

HALIFAX

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Item No. 14.1.4
Halifax Regional Council
February 23, 2016

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by _____
John Traves, Q.C. Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Original Signed by _____
Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: January 29, 2016

SUBJECT: Leaf Collection Program

ORIGIN

Regional Council, January 12, 2016, Council motion requested a staff report to analyze the effectiveness of the leaf collection program. The report should include why the leaf collection program was not completed in 2015 and, determine what resources are required to complete the leaf collection program before the winter freezing conditions worsen. In order to ensure appropriate resources are allocated for next year, this report should be completed prior to Regional Council deliberating on the final budget.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Section 79 (1), The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for; (p) preventing or decreasing flooding; (aa) streets, culverts, retaining walls, sidewalks, curbs and gutters;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct staff to complete the Leaf Collection Program with the existing resources and approved budget.

BACKGROUND

The Road Operations section of Transportation & Public Works is responsible for delivering an extensive leaf collection program on Peninsula Halifax. The program involves large tow behind collectors and vacuum street sweepers.

The Peninsula area consists of many densely populated streets with tree canopies which line both sides of every street. The trees cast their leaves quickly onto the street right of way leaving a very short period for collection. Collecting these leaves is a labour intensive process starting in mid-November. It continues

until completed or until leaves become frozen to the ground. If there is early snow followed by thaw, crews resume the leaf collection when possible.

DISCUSSION

In 2015, the leaf collection program started on November 9 – a week later than the previous year due to the trees not yet casting their leaves. On December 14, the first snow fall event of approximately 5 cm occurred. Staff resumed leaf collection within 2 days of the snow fall, however, the condition of the leaves this season (wet, frozen) resulted in a reduction of productivity as it took the crews longer to clear them.

Inclement weather and a late leaf drop are defining factors in how quickly staff can collect the leaves. Traffic patterns, school zones, road conditions, noise levels, areas prone to flooding and the types of trees on each street are taken into consideration when designing the leaf pick-up schedule.

Table 1: Comparison of 2014/2015 Leaf Collection Programs

	2015	2014
Lane kilometers for leaf clearing program (partial areas of districts 5, 7, 8 and 9)	367 kms	367 kms
Lane kilometers completed	332 kms (91%)	356 kms (97%)
Lane kilometers not completed	35 kms (9%)	11 kms (3%)
Calls to 311	320	311
Program activities	1 week with day crews and 5 weeks with day & night crews November 9 to 13 (4 day crews* 08:00 – 16:00) November 16 to December 11 (4 day crews* 08:00 – 16:00 and 4 night crews* 00:01 – 08:00) Program extended through to December 18 with intermittent mobilization between weather events.	2 weeks with day crew and 2 weeks with day & night crews November 3 to 16 (4 day crews* 08:00 – 16:00) November 17 to December 1 (4 day crews* 08:00 – 16:00 and 4 night crews* 00:01 – 08:00)
Snow events during program	Snow event December 14 th (5 cm), 0 salting events	0 snow events, 3 salting events
Crew size	Same as 2014	1 operator, 1 spotter, 1 house operator and 6 rakers
2015 Labour costs	\$212,000	\$252,000 (includes \$62,000 in overtime)
2015 Labour hours	6,340	5,680

As indicated in Table 1, more staff effort was applied to the leaf program in 2015 than in 2014; however, the completion rate was lower due to environmental factors. In 2015, management tried to complete the program without the scheduled use of overtime. The 2015 program began six days later and extended 10 days longer. In 2014, the program was 97% complete in fewer days using overtime at an additional overall program cost of \$40,000.

In reviewing obstacles to greater efficiency staff believes that improved communications through the website and public service announcements could provide significant benefit. Similar to the approach to snow removal following the initial street clearing, the PSAs and web content could provide more targeted zones requesting residents remove obstacles in the street (parked cars, etc). In addition, the strategic use of a limited amount of overtime would allow 100% program completion within the existing available budget and resources.

In conclusion, Transportation and Public Works is appropriately resourced to complete this program in a typical year with the prudent use of overtime if the leaves are cast late or inclement weather occurs. This will minimize the risk of leaves clogging catch basins and minimize the risk of flooding to our street network. Overtime is applicable when activities are necessary outside normal shifts and on weekends and holidays. In the case of flooding or tree damage events, outside of business hours, overtime is necessary to ensure the road network is returned to service as soon as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No implications identified. The program is funded within existing envelope.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement has taken place.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could increase TPW's budget in order to supplement the leaf collection service with contractors.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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