

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 27, 2014

Item 4, Report No. 25, of the Committee of the Whole (Working Session), which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on May 27, 2014.

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WINTER CONTROL PROGRAMS OPERATIONAL REVIEW

The Committee of the Whole (Working Session) recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, the Commissioner of Strategic and Corporate Services, the Director of Public Works, and the Director of Innovation and Continuous Improvement, dated May 21, 2014:

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, the Commissioner of Strategic and Corporate Services, the Director of Public Works, and the Director of Innovation and Continuous Improvement recommend:

1. That the presentation on the Operational Review – Winter Control Programs be received;
2. That the Commissioner of Engineering & Public Works, or designate, be authorized to negotiate with the City's service providers to extend the contracts for Winter Road Maintenance for an additional one year (for winter 2015/2016) with a commensurate increase in allowable equipment age, maintaining any price increases and other terms and conditions within the limits defined in the current contract; and,
3. That staff be directed to develop a detailed scope for a comprehensive Request for Tender for Winter Maintenance Services using recommendations outlined in the attached Operational Review and present this scope for Council review in early 2015, prior to issuing a new multi-year tender for a comprehensive Winter Maintenance Services contract.

Contribution to Sustainability

A key pillar of sustainability is financial viability. This has been noted in many reports, most specifically the recent financial master plan for the City of Vaughan. The organization will face many financial challenges in the coming years, while balancing the continued delivery of excellence in its programs and services. In 2012, the City completed a program review which examined its 200 plus programs/services. Further, the City recognized the significance of long term sustainability given the growth and change within the municipality and the administration: this resulted in a reorganization of the City and the establishment of the Department of Innovation and Continuous Improvement (ICI). One of ICI's main business functions is to complete operational reviews for the City's 200 plus programs/services as a means of identifying program/services efficiencies, relevance and cost effectiveness while considering service levels/standards and delivery models.

Findings, and associated recommendations, from an Operational Review of the City's Winter Control Programs are contained in the attached report.

Economic Impact

For the winter 2013/2014, the budgeted contract cost for providing Winter Road Maintenance was \$6,471,716. Extending the contract for an additional one year (i.e., for services through the winter 2015/2016) will require a similar budget amount, with an adjustment for changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

It is anticipated that the more comprehensive performance based approach to Winter Control programs proposed in the Operational Review recommendations will provide significant savings for the City.

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Communications Plan

A residents' survey was conducted as part of the Operational Review of Winter Control Programs, a detailed analysis of the survey is contained in the attached report and this section will also be made available on the "Have Your Say" section of the City's website. Further communication with residents will be planned, as specifications for a new comprehensive approach to winter control programs are developed.

Purpose

To update Council on the findings from the Operational Review of the City's Winter Control Programs, and to review opportunities to improve aspects of efficiency, effectiveness and cost management.

Background - Analysis and Options

Vaughan residents receive some of the highest levels of winter maintenance services in the GTA

When compared to other municipalities, the City of Vaughan provides residents with some of the highest levels of service in Winter Control or Maintenance programs. Whether it's reducing ice formation on roads through sanding / salting, removing snow from roads, clearing snow from paths / sidewalks or enabling residents to exit their driveways by partially removing windrows – crews from the City's Public Works and Parks & Forestry Operations departments endeavour to ensure that residents, and others, can travel safely despite the weather.

The City aspires to provide a level of service for all its Winter Programs that will enable residents (and other stakeholders) to travel safely within a certain timeframe of a winter storm ending. At the same time, the City must balance levels of services with the costs of providing those services. A recent comparison of service levels between the City of Vaughan and other GTA municipalities, suggests that the City provides its residents with some of the highest levels of service for winter control programs.

Although the various winter maintenance services are provided by different departments using a variety of resources and / or service providers, they are interlinked

Currently, the City uses a blend of external and internal resources to deliver its winter control programs. The most significant operational and cost components relate to the salting and plowing of the extensive road network, and the majority of these services are delivered by external contractors, under a contract that expires in March 2015.

Winter control programs (i.e., Road Salting, Road Snow Plowing, Snow Removal, Windrow Snow Clearing, Snow Fencing and Path / Sidewalk Plowing) are highly interlinked (e.g., snow plowing roads and sidewalks, and snow plowing roads and removing windrows), so any proposed changes in service level (or service delivery model) in one program could have a ripple impact on another program.

To understand these impacts, to develop a holistic and truly integrated approach to winter control, and to prepare for issuing a new request for services, an operational review of all winter control programs was warranted (including windrow clearing). City staff recommended that an operational review of all Winter Control Programs be conducted in order to highlight potential service delivery models, levels of service, impacts on residents, program costs, risks and mitigation.

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Surveys suggest that the overwhelming majority of Vaughan residents believe they are getting good value for their tax dollars when it comes to winter maintenance services

The most recent Ipsos Reid survey conducted for the City1 demonstrates that residents “believe they receive good value for their tax dollars” with over 81% VERY SATISFIED or SOMEWHAT SATISFIED with the winter control services provided by the City. The survey suggests that residents are comfortable supporting the current service levels. The Ipsos Reid report also identified Road and Sidewalk Snow Removal programs as areas for maintenance, i.e., services of relatively high importance where satisfaction is good and where the focus is on maintaining current levels of service.

The residents’ survey was a self-selected survey utilizing both on-line and hard copy response forms. Residents were made aware of the survey through a Corporate Communications e-mail “blast” to over 8,000 subscribers, information posted on the City’s web-site together with information presented at the City’s ten community centres. Over 670 responses were collected from respondents in all wards; though hard copy survey forms were available at the community centres, only one returned from these locations.

From this survey, it was apparent that:

- Residents largely feel positively about the winter control services provided by the City and the associated levels of service;
- Residents would not welcome a reduction in service or an increase in taxes to secure a higher level of service; and,
- The City should look at leveraging local radio and TV stations and other tools to provide up-to-date winter storm-related communications.

There are a number of factors impacting the City’s ability to deliver “Service Excellence” to residents

Not only does the City aspire to deliver high levels of service to residents with its winter maintenance programs, it actually does so much of the time – though delivering services through the unusually cold 2013/2014 winter has highlighted some challenges. Some of the City’s approaches to winter maintenance service delivery impose additional constraints and impact service delivery costs, e.g., road plows and windrow machines operating in tandem requires more routes and equipment, striving to clear sidewalks to bare pavement requires more passes and causes greater wear / tear on equipment, inconsistent by-law enforcement with respect to sidewalk maintenance and car parking requires service providers to perform additional passes.

The following items impact the ability of the City to deliver on its service levels, and should be addressed:

1. The City is currently providing service levels greater than those that have been formally approved by Council, i.e., plowing snow in laneways;
2. Operating practices can constrain the ability to meet all service level objectives cost effectively, e.g., road plow routes are planned to keep plows and windrow machines closely linked;
3. In certain areas snow removal operations have had to be implemented regularly, as there is nowhere for plows to push the snow;
4. The fleet of City-owned sidewalk plows struggles to cope with the wear and tear associated with meeting the requirement to clear snow to bare pavement;

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5. The City is constrained by Employment Standards legislation and must limit the number of hours that staff can work consecutively and in a seven day period. As Parks & Forestry Operations staff (sidewalks) and Parks Services staff (hand clearing) have responsibilities beyond winter control, even in winter, crews can sometimes be understaffed particularly when overtime call-outs are required and staff decline the callout and/or overtime;
6. Roads supervisors are supported by foremen and resources seconded from the team of heavy equipment operators, who have each been working (on average) an additional day each week in overtime, impacting their ability to rest and recover, and, in the case of the seconded resources, focus on a key role of managing the City's salt inventory;
7. Barriers, such as parked cars and encroachments, impact the ability of contractors and staff to deliver winter control programs, leading to higher costs or reduced service quality; and,
8. The City collects a great deal of data associated with the delivery of its winter control programs, (e.g., CTS, road winter maintenance logs, equipment GPS, road patrol logs etc.) but in many cases it is difficult to collect this data and mine it for information in order to identify challenges / issues and potential route causes.

Additionally, the ability to manage residents' expectations with respect to winter maintenance service levels is critical to ensuring continued resident satisfaction with the City's service delivery. The City expanded on its tools for communicating information about winter control, which worked well at informing residents about what to expect during the winter, but more needs to be done to be able to tell / show a resident when s/he will have her/his local roads and sidewalks cleared and to clarify residents' responsibilities to ensure a safe and accessible City.

The attached report provides details of the following issues and associated recommendations for addressing them (presented in order of priority). In total, 10 recommendations are provided and the comprehensive justification for the recommendations (and an associated approach) is detailed in Section 8.0 of the report.

Next Steps

In order to address the challenges previously identified, a one year extension to the existing winter road maintenance contracts is required

The majority of the City's Winter Control programs (i.e., those associated with maintaining safe roads) are provided under a contract that was initially negotiated in 2008 and which has subsequently been extended twice under available extension terms. The current contract extension expires at the end of the 2014/2015 winter season, i.e., March 2015.

The City has the opportunity to consolidate all winter control programs into a comprehensive contract for winter control programs, i.e., incorporate winter maintenance of sidewalks and facilities / parking lots, and to implement a performance-based environment, so that service providers are held accountable for delivering the service levels approved by Council.

It is anticipated that such a comprehensive tender for winter control services and the performance management approach to contract management envisioned by the Operational Review, will take some time to design, draft and issue. Additionally, as the City wants to be able to attract a large number of respondents, a significant amount of time must be given for potential respondents to respond and then for the successful respondent(s) to be able to make any capital / equipment purchases that may be required in order to provide the necessary services.

The Public Works Division believes that the comprehensive requirements (and performance measurement framework) can be defined by the end of 2014 and then brought to Council for review in early 2015. A Request for Tender could then be issued with a successful respondent

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selected by mid to late 2015. The successful respondent will likely require a year to acquire any additional specialized pieces of equipment (particularly if the respondent is not one of the City's current contractors), and so the earliest feasible start for a new contract would be the winter season 2016/2017.

This proposed timeline requires the City to seek a further extension to the existing contract for Winter Maintenance services for the winter 2015/2016.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

By examining service level needs, expectations, standards and costs for various City programs and services facilitate the achievement of all three Vaughan Vision 2020 goals:

- Service Excellence – demonstrating excellence in service delivery by ensuring we have the most efficient and effective service delivery model that addresses citizen needs
- Organizational Excellence – by examining financial viability, sustainability, relevance and cost effectiveness; as well as promoting a high performing organization by identify program/service efficiency and enhancement opportunities
- Staff Excellence – by ensuring the City has the right people with the right skills and the tools/processes in the right places.

Regional Implications

Not Applicable

Conclusion

As the City grows, the expectations and requirements of its residents and stakeholders continue to evolve and change. Program service levels define how the City strives to meet these expectations and provide insight into the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the City's service delivery models.

The Operational Review of the City's Winter Control programs (a review that coincided with one of the most challenging winters in the past ten years) provides insight into how the City tries to meet (and exceed) the approved service levels. Some of the operational challenges faced by the City in meeting service levels (and associated cost structures) could be addressed by implementing a comprehensive performance management based contract for Winter Control Programs.

Attachments

1. Operational Review – Winter Control Programs – Final Report

Report prepared by:

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Director, Innovation and Continuous Improvement

(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)