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Export date: Mon Sep 7 0:26:58 2026 / +0000 GMT

Town working to improve snow removal assistance programs

By ZACHARY ROMAN

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With winter on the way, the Town of Caledon has updated its snow removal assistance programs.

At a November 14 meeting, Caledon Council approved a $50,000 increase to the Town's snow-clearing financial assistance program and a $60,000 windrow-clearing pilot program.

Back in September, Council had asked Town Staff to review Caledon's snow-clearing programs and make them more inclusive.

?Last year several residents who required assistance did not meet the criteria due to the current eligibility requirements resulting in only approximately half of the applications expected being received?? read a motion from a September 12 Council meeting. ?The eligibility requirements must be expanded to include more Caledon seniors such as those who are 75 plus??

Last winter, residences whose occupants were low-income residents 65 plus in age (receiving Guaranteed Income Support) or whose occupants have a physical disability and are receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) could receive $500 from the Town to put towards snow removal.

A total of 91 residences qualified for this program and took advantage of it.

A report from Brian Baird, Caledon's Director of Operations, Engineering, Public Works and Transportation, and Katie Sawyers, Coordinator of Age-Friendly, Community and Human Services, highlighted how Caledon's snow-clearing programs will work this winter.

There will be a continued financial assistance program. Anyone who meets last year's criteria can contact the Town to apply for support again in 2024, but now, residences whose occupants are 75 or older can also receive assistance regardless of income.

For the first time, Caledon is going to pilot a windrow-clearing program. Windrows are the piles of snow left at the bottom of driveways after a snow plow clears a road.

The service would be completed by external contractors after snow events of eight centimetres of continuous snowfall or more.

For the pilot program, 200 residences were planned for. The service will cost residents $200 for the season, and to apply, all occupants of a residence must be 65 years of age or older.

?Providing a limited service at this time allows both Council and staff to monitor and review? to determine successes, areas for improvement and determine either expansion or reduction of the service level and its costs?? reads a report from Baird and Sawyers. ?By containing the sample size, the program can be delivered without additional staffing resources? staff believe this is a fiscally responsible program (that meets) Council's desire to provide more assistance to (Caledon's) elderly residents.?

Staff estimate the windrow service pilot will cost the Town about $100,000 this winter, based on an estimate of 200 driveways and five snow events requiring windrow clearing. However, after collecting the $200 fees from residents, the net cost would be $60,000.

The budget of the financial assistance program for the Town this winter will be $75,000. However, staff do not plan to turn residents away, and should this need to be exceeded, they plan to return to Council to ask for additional funds up to $50,000.

Mayor Annnette Groves said she was really happy to see the windrow pilot program.

?I can tell you that you'll have a lot of happy people with this program,? said Groves.

For more information or to apply for snow-clearing assistance, residents can visit caledon.ca/en/living-here/programs-and-services.aspx.