



## INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	November 18, 2021
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Snow Angels Program Update (HSC21046) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Jennifer Hohol (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7857 Rikki Frith (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7604
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Grace Mater General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

### COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable

### INFORMATION

The Snow Angels Program is a volunteer-based snow removal service that matches local volunteers with low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. In existence since 2005, this program recruits volunteers to shovel the sidewalk, a pathway to the front entrance and the windrow of the client home within 24 hours of a minimum three-centimetre snow accumulation. City of Hamilton staff provide coordination support to the program from October to April and are responsible for volunteer recruitment, marketing, client/volunteer matching, inquiry response, referrals, communication and volunteer recognition.

As a volunteer-driven program, success depends on the number of volunteers recruited, the geographical location of the volunteers and volunteer turnover. Historically, over 80% of the residents screened into the program are matched with a Snow Angel volunteer. In the 2020/2021 winter season, there were approximately 96 volunteers matched with 106 clients. The number of clients matched with volunteers changed almost daily throughout the winter season due to:

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

- Loss of volunteers from injuries, conflicting commitments and difficult working conditions (i.e. cold, heavy snow, large and/or corner lots);
- Difficulty finding and maintaining matches based on geography (i.e. available volunteers aren't close to client);
- Frustration from volunteers when they attend properties and find the snow has already been cleared, Snow Angels is often a back-up plan for many residents in case no one else provides assistance;
- Clients requiring more service mid-season, often neighbours are happy to assist at the start of the winter season but tire as the winter goes on; and,
- Significant influx in calls and emails from residents and their families, caregivers, agencies and Councillors requesting Snow Angel volunteer support when snow is forecasted.

Future Plans:

Coordination of the Snow Angels Program for the 2021/2022 winter season has just begun with client and volunteer confirmation and will be followed by a series of volunteer recruitment efforts. Letters are being sent out to clients who participated in the program last year to determine their continued need for service. Staff have also started to reach out to previous volunteers to determine their availability to continue supporting the program for the upcoming winter.

Although initially targeted to youth needing volunteer hours to meet high school graduation requirements, today's volunteers are more likely to be adults or families. Since annual snowfall is unpredictable, the Snow Angels volunteer opportunity has not proven overly successful with students as there is no guarantee of volunteer hours. Success is also often incumbent on the support of the students' families. Recruitment opportunities for volunteers are shared via social media channels, digital display boards, posters in City of Hamilton facilities (i.e. recreation centres), posters in high schools, social media channels in partner organizations and media ads (i.e. radio, television and print). Most recruitment in 2021/2022 will remain virtual until in-person recruitment opportunities become available again.

This year the program will benefit from a newly designed digital database tailored to the Snow Angels program. Developed in collaboration with the City of Hamilton's Information Technology Division, this database will improve the coordination and communication efficiency of staff with clients. The database will include an integrated mapping tool to better create matches between clients and volunteers based on geography, stats at-a-glance to monitor program performance and an auto-response generation for volunteer and/or client applications to improve communication.

Currently there are over 100 residents on the waitlist for a volunteer Snow Angel. Staff will explore several opportunities for future improvements to the program to better meet demands for service, which include but are not limited to:

- Maintaining a small roster of volunteers willing to assist on an emergency basis to provide last-minute support;
- Improving targeted recruitment strategies based on geography;
- Fostering messages of neighbourly and family support in assisting Hamilton's most vulnerable residents during the winter season;
- Creating an emphasis on families and friends helping loved ones age in place;
- Providing alternative snow clearing options for those who may have the personal or family income support to purchase private snow removal services;
- Strengthening referral of participants through programs already offering services to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities so those most in need are in receipt of services; and,
- Creating a process for applicants to demonstrate financial need for a volunteer in order to open and prioritize the waitlist.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None