

**Item No 11.1.5**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**October 22, 2013**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original signed by



**SUBMITTED BY:**

Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** October 8, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Seniors' Snow Removal Program – Revised Funding and Delivery

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**ORIGIN**

On 15 April, 2013, following a review of its internal business lines, the Spencer House Seniors Centre, which had been the administrator for their Seniors' Snow Removal Program for the past ten years, was forced to withdraw its support of the Program leaving HRM searching for a new method of delivering the Program.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Section 79(1)(av)(vii) of the HRM Charter permits the municipality to expend funds on a grant or contribution to a registered Canadian charitable organization.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1) Approve a contribution in the amount of \$400,000 for the fiscal year 2013/2014 to the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth in order to enable this registered charity to administer a Seniors' Snow Removal Program; and
- 2) Direct the Chief Administrative Officer of HRM to negotiate and execute an agreement on behalf of HRM with the YMCA, on terms and conditions acceptable to the CAO, in respect of the YMCA's receipt of a contribution relative to its administration of a Seniors' Snow Removal Program.

## **BACKGROUND**

The commencement of the Seniors' Snow Removal Program pre-dated amalgamation in former City of Halifax, and has since its inception, been administered through Spencer House. Initially in November 2003, the program was funded by HRM annually at \$30,000 and increased in November 2004 to \$50,000. In November 2006 there was a desire from Regional Council to extend snow clearing services to all HRM sidewalks. At that time, as an alternative, staff proposed servicing main arterial and transit routes on the peninsula and increasing the funding to the seniors program to \$360,000 as part of the winter sidewalk service for main arterial and transit routes on the Peninsula. This recommendation was approved, and the final increase in funding occurred in December 2009 to the current level of \$400,000, in order to reduce the waiting list. As such, the program since its inception has always been about snow removal on private property, administered by a charitable organization for specified individuals with specific needs. The program includes snow removal on front steps, back steps, front walkway, pathway to oil tank, and sidewalk if required.

In order to begin the planning process to identify who will be serviced by the program, registration takes place between September and November and individuals are placed on the list on a first come, first served basis. Prospective clients are required to be below a maximum income threshold or be identified as having a recognized disability. For the \$400,000 each season, approximately 425 clients are accepted and those residents are situated in communities ranging from Hubbards to Ecum Secum and all locations in between. The actual snow removal is historically provided by approximately 12 to 15 contractors, each normally having a number of clients from the accepted list.

## **DISCUSSION**

In January 2013, Spencer House provided notice to HRM that as a result of an internal review of their business lines, effective April 15, 2013 they would have to cease their involvement in administering the program. Since that time, HRM staff has been involved in numerous discussions in an attempt to identify a new program administrator and on September 6, 2013, the YMCA expressed interest in taking over the program as it was a good business fit with their community objectives (outreach and assistance for the elderly).

It is staff's recommendation that the appropriate method of funding this program is for Council to approve a contribution annually which will enable a registered charity to expend funds provided by the municipality on the provision of snow clearing services on private property. To date, the program has been funded at \$400,000 annually with approximately \$60,000 of that total expended directly as administration fees, which included the salary of the full time program coordinator with Spencer House.

As part of its response to the Auditor General's Report on Corporate Grants, Donations and Contributions, staff will be returning to Council with a formal Grants and Contributions Policy. It is anticipated that this contribution, as well as other grants and contributions, will be reviewed under any new policy.

Given the rapidly approaching winter season, many requests have already been received at the 311 Call Centre by residents that have asked to be placed on the list of potential homes to receive the removal service. Additionally, in an effort to be as prepared as possible if the contribution were approved, discussions have continued to progress with the YMCA in order to bring their staff up to a level of comfort if they are to take over administration of the program for this winter season. They remain very eager to take on the Administration responsibilities of the program.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As the 2013/14 Budget included \$400,000 in cost centre R781-6399 for Senior's Snow Removal, there is no additional funding required in order to approve this request.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community consultation has taken place.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Environmental Implications associated with this report.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Council could choose to reduce the scope of the program, however the grants and contribution process would still need to be followed in order to fund work on private property;
2. Council could choose not to approve a contribution or the selection of the YMCA, however this would put the 425 residents currently being serviced under the program at risk of not being able to afford the service on their own; or
3. Council could approve the procedural change to the annual contribution, and if desired, direct staff to proceed in that direction for this season and review for 2014/15 if there are other delivery options available (given more time). This is the recommended option.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

Report Prepared and  
Reviewed by:

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Chris Mitchell, Manager Municipal Operations

Financial Approved by:

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FOR Greg Keefe, Director of Finance & ICT/CFO, 490-6308

Legal Approved by:

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David Greener, Senior Solicitor, 490-3960

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