



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Benefit Eligibility Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 22, 2014
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Snow Angels Program (CES14041) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Bonnie Elder, 905-546-2424 ext. 2182 Erica Brimley, 905-546-2424 ext. 4815
SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That approval be given to Volunteer Hamilton to continue with the co-ordination and administration of the Snow Angels Program for the 2014-2015 snow season in the amount of \$100,000 (gross/net), to be funded from the existing Emergency and Community Service Departmental Operating Budget; and,
- (b) That the administrator of the Snow Angels Program contract with a third party to service residents that have not been matched to a volunteer for the 2014-2015 season in the amount of \$120,000 (gross/net)¹, to be funded from Departmental Surplus, Corporate Surplus or the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 9, 2013, the Snow Angels Program Report CS13058 was received by Council. At that time, Council expressed their concerns with the inability of Volunteer Hamilton to satisfy all requests for snow removal service by matching residents with a volunteer. Council asked staff to explore other options such as using participants of Helping Hands, integrating service requirements into Neighbourhood Plans, and investigate the use of a third party contractor. Staff was also asked to research practices to improve the “matched” percentage.

The City of Hamilton currently partners with Volunteer Hamilton to deliver the Snow Angels Program. This program recruits volunteers to clear snow on sidewalks, walkways and windrow² driveway entrances for eligible seniors and individuals with

¹ Calculation: \$120,000 based on assumption 120 unmatched x \$195/month of service x 5 months

² A snow windrow is the pile of snow that accumulates at the end of driveways during road plowing, which can be difficult for seniors and individuals with health problems or disabilities to remove.

disabilities in the Hamilton area. The annual net cost to administer the program is \$100,000. This funding covers the cost of staffing for the co-ordination of volunteer matching and training, determining eligibility and responding to telephone inquiries, marketing materials and communication, rent, utilities, insurance, equipment rental, financial fees, volunteer expenses, and other incidentals.

Snow Angels is the only program in the community that provides a free snow removal service to residents who qualify for the program. There are other organizations who offer low-cost alternatives to the private/for profit snow removal services but none offer a free, volunteer driven service.

Volunteer Hamilton has reported that the Snow Angels program involves the full time commitment of all their staff (director, co-ordinator etc.) during the winter season which includes going out and clearing the snow themselves. At the end of the 2013-2014 winter season, Volunteer Hamilton reported:

- a record high of 19 snow falls;
- 140 volunteers provided a total of 2085 volunteer hours;
- 99% of the snow events were cleared within 24 hours of the first snow fall, complying with the City's snow clearing by-law;
- 1571 calls received (inquiries, request to apply, etc.);
- 381 residents registered and were eligible for service (289 seniors and 92 individuals with disabilities); and,
- 259 residents were matched with a volunteer and 122 were unmatched.

Chart 1

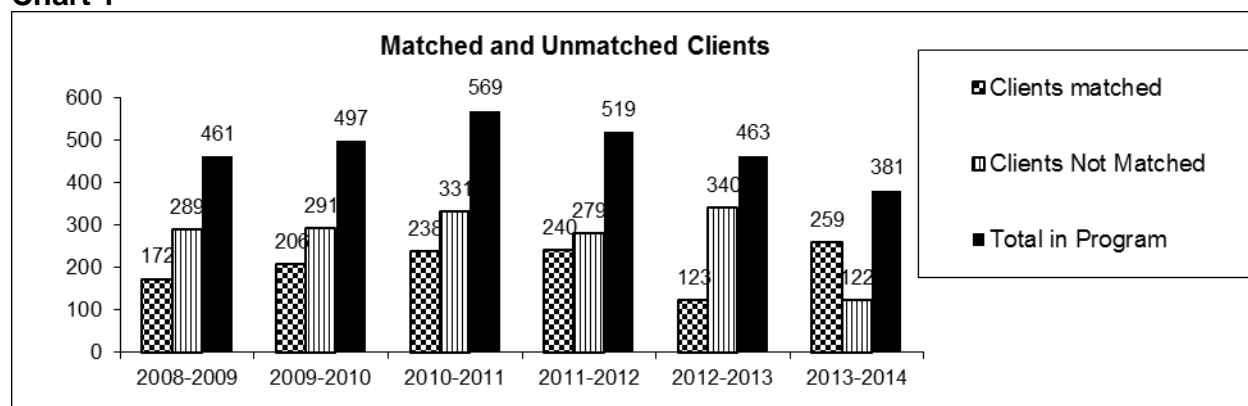


Chart 1 illustrates that in the 2013-2014 winter season;

- The number of volunteers matched with a resident exceeded the number that were not matched;
- 68% of residents were matched with a volunteer which is approximately 22-26% higher than past snow seasons; and,

- The cost per resident per snow event was \$23.41 over the season³.

Challenges

Some of the challenges that Volunteer Hamilton has been experiencing in matching 100% residents with volunteers is:

- difficulty recruiting volunteers due to snow fall being unpredictable therefore, students may move on to other volunteer opportunities;
- students tend to discontinue volunteering once they have graduated from high school;
- some volunteers are unable to participate due to the physical requirements of the work; and,
- some volunteers cannot afford the travel costs involved in going to resident homes throughout the City.

Municipal Comparison

Municipality	2013-2014 Residents Serviced	2013-2014 “Matched” Rate
Hamilton	259	68%
Guelph	120	80%
Niagara	57	35%
Windsor	189	38%

Based on research conducted in April, the average “matched” rate for the 2013-2014 season for the above municipalities was 49%. Since the inception of the Snow Angels Program, Hamilton has a match rate of 47%. As per the Municipal Comparison Chart, the City of Hamilton was able to match 68% for the 2013-2014 snow season and based on the most recent performance, the “matched” rate can be improved. Staff will continue to collaborate with Volunteer Hamilton during the upcoming snow season to create partnerships with School Boards, Sporting Associations and implement key performance measures.

During the past year Volunteer Hamilton has marketed the Snow Angels Program using social media, local television and radio outlets, print media, flyers, advertisements and conducted outreach activities with McMaster Student Union, John Howard Society, and grade 10 career and civic classes.

While Volunteer Hamilton continues to increase the number of volunteers involved in the Snow Angels program, Council has expressed their concerns with the agency’s inability to meet demand.

Given that the Snow Angels Program is a large voluntary goodwill program, a 100% “matched” rate is likely unachievable. To augment or supplement the volunteer base, staff are recommending implementing a paid for service in order to better meet demand.

³ Calculation based on 19 snow events with average of 224.78 residents over the winter season

The cost of this additional contracted service will vary depending on the duration and severity of the winter season. This hybrid approach will continue to:

- promote being “neighbourly”,
- support neighbourhood development and stakeholder engagement,
- fulfil all eligible requests for service; and,
- mitigate the insurance risk.

If Council supports the hybrid model – i.e. Volunteer Hamilton and a private snow removal contractor, the costs of the Snow Angels Program will increase from \$100,000 up to a maximum \$220,000 gross/net for administration and coordination by Volunteer Hamilton and the fee for matching requests to a private snow removal contractor. The increase is based on the cost for the contracted service by the number of months the service is required by the number of estimated residents requiring the service. This model will also require a greater internal effort to administer and co-ordinate.

Staff, in partnership with Volunteer Hamilton, are recommending proceeding with this hybrid strategy for the 2014/2015 winter season. A report will be brought forward to the Emergency and Community Services (E&CS) Committee in September 2015 to summarize the overall costs and impacts to “matched” rate. This report will also address funding requirements for the 2015-2016 winter season and ongoing permanent funding.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 7

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

Volunteer Hamilton will continue with the co-ordination and administration of the Snow Angels Program for the 2014-2015 snow season in the amount of \$100,000 (gross/net), funded from the existing Community and Emergency Services Departmental Operating Budget.

A third party service will be contracted at a cost of \$120,000 (gross/net), based on the number of unmatched residents and number of snow events for the 2014/15 snow season which will be funded from Departmental Surplus, Corporate Surplus or the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications associated with Report CES14041.

Legal:

A new agreement with Volunteer Hamilton will need to be created. The agreement will clearly outline both the expectations and key performance measures.

Existing City of Hamilton contracts with third party snow removal providers may need to be modified to accommodate this type of service.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In December 2005, Council approved a snow removal program that would later be called the Snow Angels Program and in January 2006, signed a Letter of Agreement with Volunteer Hamilton to administer the program.

In November 2008, Council approved the program to be an ongoing annual commitment and requested that updates regarding the program's impact be provided to the E&CS Committee. The contract for this program has been renewed yearly.

In August 2009, a program evaluation was presented to the E&CS Committee. The evaluation concluded that investment in the program would continue to build capacity for increasing volunteerism in the community.

In November 2011, Snow Angels Program Report CS11093 was received by Council. This report provided information regarding the number of volunteers matched to residents, the capacity and demand of the program and the number of volunteers for the 2010/2011 winter season. It also provided alternative snow removal services and outlined the benefits of the Snow Angels Program.

In December 2013, an update on the Snow Angels Program Report CS13058 was received by Council. Council expressed their concerns with the inability of Volunteer Hamilton to satisfy all requests for snow removal service by matching residents with a volunteer. Council asked staff to explore other options such as using participants of Helping Hands, integrating service requirements into Neighbourhood Plans, and investigate the use of a third party contractor. Staff was also asked to research practices to improve the "matched" percentage.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

There are no policy or legislative implications.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

- Corporate Services Department, Finance, Administration and Revenue Generation Division consulted on financial aspects of the report and their feedback is included in the report.
- Volunteer Hamilton, Administrator of Snow Angels Program acknowledges that without the Snow Angels Program contract for the 2014-2015 winter season they will incur some hardship and need to scale down their operations.
- Public Works, Manager Facilities Operations Technical Services on third party snow removal contracting resulting in cost estimates for a paid for service in order to better meet demand for recommendation (b) and alternative option #2 Guaranteed Service.

- C&ES Department, Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division, assisted with research and feedback included into this report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONAL FOR RECOMMENDATION

Council requested staff explore other options such as using participants of Helping Hands, integrating service requirements into Neighbourhood Plans, and investigate the use of a third party contractor. There is no evidence to suggest that the City could outperform the “matched” rate provided by Volunteer Hamilton. For example: The City of Hamilton Helping Hands Program is based on Ontario Works participants volunteering in the program. There is no guarantee to increase the volunteer base and/or retain them in the program as they could find paid employment during the program and it would require additional staffing to run the program during evening/weekends and holidays.

Volunteer Hamilton is the centre for community engagement on the involvement and management of volunteer programs. They provide assistance through community service, education, training, management and recruitment to value added programs such as the Snow Angels Program. During the 2013-2014 winter season, Volunteer Hamilton increased their “matched” percentage by 45% over the average. A new agreement with Volunteer Hamilton will need to be created. The agreement will clearly outline both the expectations and key performance measures.

A volunteer goodwill program may not be able to achieve a 100% “matched” rate as demonstrated through municipal comparisons. In order to service all eligible requests for service, a contracted service is required. The Snow Angels Program however will remain a goodwill volunteer based community initiative supplemented by a paid service in order to better meet demand.

Demographics of 140 Volunteers

- 92 male and 48 female,
- 44 under 18 years of age and 96 over the age of 18,
- 88 matched to one resident; and,
- 52 are matched to more than 1 resident.

2013/2014 Volunteer Hamilton Marketing Research Strategies

Number of Press Releases sent between December & April	6
Number of times featured in media	9
Number of Postcard Mail drops to residents	4 times in Ward 4 to approximately 200 homes
Number of buses running advertisement through December	19
Number of new volunteers recruited as a result of December bus advertisement	26

Twitter Contest (Bulldogs ticket give away)	1
Total number of tweets	25
Number of Twitter Contest Contributors	12
Number of Twitter Contest Retweets	14
Estimated numbers reached from Twitter Contest	16,432
Number of new volunteer applicants after Twitter Contest closed(December 9, 2013)	91
Number of School and Community Group Presentations Between November and April	37
Number of individuals reached through presentations	925

‘In the News’ Breakdown

Cable 14	10-Oct-13
Hamilton Spectator	09-Dec-13
Metro News	09-Dec-13
CBC Hamilton	10-Dec-13
Hamilton Magazine	Winter 2013 Issue
CHCH News	15-Dec-13
McMaster Radio	15-Dec-13
Bill Kelly CHML	15-Dec-13
Hamilton Spectator	08-Jan-14
Volunteer Recognition Events	2

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**Option #1 - Goodwill**

Council could decide not to renew the contract with Volunteer Hamilton, and decide to provide the service internally through City staff. This option would maintain the goodwill community benefits of “being neighbourly”. However, as with the current program, not all residents would be matched with a volunteer. There is also no evidence to suggest that the City could outperform the “matched” rate provided by Volunteer Hamilton. Residents may also interpret the City’s involvement as a new “service” or business line and may also open the City to greater risk and liability.

Financial:

An estimated cost of \$80,000 (gross/net) is based on leveraging existing staff to perform a portion of the work at no additional cost (ex. Call Centre receiving resident enquiries), leveraging existing staff to perform a portion of the work at a cost (subsidize existing volunteer co-ordinator positions) and hiring additional staff for the determining of eligibility. Additional insurance may be required.

Staffing:

Additional staffing of 0.5 FTE Co-ordinator \$42,110 (gross/net) in the amount of \$37,890 gross/net would be required to co-ordinate residents with volunteers, recruit volunteers,

train volunteers, schedule services and deal with complaints and 0.5 FTE Special Supports Case Aide \$37,890 (gross/net) for determining eligibility and respond to inquiries, tracking incoming applications approvals and denials. This cost is accounted for in the financial section.

Legal:

Increased risk exposure due to the role and function the City will be performing

Option # 2 - Guaranteed Service

Council could decide not to renew the contract with Volunteer Hamilton and decide to contract the service to a third party private snow removal contractor. This option would guarantee service for the period contracted for as well as mitigate risk associated with the provision of the service however the community benefits associated with a goodwill program would be lost.

Financial:

In order to meet the expected demand of 500 eligible residents, additional funding of \$330,000 up to a maximum of \$530,000 gross/net⁴ (based on snow events and length of winter season) would need to be secured before November 2014.

Staffing:

Additional staffing of 0.5 FTE in the amount of \$37,890 gross/net would be required to co-ordinate applications, determine eligibility, schedule services and deal with complaints. This cost is accounted for in the financial section.

Legal:

Existing contracts with third party snow removal providers may need to be modified to accommodate this type of service.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #1

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Objective

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.
- 1.6 Enhance Overall Sustainability (financial, economic, social and environmental).

Strategic Priority #2

Valued & Sustainable Services

⁴ Calculation based on 500 service requests x \$195/service a month x 4 month and 5 months plus additional 0.5 FTE. Less \$100,000 already budgeted.

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Objective

2.1 Implement processes to improve services, leverage technology and validate cost effectiveness and efficiencies across the Corporation.

Strategic Priority #3

Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None