



Staff Report for Committee of the Whole Meeting

Date of Meeting: June 12, 2024

Report Number: SRCS.24.12

Department: Community Services
Division: Public Works Operation

Subject: **SRCS.24.12 - Windrow Program Review**

Purpose:

This is to report on the status, performance, cost, and potential enhancements to the City's Windrow Program.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRCS.24.12 which provides a comprehensive review of the City's Windrow Program be received for information.

Contact Person:

Frank Quarisa, Director Public Works Operations

Diogo Oliveira, Manager Water, Wastewater and Roads

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Tracey Steele, Commissioner of Community Services

Approved by: Darlene Joslin, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the report's approval are attached.

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Background:

At the March 25, 2019 Council Meeting, Council directed staff to proceed with implementation of a city-wide program to remove the accumulation of snow at the bottom of residential driveways caused during road plowing operations. The program was referred to as The Windrow Program. Council considered various implementation options and approved a program delivered by city staff – referred to as In-House Service.

To deliver the windrow service, the plan was to delete 80 summer seasonal and 40 winter seasonal positions and replaced them with 80 full-time positions. This effectively added 40 net new positions for the 5 winter months. The added capacity of 40 staff during the winter months would deliver the Windrow Program during storm events and perform a variety of other Public Works Operations (PWO) duties the rest of the winter. This approach had the added benefit of dealing with emerging issues such as high growth in Richmond Hill as well as service and resourcing issues within Public Works Operations. For this reason, the Windrow Program was launched as a component of the Public Works Enhancement Program.

Thirty-five (35) heavy-duty tractors equipped with 2-metre-wide articulating wings, AVL/GPS tracking and monitoring systems, and dash cameras were purchased. The cost of the 35 heavy-duty tractors was \$5.5 million and was fully funded from Public Works Development Charge Reserve Funds.

Prior to approval of the In-House Service approach, the contracting out option was assessed and deemed slightly more costly when compared with the direct cost of the in-house delivered Windrow Program. The cost of contracted out service would include the cost of equipment, fuel, maintenance, and labour during windrow events as well as a standby charge for the equipment and labour when not deployed. Most importantly, the contracting out option would not support the implementation of the Public Works Enhancement Program and was therefore not recommended.

Full city-wide windrow services have now been provided since November 2019.

On June 21, 2023, Committee of the Whole received Staff Report SRCS.23.12 regarding the 2022 to 2023 Season Winter Maintenance Review. At the June 28, 2023 Council meeting, a motion was passed directing staff to report back with a comprehensive review of the Windrow Program that explores ways to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the program and includes an assessment of options with associated financial impacts.

The discussion below summarizes the performance and cost of the program as well as opportunities for improvement.

Discussion:

Although the number of Windrow Program deployments varies from year to year, Windrow Program assumptions used in this report are based on an average of ten

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windrow plowing events per year with a 13-hour service delivery target for each event. Some of the windrow plowing is performed during normal business hours and the remainder is performed at night and on weekends thereby requiring overtime. For planning purposes, and as per the original 2019 Council approval of the program, it is assumed that windrow staff dedicate 20% of their time to the Windrow Program and the remaining 80% is dedicated to other components of the PWO Enhancement Program. In practice the actual percentage split depends on the number and severity of winter events. In contrast, sidewalk winter maintenance staff are deployed for approximately 50 extended duration events each winter season which consumes approximately 80% of their available time.

As the 2023/24 winter season was unusually mild with only two winter events requiring windrow equipment deployment, the analysis in this Staff Report also includes data from the 2022/23 winter season.

Public Works Operations Enhancement Program

In order to create the 40 winter positions necessary to deliver the Windrow Program, windrow services were embedded within a broader PWO Enhancement Program which was intended to also address a number of PWO sustainment challenges that needed resolution at the same time that windrow services were being considered.

Prior to the implementation of the PWO Enhancement Program, PWO relied on a large seasonal workforce consisting of approximately 80 positions for the seven summer months and 40 positions for the five winter months. These large twice per year recruitments were extremely time consuming and inefficient and were not conducive to building excellence, sustainment, and succession within the workforce. The 40 winter seasonal workers were dedicated to road and sidewalk winter maintenance activities during inclement weather and were not available to also support the Windrow Program. After the winter events they would return to other daily duties in PWO.

The initial estimated total payroll cost impact of the staff conversion was \$3.63 million as per the March 25, 2019 SCRS.19.07 Staff Report. Actual costs incurred were as follows:

Item	Financial Impact
Deletion of 80 summer and 40 winter seasonals	(\$3.161 million)
Creation of 80 full-time positions	\$6.100 million
Total Impact 2020	\$2.939 million
Estimated Equivalent 2024 Impact (incl. COLA)	\$3.17 million

Under the Enhancement Program, the seasonal compliment was converted to a full-time workforce of 80 staff. The added capacity of 40 staff during the five winter months were dedicated, during storm events, to deliver (or support) the Windrow Program. The Enhancement Program allowed the city to shift to a full-time work force more realistically adapted to the current labour market conditions. This has produced a workforce that is better able to deliver more consistent and responsive service levels and is better structured to ensure long term sustainability and succession.

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After some adjustments, the makeup of the 80 total full-time positions was finalized as follows:

- 80 summer seasonal and 40 winter seasonal PWO positions were eliminated.
- 79 full-time PWO positions were created including:
 - 1 - Roads Supervisor to support all Roads Section activities and to coordinate Windrow Program deployments.
 - 1 - Mechanic II for the additional equipment fleet.
 - 16 - Labourers
 - 61 - Operators
- 1 Access Richmond Hill Advisor was hired to assist with administration, customer service and support to the Windrow Program.

The added winter full time staff under the PWO Enhancement Program have been fully integrated and now support or deliver a number of winter service level improvements. When the windrow front line staff are not deployed on a windrow event, they are assigned to a variety of other tasks including:

- Sidewalk snow removal has been expanded and is now mostly performed by full-time staff. Operations have been supplemented in the past year by a second crew that is available when not on windrow duties. The conversion to full-time staff has improved service levels.
- The annual spring and fall sidewalk technical inspection has been expanded in order to locate and remediate deficiencies resulting from, or in advance of, winter sidewalk plowing operations. This is to improve efficiency as well as operator safety. Also instituted a once-per-month general winter inspection cycle for all sidewalks to identify and remediate hazards.
- Commencing this year, winter trail inspections have been instituted which include winter pruning and hazard tree removals. Dedicated staff and a formal program include inspection of trails as well as proactive repairs to trail, bridges, and boardwalks. This has allowed some spring and fall trail maintenance activities to be shifted to the winter months thereby partially addressing the growing backlog of work in the forestry group.
- Winter maintenance of catch basins, laneways, bridge decks, culverts. Parking lot inspections and maintenance. Previously these were only winter serviced on an as-needed basis and usually only in response to resident complaints.
- Sports dome constructed in 2016 requires ongoing winter attention. Ice and snow clearing around the perimeter of the dome must be performed manually to avoid damage to the dome fabric. The service needs and due diligence have increased in recent years given the age of the fabric.
- With the increasingly variable winter weather conditions and the resulting difficulty maintaining ice, added support is needed for outdoor skating at the Richmond Green skate trail.

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- Winter parks and trails sanitation and illegal dumping including periodic encampment clean-ups. Services were not previously provided during winter months and now provided year-round.
- Holiday lights installation and removal at Richmond Green began in 2021. This involves almost 1,400 hours of staff time.
- Support, clean-up and tear-down of the fall/winter Merry Market at Richmond Green commenced in 2022.
- Annual winter parks inspections, documentation, and preparation in advance of upgrade and maintenance work commencing each spring. Winter planning and preparation is expected to improve maintenance effectiveness during the other three seasons.
- Increased winter staff presence within City parks during weekends. This proactive measure has ensured a higher level of service and prompt response to inquiries and oversight during the winter months.
- Weather permitting, the horticulture and forestry teams have shifted some of their work to the winter months. The horticulture group performs the clean-up and maintenance of horticulture beds that are typically only addressed on a complaint basis. This includes traffic islands and right-of-way horticulture beds and perennial horticulture beds found at trail entrances, within parks and around civic buildings. The forestry team is able to respond to resident-initiated issues more quickly by shifting some activities to the winter months (corrective maintenance, removal, etc.).

In addition to the above, the PWO Enhancement Program has created surge capacity to respond to emergencies and unforeseen circumstances such as the August 2021 and May 2022 windstorms, the 2021/2022 Spongy Moth outbreak, the January 17, 2022 extraordinary winter storm event, etc.

During COVID, the PWO Enhancement Program staff responded to the surge in demand for outdoor activities including multiple openings/closings of parks, and increased demand for skating and other outdoor leisure activities.

PWO Enhancement Program Funding

For funding purposes, the Windrow Program, is embedded within the PWO Enhancement Program. The PWO Enhancement Program, from which the Windrow Program is funded, is being phased in over eight years by drawing from the Community Enhancement and Economic Vitality Reserve Fund. This approach is intended to lessen the annual impact on the property tax rate, and after the eight years (ending in 2026), will have achieved a full transfer of the PWO Enhancement Program to the tax base in 2027. The past and projected annual funding draws from the reserve fund are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1: Draw from Community Enhancement and Economic Vitality Reserve Fund

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Draw from Reserves	\$1,334,234 (Actual)	\$3,005,062 (Actual)	\$2,259,314 (Actual)	\$1,865,222 (Actual)	\$2,042,190 (Actual)	\$1,242,800 (Budget)	\$825,100 (Budget)	\$410,000 (Budget)

Enhancement Program and Windrow Program Costs

For the last three winter seasons, total winter costs allocated to the PWO Enhancement Program and the portion dedicated to windrow service delivery only (referred to as “Direct Windrow Operating Costs”) are summarized in Table 2 below.

The PWO winter Enhancement costs include all salaries, benefits, overtime, and standby time for 80 full-time staff for the periods commencing November 1 to the end of March for each year. The Direct Windrow Operating Costs include winter salaries, benefits, and overtime during windrow deployment events for all windrow full-time staff, 5 months of standby time for windrow full-time staff, equipment, fuel, and supplies.

Table 2: Enhancement Program Winter (5 Months) Costs

Year	Enhancement Program (Nov. to March)	Number of Windrow Deployments	Direct Windrow Operating Costs (Only Operating Costs Dedicated to Windrow Service Delivery)	Direct Windrow Operating Costs Per Driveway
2021/2022	\$1.400 million	6	\$0.321 million	\$7.30
2022/2023	\$1.497 million	11	\$0.552 million	\$12.40
2023/2024	\$1.514 million	2	\$0.210 million ¹	\$4.77

¹ For the 2023/2024 winter season in which only two windrow equipment deployments were required, the total Windrow Program cost was approximately \$209,900 for deployment which includes \$113,200 for windrow operator stand-by time.

Windrow Equipment

An assessment of the windrow equipment purchased in 2019 is included in Attachment 1. Overall, the 35 windrow machines are in very good condition but underutilized based on average engine time. This presents an opportunity to either extend the planned 10-year life of the current equipment, or to recover a better price at auction after the originally planned service life of the equipment.

Based on the assessment, and assuming the condition and reliability of the machines remains as is, staff will:

- Conduct a market assessment one year prior to the planned 2029 disposal to confirm the expected salvage value of the equipment,
- Conduct an equipment condition assessment to confirm the remaining useful life,

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- Based on expected maintenance costs and replacement value, determine, and recommend either an extension to the replacement cycle based on these findings or proceed with replacement and realize the higher auction value.

At this time, and based on what is now known, it is expected that the replacement date can be deferred thereby allowing, if necessary, a further program re-assessment at that time.

Windrow Program Performance

The Windrow Program was conceived in 2019 to achieve completion of 43,436 residential driveways, including 18 located on Regional Roads (which were grandfathered under the previous seniors and disabled resident program) within a 13-hour service delivery target after the end of a snow fall. Actual service delivery time was expected to vary depending on the duration of the storm, snow accumulation and time of day (for example, rush hour). In its first year, the program achieved an average completion time of 9.3 hours.

The average completion time during the 2022/23 season was 11.7 hours, and 11.2 hours for 2023/24. The average completion time over the two winters was therefore 11.6 hours per windrow event.

Although exact numbers were not available for this report, at present, more than 44,000 driveways are serviced by the Windrow Program. With the number of new subdivision roads to be assumed this year and in the next few years, it is expected that the number of driveways will soon exceed 45,000.

As the 2023/24 winter season was uncharacteristically mild with only two windrow equipment deployments, the 2022/23 performance may be a better measure of the current expected performance.

Using calls to Access Richmond Hill (ARH) as a surrogate for service performance, the following summarizes the resident issues that were processed:

2022/2023:

- Total number of Windrow Deployments: 11
- Approximately 1050 calls were received. Average 95 per windrow event.
- 62% of the calls (651) required no action (first call resolution) as they were primarily inquiries related to service levels and estimated time for completion.
- 38% of the calls (399) were investigated. Approximately 200 were found to be already completed when staff visited the address.
- Approximately 150 of the remaining 199 driveways had issues beyond City control such as – parked cars, obstructing landscaping, garbage/blue box placement, basketball/hockey nets, and insufficient snow storage. The remaining 49 required City action such as a second windrow plowing or turf repair.

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2023/2024:

- Total number of Windrow Deployments: 2
- Approximately 180 calls were received. Average 90 per event.
- 55% of the calls (99) required no action (first call resolution).
- Approximately 81 were investigated and 50 of these were found to be already completed.
- Approximately 25 of the remaining 31 driveways had issues beyond City control. The remaining 6 required City action such as a second windrow plowing or turf repair.

Based on the above, Table 3 summarizes the number of driveways that needed to be investigated during or following a windrow deployment event.

Table 3: Investigation Rate Per Event

Year	Events / Deployments	Investigations	Total Investigations Per Event	Investigation Rate Per Event
2022/23	11	399	36.3	1 per 1,213 Driveways
2023/24	2	81	40.5	1 per 1,086 Driveways
Overall	13	480	36.9	1 per 1,192 Driveways

Based on the above, Table 4 summarizes the windrow service deficiencies that were confirmed upon investigation and needed to be rectified.

Table 4: Confirmed Deficiency Rate Per Event

Year	Events / Deployments	Confirmed Deficiencies	Deficiencies Per Event	Deficiency Rate Per Event
2022/23	11	49	4.45	1 per 9,876 Driveways
2023/24	2	6	3.00	1 per 14,667 Driveways
Overall	13	55	4.23	1 per 10,400 Driveways

A staff analysis of resident complaints indicates the following findings and potential opportunities to improve the windrow service:

- With an average of 90 – 95 windrow related calls to ARH per windrow deployment event, and more than half related to timing and service levels, resident understanding of the windrow services could be improved. Windrow information on the City web site should be refreshed annually. The feasibility of including a dedicated Track My Plow screen for windrow operations should be investigated. Increased resident awareness of service levels should reduce the number of calls.
- The expectations of some residents are not fully aligned with the Council approved service levels of the Windrow Program. It should be understood that windrow plowing is only intended to ensure one car width access in and out of residential driveways. The driveways should be passable within a reasonable time frame after City road plows have created the windrow. The windrow service does not replace the responsibilities of the homeowner to clear the remaining few centimeters of snow

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left behind by the windrow plow or the smaller windrow left behind by sidewalk clearing operations. Residents are responsible for added windrow clearing on wider or more complex driveways.

- The City’s communications should include messaging regarding resident responsibilities – for example ensure that the bottom of the driveway can be accessed by City windrow plows. Messaging should emphasize problems with parked cars, proper placement of landscaping, encroachments, garbage/blue bin placement, and other obstructions such as basketball and hockey nets.
- With an average of 1 deficiency per 10,400 driveways, the overall number of deficiencies that require a second pass is low. Service improvement efforts should be dedicated to improving the average completion time. With a service level target of 13 hours, and an average completion time of 11.6 hours over the last two winters, consider alternate windrow deployment strategies in order to further improve the average completion time.

Cost Comparison of In-House vs Contracted Option:

The following compares the current Richmond Hill in-house delivery of the Windrow Program with the expected costs should the program be contracted out.

The operational cost of the Windrow Program is made up of two major components:

1. Direct costs incurred during a deployment. Includes payroll costs, equipment, fuel, materials, and other consumables.
2. Stand-by costs to ensure immediate availability of staff and equipment.

For in-house service delivery, the capital investment to procure the necessary equipment is also to be considered. For the purpose of this analysis, the annual depreciation, on a straight-line basis, of the equipment is considered to be a standby cost for windrow services.

Staff have assessed the expected cost of contracting out the Windrow Program and have compared this against the contracting out costs incurred by two surveyed municipalities (see Attachment 2) as well as the current cost of the Richmond Hill in-house program.

In the case of the City of Toronto and the City of Vaughan, the all-inclusive costs indicated in Table 5 have been publicly reported.

Table 5: Costs for Comparable Windrow Programs

Municipality	Reported annual Cost	Number of Driveways	Approx. Cost per Driveway
Toronto	\$16M ¹	262,000	\$61.07
Vaughan	\$2.1M ²	90,000	\$23.33

¹ Based on 2024 Toronto City Council budget deliberations.

² Based on publicly available City of Vaughan 2023 Staff Reports.

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As noted earlier, it is important to note that the cost of contracting out includes a deployment charge and a stand-by charge. In the case of contracted services, the standby charge includes the cost of staff and equipment on hold that the contractor owns or leases to perform the service. The breakdown between stand-by costs and deployment costs for these two municipalities is not known. It is expected that some efficiencies are being achieved through bundling of services with winter plowing and salting contracts, but the two municipalities derive no benefit or services from (windrow) contractor staff outside of a winter event when these staff are on standby.

To compare the Richmond Hill in-house Windrow Program costs, the following assumptions were made:

1. As per Attachment 1, the windrow related equipment purchased in 2019 cost \$5.51M and is expected to have a minimum salvage (auction) value of \$1.65M after 10 years. Therefore, assume an equal annual depreciation of \$385,000 which, for the purposes of this analysis, approximates the equipment standby cost.
2. The 'Direct Windrow Program Operating Cost' includes all windrow related costs incurred between November 1 and March 31. This is a subset of the PWO Enhancement Program cost.
3. The staff stand-by costs incurred are reported separately and are also a subset of the PWO Enhancement Program cost.

The Windrow Program costs incurred for the 2022/23 and the 2023/24 winter seasons are as follows (Table 6):

Table 6: In-house Total Windrow Program Costs (Incl. Allocation for Equipment)

	2022/23	2023/24
Number of Deployments	11	2
Direct Windrow Deployment / Operating Costs (incl. labour, equipment usage, fuel, and supplies)	\$443,420	\$96,700
Windrow Staff Stand-By Cost (CUPE Staff)	108,580	\$113,200
Sub-Total Direct Windrow Program Costs	\$552,000	\$209,900
Sub-Total Per Driveway (Operating Budget)	\$12.55	\$4.77
Allocation of Annual Equipment Depreciation (assume as proxy for equipment standby costs)	\$385,000	\$385,000
Total Cost	\$937,000	\$594,900
Total Cost per Driveway	\$21.29	\$13.52

Staff have assessed the expected cost for these two years had the Richmond Hill Windrow Program been contracted out. For costing and benchmarking purposes, the

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existing Richmond Hill road plowing contract was used to estimate the cost of contracted windrow services. Table 7 summarizes the expected costs assuming the actual number of deployments for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Table 7: Estimated Contracting Out Costs

	Comments	2022/23	2023/24
Number of Deployments		11	2
Deployment Costs:.	Estimated cost of direct labour, supplies and fuel incurred during deployment	\$275,000 ¹	\$50,000 ¹
Stand-By Cost:	Estimated cost of all equipment ownership, maintenance, plus standby pay to operators.	\$770,000	\$770,000
Total Cost		\$1,045,000	\$820,000
Total Cost per Driveway		\$23.75	\$18.64

¹ Computed as prorated value based on existing Road Plowing Contract

The estimated cost of contracting out the Richmond Hill Windrow Program is expected to exceed the cost of the in-house program and aligns closely with the per-driveway cost being incurred by the closest comparable municipality.

Survey of Other Municipalities:

For the purpose of this report, ten municipalities who provide some form of windrow services were surveyed. The information gathered is included in Attachment 2. The following is a summary:

All municipalities surveyed provide windrow clearance limited to one car width and have published service levels that stipulate when windrow services are to commence and by when the windrow clearing can be expected to be completed. Although the service levels vary, the two municipalities that provide full (city wide) free windrow services generally promise to deploy and complete sooner than the other eight municipalities. These other eight municipalities generally deploy windrow equipment only after most other winter maintenance operations are nearing completion. All the municipalities link service levels to the amount of snowfall although deployment often commences in advance of the published service standards. Toronto for example deploys windrow equipment as soon as local residential road plows are deployed.

The Cities of Vaughan and Toronto provide the most comprehensive free windrow services comparable to Richmond Hill. Both municipalities contract out the service and it is bundled with other contracted winter maintenance services.

The remaining eight municipalities surveyed provide windrow services only to seniors and disabled residents. (The Town of Aurora windrow program is considered a pilot). All

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eight have strict eligibility requirements and application processes that allow the municipalities to verify eligibility. These programs differ as follows:

- Two of the eight municipalities cap the number of eligible homes and maintain a waiting list. The Mississauga cap is at 750 while the Burlington cap at 1,000. The remaining six municipalities will accept applications and provide services if all the eligibility criteria are met.
- Four of the eight municipalities charge a separate fee ranging from \$100 to \$200 per driveway.

Implemented and Proposed Program Enhancements:

Staff perform a full assessment of winter operations at the end of each winter season. Although this winter was mild, some improvements to the Windrow Program have been identified and are being considered for implementation in future years. These include:

- Review of plowing routes and the configuration of the zones to both optimize the deployment of windrow resources and capture new subdivision roads assumed this past year (and to be assumed in 2025). This should assist in the ongoing efforts to shorten the lag time between street plows and windrow plows and thereby improve service levels.
- Continued assessment of the mix between full-time and casual positions to deliver and support the Windrow Program. Current recruiting challenges given the labour market need to be assessed against the long-term staffing needs of the program.
- City's communications should continue to emphasize the level of service residents can expect as well as resident responsibilities.
- Review the feasibility of adding the windrow machines to the Track My Plow web page to allow residents to better determine the estimated completion of windrow services in their neighbourhood.
- Increase the utilization of windrow equipment during the off-season. The objective is to increase engine hours by using the windrow equipment to displace other equipment needs and thereby mitigate or postpone equipment replacement.

Operational/Cost Impacts of eliminating the Windrow Program or Converting to a Seniors/Disabled Persons Program

Staff have reviewed the operational impacts of eliminating the Windrow Program or reverting to a Windrow Program targeted only to seniors and disabled persons. See Attachment 3.

Elimination of the Windrow Program without adversely affecting the benefits of the PWO Enhancement Program would entail the conversion of eight full time positions to eight summer seasonal positions. The fleet of windrow clearing equipment would no longer be needed although an estimated six units would be retained and redeployed to other functions.

As outlined in Attachment 3, the operational budget savings (in 2024 dollars) of eliminating the Windrow Program would range from \$405,000 to \$590,000 depending

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on winter weather conditions and therefore the number of windrow deployments. Based on current estimated auction value of the windrow equipment, \$2.9 million would be returned to capital.

The cost of conversion to a seniors and disabled persons program is more difficult to estimate. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that demand would be approximately 4,650 driveways. A dispersed network of eligible driveways across the city would equate to a reduction in winter service levels, be inefficient to coordinate, and would not produce significant cost savings for the following reasons:

- Costs would be incurred to administer and monitor an application process to ensure applicants are eligible for the service.
- Winter windrow staff standby costs as well as equipment standby costs would remain as is.
- Windrow operations would need to wait for road plowing operations before windrow clearing could be performed. This delay would jeopardize existing service standards.
- The current city-wide program clears approximately 100 windrows per machine per hour. The dispersed seniors and disabled persons program would need to achieve more than 10 windrows per machine per hour in order to break even. Given the expected travel distances this would be difficult to achieve.

For comparison purposes, the City did at one time deliver a limited on-demand windrow program to seniors prior to introducing the City-wide Windrow Program. The cost of the program at the time based on Staff Report SRCS.19.07 averaged \$345,000 per year. The service was delivered (depending on the year) to between 1,100 and 1,600 driveways by six to eight staff using pickup trucks and the service was delivered within 16 hours after other winter maintenance activities were completed.

Since a new seniors and disabled persons program would service some three to four times the number of driveways, a need for 24 to 32 staff and equipment corroborates the above conclusion - conversion to a seniors and disabled persons program would not generate any significant annual operating cost savings.

Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

This Staff Report does not recommend changing the current approach to windrow program deliver and therefore has no financial implications.

Relationship to Strategic Plan:

The programs described in this report as well as future actions to be implemented by staff support certain key elements of the Richmond Hill 2024-2027 Strategic Plan.

The Public Works Enhancement Program, as approved by Council in 2019, directly supports the following action under Pillar 2 – Focusing on People:

“Build a workforce for tomorrow to ensure that expertise and Continuity is in place to deliver on the city’s aspirations for the future.”

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The analysis of the Windrow Program, and the staff initiatives to undertake ongoing continuous improvements, directly support the following actions under Pillar 3 - Strengthening our Foundations:

“Make decisions that are evidence-based and data driven to enable the City’s long term financial sustainability, as well as social, environmental and economic sustainability.”

“Focus on quality customer service and a continuous improvement mindset to support innovation and be responsive to residents, stakeholders, businesses, the private sector and colleagues.”

Climate Change Considerations:

Overall climate change considerations are only partially applicable to this staff report. Applying ongoing continuous improvement measures to improve the Windrow Program will optimize usage of equipment as well as winter maintenance routes (for street and windrow plowing) and will contribute to climate change mitigation by minimizing total driving time and distance, which reduces the City’s greenhouse gas emissions.

Conclusion:

The Richmond Hill City-wide Windrow Program is delivered within the service standards established by Council in 2019, and within the annual budgets that have been allocated. Due to terminology, the Windrow Program is at times confused with the Public Works Operations (PWO) Enhancement Program. In fact, the Windrow Program is a subset of the PWO Enhancement Program and the Council approval of the programs in 2019 helped address two separate and distinct pressures.

The cost of the Windrow Program remains slightly below the cost incurred by other comparable municipal Windrow Programs and in-house delivery remains less costly than the contracting out option. The added advantage of the in-house program delivery model is the ability to utilize front line staff during times when snow plowing is not required for a variety of new and enhanced winter services as intended by the PWO Enhancement Program. In a contracted-out scenario, standby contractor staff would not be available, and the City would be incurring standby costs but obtaining no added services.

The cost impacts of fully eliminating the Windrow Program were assessed and potential savings depend on the number and duration of deployments. A conversion to a seniors and disabled persons program will not generate any significant total cost savings due to the inefficiencies associated with dispersed deployment of windrow resources.

Despite the apparent large number of calls through Access Richmond Hill related to services delivered during a windrow event, confirmed deficiencies remain low. It appears that the large call volume relates to resident expectation and low understanding of the service standards. For this reason, increased public awareness of the service standards and improved real-time windrow operations information on the City web site will be pursued.

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Annual program reviews and implementation of program improvements will continue. Opportunities to optimize the service delivery through route re-design and active management will produce efficiencies and will be needed to accommodate the incremental growth and new subdivisions that the City will be assuming in the next few years. Continuous improvement efforts will focus on shortening the lag time between road plowing and windrow plowing operations.

Should Council wish to modify the City-wide program or transition to a scaled down program for seniors and persons with disabilities, the next opportune timing for this would be in advance of 2029. This would be in alignment with the replacement of windrow equipment which is expected to commence or in 2031 should the City opt to defer equipment replacement due to the good condition (and low engine time) of the windrow equipment.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Windrow Program Equipment – Background and Assessment
- Attachment 2: Survey of Other Municipalities
- Attachment 3: Potential Cost Savings to Scale Back or Eliminate the Program

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRCS.24.12 - Windrow Summary Report.docx
Attachments:	- SRCS.24.12 - Attachment 1.docx - SRCS.24.12 - Attachment 2.docx - SRCS.24.12 - Attachment 3.docx
Final Approval Date:	May 28, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Steele - May 28, 2024 - 12:49 PM

Darlene Joslin - May 28, 2024 - 1:43 PM