot Program provided significant benefits to seniors and individuals with disabilities within our community. This program alleviates the challenges faced by vulnerable residents during the winter months, ensuring safe access to essential services and enhancing overall quality of life:

- Town of Aurora adopted the 2023/2024 windrow removal program as endorsed by Council in September 2023.
- Windrow removal events were well executed, with staff and equipment at optimal performance.
- Additional operational works completed by seasonal staff provided added value in accomplishing necessary urban forestry maintenance and off-season refurbishments of parks assets.

- Due to above average seasonal temperatures, the number of removal events was lesser than predicted and thus a true fiscal and operational impact assessment was not realized.

## Background

**Town of Aurora adopted the 2023/2024 windrow removal program as endorsed by Council in September 2023.**

As stipulated by the Municipal Act, 2001, the Town of Aurora (The Town) 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 Snow Windrow Removal Assistance Pilot Program in September 2023 to address the specific challenges they encounter during winter weather conditions.

**Windrow removal events were well executed, with staff and equipment at optimal performance.**

Even with the relatively mild winter experienced this season, the operational efforts of our staff have remained diligent in executing snow removal duties. The frequency of plowing roads and seniors' driveways has been limited, occurring only three times throughout the winter season.

**Table 1: Windrow Plowing Events (Winter 2023/2024)**

Event date	Number of staff	Hours to Complete
December 7 2023	9 staff	5 hours
January 13 2024	9 staff	7 hours
February 16 2024	9 staff	5 hours

During windrow plowing events, on average, 10-15 complaints were received per event. In summary, most complaints received concerned timing of removal, which were mostly premature as the service would normally not commence until primary plowing was complete, and on all occasions within the service standard, which mitigated any response. Other complaints included instances where second plow passes may have created a second smaller windrow, which did not impede driveway use, but rather served as an aesthetic annoyance, and complaints related to lawn turf damage. During the Significant Weather Event declaration of January 12, despite the exception of

service standard timing, the windrow removal service was completed well within the normal standard.

**Additional operational works completed by seasonal staff provided added value in accomplishing necessary urban forestry maintenance and off-season refurbishments of parks assets.**

The six seasonal staff Operational Services recruited to support snow plowing operations for seniors' driveways have been efficiently utilized throughout the winter season. While not engaged in snow removal duties, these dedicated individuals have been primarily engaged in urban forestry activities including block pruning of street trees. The focused effort of staff on pruning has cleared a backlog, allowing the decision to move closer to meeting the Parks Service Level Standards for routine maintenance pruning. As well staff were actively involved in various essential parks maintenance tasks, some of which includes but is 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 utilised despite the lesser than predicted windrow removals.

**Due to above average seasonal temperatures, the number of removal events was lesser than predicted and thus a true fiscal and operational impact assessment was not realized.**

Due to the unseasonably warm weather this winter it was not possible to gauge the total effect on Operations and other administrative support divisions. Not only is there a financial impact due to increased staff compliment, but other operational impacts also as they relate to increased fuel consumption, vehicle maintenance etc. require evaluation. It is important to fully understand all factors to determine the viability and potential adoption of program, this can only truly be achieved through experiencing a traditional winter season.

Regarding staff's recommendation to continue this pilot through the 2024-2025 winter season, staff are exploring opportunities to streamline the application process for next year, which would allow existing program users to simply re-enroll without the

inconvenience of a full re-application process. Operational Services will work with internal partners to ensure legal considerations are addressed, while seeking to optimize the user experience.

## Advisory Committee Review

None.

## Legal Considerations

None.

## Financial Implications

The implementation of the 2023/24 windrow pilot program included Operational Services hiring of six seasonal staff (six-month contracts) to effectively manage the 1,100 senior's driveway applications that the Town received. The total estimated cost of this pilot for the 2023/24 winter season was \$253,000 as summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Approximate Costs for the 2023/2024 Windrow Pilot Program**

Task performed	Hours	Estimated cost to municipality
Administration (application processing, customer service inquires/responses)	150 hours	Approximately \$9,000
GIS Mapping (adding addresses in a data base and develop app for staff tracking purposes)	170 hours	Approximately \$9,500
Hiring/onboarding seasonal staff	70 Hours	Approximately \$4,500
Labour, six-month seasonal contracts	6 months x 6 staff plus applicable overtime	*Approximate estimation \$230,000

\* Estimated overtime costs are included, there will be a savings due to the mild winter conditions.

As per Council's direction, these costs will be fully funded through an equivalent draw from the Tax Rate Stabilization reserve.

If Council were to make this service enhancement permanent, all of the above identified windrow program costs would represent an incremental operating pressure on the Town's tax levy.

Should Council approve the recommended extension of the windrow program pilot into the 2024/25 winter season, staff estimate that the program's costs will be comparable. The variable cost component of this program such as overtime and other administrative costs, will be driven by the number of winter events over this winter season. It is recommended that the 2024/25 pilot program costs continue to be fully funded from the Tax Rate Stabilization reserve.

## **Communications Considerations**

The Town will inform the public about the information contained in this report by posting it to the Town's website. Depending on Council's decision, the Communications Division will inform the public about the availability of a windrow removal pilot program, and application requirements similar to the 2023/24 pilot.

## **Climate Change Considerations**

The key opportunity in developing the Green Fleet Plan in 2021 was to achieve long-term GHG emissions targets, in conjunction with fundamental goals developed and the associated action items.

The following actions from GFP play a role in climate change mitigation:

- Replace vehicles with best in-class fuel efficient vehicles. New models are more fuel efficient, produce lower emissions and are good options while the manufacturers develop viable hybrid/electric vehicles required to provide service. Overall, GHG reduction, by upgrading alone, through capital renewal can produce 4-5 percent decrease.
- Utilize telematic information provided through GPS system to reduce idling, driver behaviour, maximize route efficiency, smart drivers can help reduce fuel use.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

The development of a potential windrow 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 to provide direction.
2. Council may choose to endorse the implementation of the windrow program fulltime for seniors or individuals with disabilities.

### **Conclusions**

A snow windrow clearing program is an investment in the health and well-being of the senior's population and residents with disabilities and would provide an enhanced level of service for these residents. Through the 2023-2024 winter maintenance season, staff successfully delivered the windrow removal service, and assuming continued allocation of necessary resources, staff should be equipped to continue to deliver the program in 2024-2025 as currently offered to designated residents.

As such, staff recommend that the Town extend the Windrow Removal Assistance Pilot Program for seniors and persons with disabilities for the 2024-2025 winter season.

### **Attachments**

None.

### **Previous Reports**

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

### **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on March 14, 2024

### **Approvals**

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer