



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No. 13.1**

**Halifax Regional Council  
19 July, 2016  
July 26, 2016**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director

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Bruce Zvaniga, P.Eng., Director Transportation & Public Works

**DATE:** June 21, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Additional Funding for Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

On January 27, 2016, Regional Council requested an information report regarding the availability of snow removal programs and discounted snow removal services for seniors or persons with disabilities.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 79(1)(av)(vii) of the HRM Charter permits the Municipality to expend funds on a grant or contribution to a registered Canadian charitable organization.

**BACKGROUND**

The Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program, initiated prior to amalgamation, has provided snow removal on private property, administered by a charitable organization for individuals with specific needs. The program includes snow removal on: front steps, back steps, front walkways, a pathway to the oil tank and sidewalk, if required.

On August 5, 2014 Regional Council approved a multi-year agreement with the Halifax YMCA to administer the Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program, subject to annual budget approval. The program allows for stability and confidence among residents and provides the YMCA a strong foundation for increased service delivery through efficiencies of a multi-year program.

**DISCUSSION**

During the 2015/2016 winter season, the YMCA received a total of 549 eligible applicants for the municipal Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program. It is worth noting that there may have been additional demand but applications were discouraged after the program was fully subscribed. The \$400,000 available funding from the approved budget was sufficient to provide service to 466 of these individuals (85% of applicants). The program is provided by the YMCA at a cost of \$700 plus 7.5% HST per individual, plus a 15% administration fee.

Council has asked for an information report providing alternatives to the Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program that could support applicable citizens in clearing snow and ice from the walkways on their properties.

### **Nova Scotia Supportive Care Program**

The Province, through the Supportive Care program, provides \$500/month to Nova Scotians with cognitive impairments (difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering, etc.) for home support services. Under this program people may also be eligible to receive reimbursement for snow removal services. To qualify for the program, the individual must meet the following criteria:

- 65 years or older;
- A Nova Scotia resident with a valid Health Card;
- Have significant memory loss and memory problems that affect daily functioning;
- Deemed by Continuing Care as needing a minimum of 25 hours/month of care support; and,
- Have a Substitute Decision Maker (someone who will act on your behalf and has signed an agreement that defines terms and conditions for this program).

Once a Supportive Care recipient has been approved for assistance with snow removal services, he/she will be reimbursed for up to \$495/year based on approval of actual receipts for services provided. The recipient must be considered low income, which is an annual net income of \$22,125 or less if single or \$37,209 or less if married.

### **Veterans Independence Program**

The Government of Canada Veterans Independence Program is intended to assist individuals to remain independent and self-sufficient in their home and community. Depending upon the individual circumstances and health needs, one may qualify for financial assistance for assistance such as snow removal. In 2016, for individuals residing in Halifax, the program provides between \$581 and \$1003 annually for snow removal to qualified individuals.

Veterans can access the program through their case officers or can apply by telephone or on-line if they do not have a case officer. In other provinces, the provincial programs move any recipients of support to the veterans program if the recipients meet the veterans' criteria.

### **Good Samaritan/Snow Angels**

Some other municipalities (such as Calgary, Ottawa and Kingston) either fund or administer a program called "Snow Angels", which encourages citizens to volunteer in assisting the elderly or those with disabilities with the clearing of snow. Typically, if a municipality decides to administer the program itself, the intent of the program is to match volunteers with citizens in need. The operating budget for program administration is generally from \$100,000 – \$200,000, depending on the municipality. In lieu of running the program themselves, some municipalities have instead allocated funds to advertising and recognition programs, encouraging citizens to be "neighbourly" and volunteer in their communities. For example, the City of Ottawa has a Snow Angel Recognition program that recognizes volunteers with a certificate signed by the Mayor and a custom keychain with a snowflake symbol and Ottawa logo.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Should an individual currently being served by HRM's Snow Removal for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities program qualify for Supportive Care or Veteran's assistance, there may be an opportunity to use programs offered by another level of government to supplement the municipality's program. This would allow the same level of funding to provide service to more people in need.

Other Canadian Municipalities have been successful in meeting the needs of some citizens through encouraging and rewarding volunteers who provide neighbourly assistance to other community members.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community consultation has taken place.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A – Nova Scotia Supportive Care Program

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.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.

Report Prepared by: Michael Holinsky, Administrator Road Operations & Construction 902-880-1366  
Trevor Harvie, Superintendent Winter Operations, Training & Compliance 902-219-3314

# Supportive Care

The Supportive Care Program supports eligible Nova Scotians with cognitive impairments (difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering, etc.) by providing them with \$500/month for Home Support Services (personal care, respite, meal preparation and household chores). Under this program people may also be eligible to receive reimbursement for snow removal services up to \$495/year.

To receive funding for Supportive Care, you must:

- Be 65 years or older.
- Be a Nova Scotia resident with a valid Health Card.
- Have significant memory loss and memory problems that affect daily functioning.
- Be deemed by Continuing Care as needing a minimum of 25 hours/month of care support.
- Have a Substitute Decision Maker (someone who will act on your behalf and has signed an agreement that defines terms and conditions for this program).

## How do I get Supportive Care?

You can apply by calling Continuing Care toll-free at **1-800-225-7225**. Once approved, the money will be deposited into your bank account by the Department of Health and Wellness every month. All receipts for services must be submitted to the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

## How can I get reimbursed for snow removal costs?

Once a Supportive Care recipient has been approved for assistance with snow removal services, he/she will be reimbursed for up to \$495/year. All receipts for services must be submitted to the Nova Scotia Health Authority for reimbursement. You must be considered low income, which is an annual net income of \$22,125 or less if single or \$37,209 or less if married, to be eligible for reimbursement of snow removal costs.

## Who can provide home support and snow removal services?

There are many companies who provide these services. Some can be found in the Department of Seniors' Programs for Positive Aging, which can be read online at [gov.ns.ca/seniors/pub/2012\\_ProgramsPA.pdf](http://gov.ns.ca/seniors/pub/2012_ProgramsPA.pdf).

Home support and snow removal services may also be purchased from private companies or people living within your community.

Funding under this program cannot be used to purchase services from:

- A person or organization providing home support and/or snow removal services and who also owns, rents or manages the household / facility the client lives in (e.g., an assisted living facility).
- Family members of a Supportive Care client, including a spouse/partner, children/grandchildren, parent/grandparent, siblings, aunts/uncles and nephews/nieces.



**Will this funding need to be reported as income on my income tax return?**

No, you do not have to report this funding as income on your income tax return because it is considered payment for medical expenses (attendant/respite services) by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Expenses incurred under this program cannot be claimed when filing income tax returns.

To learn more about the Supportive Care Program, please call Continuing Care toll-free line at **1-800-225-7225**, or visit the Department of Health and Wellness website at **[novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs](http://novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs)**.