

Memorandum



BUDGET COMMITTEE

DEC 03 2012

TO: Mayor and Members of Budget Committee

FROM: Patti Elliott-Spencer, Director, Finance

DATE: November 28, 2012

RE: **Snow Removal Subsidy Program**

At the Budget Committee meeting of November 27, 2012 Councillor Saito indicated that it was her understanding that the Snow Removal Subsidy Program provided by the City was also available to provide seniors with assistance for summer maintenance services. Additional information and clarification was requested on the program and the annual budget.

The Snow Subsidy program in its current form was approved by Council in December 1992 under Resolution 0432-92. The program offers financial assistance to low income seniors and low income persons with physical disabilities for snow removal costs, currently up to a maximum of \$200, with supporting receipts. The program does not offer a snow clearing service for other residents, nor does it provide for subsidies for summer maintenance.

To qualify for the program, the applicant must be:

- a Mississauga resident who resides as owner or legal tenant in the residential property for which the snow removal subsidy is required
- able to provide receipts or other documentation verifying the claim
- not living in a high-rise or similar multi-unit building
- the only person making application for subsidy at this municipal address

AND must be

- 65 years of age or over and in receipt of a monthly Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) under Part II of the Old Age Security Act (Canada), OR
- physically disabled in such a way as to restrict his/her mobility and in receipt of benefits under the Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP) or in receipt of assistance under the Ontario Works Support Act.

Background:

Prior to 1992, the City had a Senior Citizens Subsidy Program. This program was available to residents who either owned or leased a home, and were 65 years of age or older, or physically or medically disabled. There was no requirement to demonstrate financial need. In 1990, the Budget for this program was \$250,000 and provided a maximum \$65 subsidy per applicant for winter maintenance and \$65 subsidy for summer maintenance. In the 1991 Budget, the summer maintenance component was eliminated as utilization of the program was increasing rapidly due to grounds maintenance services being actively marketed to seniors based on the grant availability. Eliminating the summer maintenance program reduced the 1991 Budget by \$128,000. During 1992, the eligibility for the Snow Removal Program was reviewed and tightened to the current criteria, which requires demonstration of financial need. As a result of the new criteria, the cost of the snow removal program declined significantly. Other than increases in the amount of the subsidy available to an individual, and the resulting budget increases, the program has remained unchanged since approved in 1992.

The current budget for the Snow Removal Subsidy is \$50,000. The following table shows the number of applicants and actual expenditures for the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Qualified applicants are eligible for a maximum \$200 subsidy.

| Year | No. of Applicants | Total Spent | Budget Unspent |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 2010 | 160 | \$27,796.25 | \$22,203.75 |
| 2011 | 181 | \$35,025.55 | \$14,974.45 |
| 2012 | 144 | \$25,565.00 | \$24,435.00 |

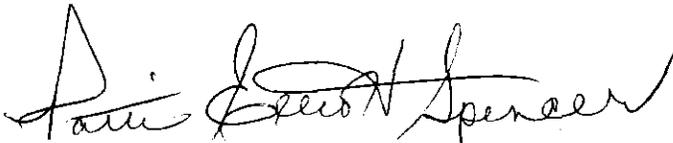
While the total budget has not been spent for the last three years, these have been relatively mild winters. However, some funding could be available for summer maintenance should Council wish to consider offering this service, although the \$50,000 would not be sufficient if all those who applied for Snow Removal Subsidy also applied for summer maintenance.

The Snow Subsidy program is administered by the Finance Division. Administration of the program is very time consuming. In the fall, staff prepares the application forms and mails them to previous applicants. New requests are also received. At the end of the season, each applicant must submit their receipts and proof of eligibility which must be verified by staff. For qualified applicants cheques are requisitioned and produced. Throughout the year staff receive numerous calls about the program, snow clearing or challenges to the eligibility requirements. Staff can spend more time handling enquiries than processing applications. Introduction of a summer maintenance program would double the administrative time required. It is estimated that this would require an additional 0.20 FTE.

In addition to the Snow Removal Subsidy the City of Mississauga, Transportation and Works Department also offers and administers a Driveway Windrow Snow Clearing Pilot Program. The Driveway Windrow Snow Clearing Pilot Program is a City-wide pilot program to clear snow windrows from driveways for older adults (65 years or older) and individuals who are physically disabled (as verified by a regulated health professional). The pilot program provides windrow snow clearing service after every snow plowing operation. Participation in the program is available on a first come, first serve basis. The cost to participate is either free or \$200, depending on whether the applicant meets financial assistance criteria. An individual meeting the financial criteria, can receive both the snow removal subsidy and the free windrow clearing, if they apply for both subsidies.

In 2009/10 season 96 applicants received free windrow clearing service, 216 paid. In 2010/11 season 70 applicants received free service, 200 paid. In 2011/12 season 52 applicants received free service, 44 paid. Due to the lack of snow events, revenues have exceeded estimated expenditures in all years, except in 2010/11 when net expenditures were approximately \$8,000. The Budget for the 2012/13 season is \$50,000.

The City has two winter support programs for eligible residents. Each program has a budget of \$50,000. In the previous three years the spending has been below budget due to very mild winters. The City currently does not have a summer maintenance program, and if one were to be implemented, a budget adjustment would be required.



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cc. City Manager;
Leadership Team