

Town wants to crack down on cars blocking plows

By Bill Rea

The Town of Caledon is looking at tightening the rules when it comes to parking on streets during winter.

The main focus is going to be on cars that are parked in such a way that they block snowplows.

Public Works Director David Loveridge said the concern is really when there are major storms, adding the plan is to enforce the new proposed rules when Environment Canada Forecasts more than seven centimetres of snow for the area in a space of 24 hours.

The Town hosted an open house session at Town Hall last Wednesday to inform the public what's being proposed.

It was stressed last week that cars parked on the street impact the ability of road crews to safely remove the snow. That means increased costs to taxpayers because of the additional time involved, having plows return to streets to finish the job, the risk of damage to vehicles, and safety issues, especially where there are no sidewalks.

Parking enforcement officers currently support road crews by ticketing vehicles, but only after they have interfered with the plowing process. There are currently no provisions for moving or removing them. That, according to the Town, has resulted in hazards, such as windrows in the middle of road, left there when the plow had to go around a parked vehicle.

Under the proposed new process, the Town will decide when a winter parking ban will be in effect, and will issue advisories through local media, the Town's website, portable road signs and various social media. There will also be a 12-hour grace period between the public notice of the ban and it being enforced. As well, any parking exemption that had been granted would be cancelled by the ban. In addition to serious snowfalls, bans could be issued in cases of severe road icing.

The current plan is to have enforcement officers work ahead of the plows, ticketing cars before they arrive.

Loveridge said the seven-centimetre mark is a threshold that Town staff is recommending.

The Town also reported there were six days in 2017 when snowfalls in Caledon hit the seven-centimetre mark, four in 2013 and none in 2012.

Loveridge pointed out these bans are only going to be imposed if the situation calls for it.

"We figure that's going to be about four to seven times a year," he said.

Assuming the new rules come into effect, the plan is to publicize them and bring them into force for next winter. For the remainder of this season, enforcement officers will be issuing warning tickets, which will explain the new rules.

Loveridge had raised this issue with council late last year, in light of the heavy snowfall in December. He said at the time it was an issue all over town.

"Snow removal's a team sport," he declared last week, adding Town crews will have discretion when it comes to issuing tickets and having cars towed.

He said if people have parked on the street while they shovel their driveway or take down a windrow, that's reasonable.

"This is a team sport," he said. "We've all got to work together."

"We're going to try and be reasonable," he added. development. It also takes time the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to actually assess the development. Wong also said those numbers have been factored into the projections, but they have been offset by the freezing of lands around the GTA's West Corridor that runs through town.

He said more assessment is expected from areas like South Simpson Road in Bolton, as well as Tullamore.

The Town is anxious to increase its industrial and commercial tax base, so it's been putting in roads and associated infrastructure to attract businesses, with the plan of charging them for the improvements later.

One man raised the issue of the Toronto budget, pointing out Caledon is looking at twice the rate proposed for the City, and twice the rate of inflation.

"Four point seven two per cent is a hell of a lot just for the Town's operating and capital expenditures," he remarked.

Wong pointed out Toronto is a single-tier municipality while Caledon is at the lower tier with Peel Region at the higher one. The combined increase of the two tiers is currently expected to be about two per cent.

The proposed budget calls for expenditures of \$79,620 for an assistant to council and \$96,430 for a communication coordinator for council.

Treasurer Peggy Tollett had explained the communication coordinator was intended to improve information and dealings with the public.

One woman wondered if these people would be getting offices, pointing out councillors don't even get offices at Town Hall.

Wong said councillors deal with staff, but these positions would be aimed at community engagement and serving the public.

The woman was concerned one councillor might use the assistant for tasks the councillor should be performing.

'It's a shared resource,' Wong said.

The woman said she understood people in the community are busy and might have trouble getting the information they need.

'We can't really baby the public too much,' she said. 'I have a problem with hiring two people.'

Thompson pointed out the workload has increased greatly in the 12 years he's been on council, and it was decided they needed help dealing with it. He added a lot of smaller municipalities with smaller councils have assistants.

He also commented that half the councillors sit at Peel Regional council, and there could be moved soon to reduce Caledon's representation there. They will need supports, as well as people to do research to help fight such a move.

'We've got some big challenges ahead,' Thompson said.

He added they heard complaints during last fall's election campaign, as well as calls for councillors to do a better job and increase access to the public. A person coordinating information could keep track of things councillors should be following up on.

'Residents want their information real quick,' the Mayor observed.

Town CAO Doug Barnes added staff canvassed suburban municipalities around the GTA, and came up with what they thought were appropriate supports for council.

'I think it's a reasonable proposal,' he said. 'It wasn't just pulled out of the air.'

Town departments will be making their budget presentations to council Feb. 2 and 3, with council being scheduled to approve the budget March 3.