

HALIFAX

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Item No. 15.1.7
Halifax Regional Council
October 29, 2019

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by 

SUBMITTED BY: _____
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 12, 2019

SUBJECT: Roadside Tree Debris Pickup Service

ORIGIN

On September 24, 2019, the following motion of Halifax Regional Council was put and passed:

That Halifax Regional Council request that the Chief Administrative Officer provide a staff report on the initiation of a roadside pickup service of tree debris across the Municipality, caused by Hurricane Dorian.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter clauses 7A and 79A (a), as follows:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality;
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality;

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO not to initiate a roadside tree debris pickup program across the municipality in response to post-tropical storm Dorian.

BACKGROUND

In the days following Dorian, the municipality implemented a number of service adjustments and programs to support residential, private property tree debris cleanup and removal:

- Increased curbside 5 bundle limit (for tree debris) to 10 bundles.
- Procured Halifax C&D Recycling locations (16 Mills Drive in Goodwood and 188 Ross Road in Westphal) to extend their hours of operation and accept residential wood debris at no cost to citizens:
 - Saturday and Sunday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
 - Monday to Friday: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- Established eight drop-off debris locations, at no cost to citizens:
 - 2 Lyle Street, Dartmouth
 - 144 Thornhill Drive, Dartmouth
 - 26 Thomas Raddall Drive, Halifax
 - 50 Cheviot Hill, Porters Lake
 - Kinsac Ballfield (near 1703 Beaver Bank Road), Beaver Bank
 - Sheet Harbour Community Centre, 183 Pool Road, Sheet Harbour
 - Lake Charlotte Boat Launch, 11475 Hwy 7, Lake Charlotte
 - Peace Park, 67 Park Road, Musquodoboit Harbour

For risk and insurance purposes, staff were advised that the drop-off locations required 24/7 security. To meet this requirement, for five of the eight locations, security resources were procured through HRM's standing offer. HRM exhausted all available standing offer resources for the initial five sites and, as a result, Sheet Harbour Community Centre, Lake Charlotte Boat Launch and the Peace Park were staffed during daytime hours using municipal resources (Maintenance Planning Supervisors) with Traffic Control resources (from standing offer) for staffing overnight. As expected, use of these locations naturally decreased as residents completed their private property clean ups and the sites were closed effective Sunday October 6th. Similarly, the free debris service at the C&D facilities ceased on Saturday October 5th. The increased curbside limit of 10 bundles continues.

Costs for the residential debris program are still being incurred as staff proceed to procure chipping/disposal services to remove wood debris from the HRM sites. Photos in appendix A provide some sense of the debris collected. Total incremental costs for this program are expected to be in the range of \$170,000. HRM staff have been advised that tree debris services for private property will not be recoverable through the Disaster Financial Assistance program (which has yet to be established at the time of writing this report).

Consideration of Curbside Pickup immediately following Dorian:

Several Councillors inquired about the potential for a residential / private property tree debris roadside pickup service immediately following the storm, as was provided during Hurricane Juan. It is important to note that Hurricane Juan and Dorian were distinctly different storms with significantly different community impacts as shown below:

Circulation Pattern Comparison between Juan (2003) and Dorian (2019)¹



Approximate circulation pattern with hurricane Juan (2003) near the time of landfall. Peak wind gust in the Halifax area was 176 km/h



Approximate circulation pattern with post-tropical storm Dorian (2019) near the time of landfall. Peak wind gust in the Halifax area was 141 km/h

One of the major lessons learned from Hurricane Juan was the decision made on the second day after the storm to address residential tree debris curbside while trying to restore critical public infrastructure. This decision resulted in unnecessary delays in restoring power, public service and business continuity. The decision to not proceed with an immediate residential roadside program for post-tropical storm Dorian is considered one of the major contributing factors to HRM's rapid recovery.

DISCUSSION

On September 24, 2019, Halifax Regional Council requested that the Chief Administrative Officer provide a staff report on the initiation of a roadside pickup service of tree debris across the Municipality, caused by Hurricane Dorian. Staff has conducted initial research into the provision of a roadside service initiative. The major challenge for staff is that there is no reliable estimate of how much tree debris remains on private property that would be brought roadside if a service was made available. In the absence of this information staff would suggest that a 6 to 8 week collection program would be required. The program would utilize approximately 8 external forestry crews at a minimum estimated cost of \$500,000. This estimate could fluctuate significantly depending on the amount and types of roadside debris generated. These services would need to be tendered and therefore it would likely take at least 4 weeks before contracts are signed and work begins.

Given the provision of the free tree debris services to date, and given the lack of requests/complaints regarding private property tree debris, staff is continuing to not recommend roadside pickup service for the following reasons:

1. Public Safety and Mobility – bringing residential tree debris to the roadside will negatively impact safety and mobility throughout the municipality. Currently streets, sidewalks, parking spots, bus stops (Transit and HRCE) and sight lines are clear of debris.
2. Liability – once the municipality requests citizens to bring debris roadside, HRM owns the waste and responsibility for damage that may follow.
3. Fairness – based upon the use of the free tree debris programs to date, staff would suggest that a majority of households/citizens have invested personal resources to manage the tree debris

generated from private property. Proceeding with a curbside initiative at this time may be viewed as both unnecessary and unfair.

4. Risk to Operations – there remains significant work left to be done to restore right of way and park assets to a safe condition. Ongoing storm recovery efforts continue to compete with routine seasonal work such as the crack/pothole filling program, concrete program, tree planting, leaf clearing, street sweeping and Winter Operations preparations (vehicle maintenance, plow installations and training). A curbside program would run during Winter Operations which is set to begin November 17th.
5. Costs – costs to provide the 6 to 8 week roadside pickup service are estimated in the range of \$500,000. These costs are not anticipated to be recoverable through the Disaster Financial Assistance program. It should be noted that staff has confirmed that declaring a State of Emergency, (as was done for Juan but not Dorian), has no impact on whether HRM can make a claim or what damages HRM can claim. It should also be noted that the DFA program has not been formally established by the Province as of this date.
6. Precedent – Dorian was defined as a post-tropical storm as it made landfall. HRM is experiencing an increase in these types of storms and therefore the precedent of a roadside pickup program in response to Dorian is a significant financial consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from staff's recommendation.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no known risks resulting from staff's recommendation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was not undertaken as part of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no substantive environmental implications associated with staff's recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

Council could direct the CAO to proceed with the initiation of a roadside pickup service of tree debris across the Municipality as described in this report. This alternative is not recommended. However, should Council wish to proceed with a roadside tree debris pickup program, funding would be available from the General Contingency Reserve, Q421 which has an uncommitted balance of \$3.2M remaining.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A – Photos of HRM brush drop-off sites

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Brad Anguish, Director of Transportation and Public Works, 902.490.4855

Appendix A – Photos of HRM Brush Drop-off Sites

Brush Site Location Photos:



Lyle Street, Dartmouth



Thornhill Drive, Dartmouth



Thomas Raddall Drive, Halifax



Cheviot Hill, Porters Lake



Beaver Bank Road, Beaver Bank



Sheet Harbour Community Centre



Peace Park



Lake Charlotte Boat Launch