



SUBJECT: RPF-26-20 Options for Loose Leaf Collection

TO: Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services Cttee.

FROM: Roads, Parks and Forestry Department

Report Number: RPF-26-20

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 795-01

Date to Committee: August 10, 2020

Date to Council: August 24, 2020

Recommendation:

Staff recommend Option 3 of Report RPF-26-20 and that the Director of Roads, Parks & Forestry be directed to implement a four-week Loose Leaf Collection Program for 2020 and 2021 and report back to Council in Q1 of 2022 to identify successes and challenges.

PURPOSE:

This report has been prepared for the 2020 and 2021 Loose Leaf Collection programs to provide options for council regarding operational changes in order to operate safely in the Provincial Stage 3 Covid-19 operational environment and to propose cost saving initiatives.

Vision to Focus Alignment:

N/A

Background and Discussion:

The City of Burlington's Loose Leaf Collection program works in conjunction with the Region of Halton's Yard Waste Program. Roads, Parks and Forestry Department conduct an annual six-week program to collect loose leaves placed at the edge of the

road through various methods, conducting two collections for areas designated with larger volumes. The annual budget for this program is approximately \$830,000.

During the last two seasons Burlington experienced significant winter weather events during Loose Leaf Collection that caused the program to end early, leaving a large amount of leaves remaining on the road. This caused intense customer dissatisfaction and very time-consuming complaints to council as well as staff.

Discussion:

In 2019, Performance Concepts Consulting was retained by the City of Burlington to conduct a service delivery review of this program. A separate report will discuss their recommendations for the program going forward for the post pandemic operational environment. This report will be brought to the EICS committee on September 14, 2020

Strategy/process

1) COVID-19 Operational Environment

Safe working practices include social distancing, hand washing and wearing of non-medical face masks. Operational initiatives include one person per vehicle where possible and a maximum of two people per vehicle. The loose leaf collection program traditionally has involved several staff working in close proximity working manually in proximity to collection equipment to remove the leaves. Physical distancing requirements will impact this process. A reduced one pick-up program would allow for more flexibility in accommodating the reduced productivity owing to additional Covid-19 work procedure restrictions.

2) Current Staffing Issues

Covid-19 has resulted in many issues impacting staffing availability and scheduling. Staggered shifts and work from home arrangements available in many other service areas delivered by the city are not easily implemented in the operational nature of RPF services like the loose leaf collection program. The corporation has made significant accommodations to support staff during this pandemic. Family care needs have reduced some staff availability from full time consistent hours of work. This has presented challenges in maintaining crew consistency and our ability to remain on schedule for maintenance activities. Roads, Parks and Forestry Department has adopted operational safety practices to keep crews consistent to retain the 2-metre physical distance and keeping

individuals operating the same equipment daily wherever possible. This is anticipated to continue throughout the fall and winter.

Further, during the November cold and flu season, any staff reporting ill will need to be tested for Covid-19 which can take up to two weeks to book an appointment and receive results. In addition, current health practices include a two-week self-isolation period if Covid-19 symptoms are present. This may cause staff shortages which in turn would significantly reduce the ability for Roads, Parks and Forestry to complete the program. Reducing the leaf collection program to one pick up would provide more flexibility in being able to deliver on the program expectations. The addition of four temporary employees at a cost of \$21,500 is recommended.

3) Weather

The threat of a winter storm annually challenges the completion of this program. Should a storm event occur it may cause the Loose Leaf Collection program to be terminated early as staff and equipment will need to be re deployed to winter maintenance activities. This change over is very challenging in a non-Covid environment, however with the added work place restrictions and potential staffing issues this can be expected to amplify this challenge resulting in further delays and risk to the delivery of winter maintenance activities. Managing expectations and informing the public of these operational challenges is critical.

4) Fiscal Restraint

Due to the closing of facilities and the need to implement safety measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19, many revenue generating operations, programs and activities have been cancelled or significantly altered. This significant revenue loss has prompted all services to review where cost savings can be generated. Proposed cost savings have been outlined in the Financial Matters section below. In summary, the three options outline potential savings ranging from \$62,000 to \$230,000 per year.

Options Considered

Option 1

This option potentially provides the greatest environmental and financial benefits. Currently, staff are pulled from other work that does not get completed in the fall to ensure the Loose Leaf Collection is staffed. Many residents may consider alternatives to disposing of leaves through the waste stream and instead consider options such as

using a mulching mower blade to reduce the leaves to nutrient material left on the grass or consider composting of the leaves. It would result in a significant increase to the bagged leaf program run by Halton Region. It is also a very well-used and appreciated service that the community has come to expect.

Option 2

This option reduces the program time by one half. The potential benefits could be lost due to timing of the collection period, causing delays and customer frustration.

Option 3

This option is recommended. One collection per area can be completed and still allow for some adjustments due to weather related issues, if needed. It is recommended to be implemented for a two-year period to allow for evaluation of the changes.

Financial Matters:

Total Financial Impact

Options	Description	Area for Cost savings	Proposed Savings	Comments
Option 1	Cancel Program Potential Cost Savings \$233,000 / per year implemented	- Redeployment of staff to other maintenance activities - No haulage fees - No Regional Tipping Fees	- Minimal savings for labour and equipment \$45,000 - Proposed savings of \$100,000 - Proposed savings of \$ 88,000	This option will significantly impact the Regional Yard Waste Program and may result in a higher assessment from Halton Region, reducing the cost savings.
Option 2	Three Week Program One pick-up per area (reduced from two) Potential Cost Savings \$118,000 / year implemented	- Some deployment of staff to other maintenance activities - Reduced haulage fees - Reduced tipping fees	- Minimal savings for labour and equipment \$22,000 - Proposed savings of \$66,000 - Proposed savings of \$30,000	This option will also impact the Regional Yard Waste Program. Assume a 1/3 reduction in equipment rentals, haulage and tipping fees.
Option 3	Four Week Program	- two-week deployment of staff to other maintenance activities	- Minimal savings for equipment \$15,000	This option will also impact the Regional Yard Waste Program.

	One pick-up per area (reduced from two)	- Reduced haulage fees	- Proposed savings of \$25,000	Assume a ¼ reduction in equipment rentals, haulage and tipping fees.
	Potential Cost Savings \$62,000 / year implemented less recommended contract staff at \$21,500 for a Net Saving of \$40,500	- Reduced tipping fees	- Proposed savings of \$22,000	

Note: Costs for haulage and tipping fees are approximate only and actual costs are based on the actual tonnage of leaves collected. The hauling of leaves is proposed to be let out for tender this year. As such, actual costs may be impacted.

Climate Implications

The Loose Leaf Collection Program is dependent on the use of gas and diesel powered equipment that contribute to the city's corporate greenhouse gas emissions. The Region's yard waste collection program also utilizes diesel powered trucks, but would be more efficient from a GHG emissions as perspective. The best practice for homeowners to reduce the climate change impact of leaf collection would be to mulch and compost on their own property to the extent possible.

Engagement Matters:

Communication to Residents

It is recommended that part of the savings be utilized to enhance communication of the program to the community. This is needed to ensure good understanding of the program changes, the variables that impact collection, where to look for information and what happens if winter comes early, or if leaves are put out after collection, has taken place.

Public Engagement Matters:

During the service delivery review conducted by Performance Concepts in 2019, a public survey was released through Get Involved Burlington to obtain resident's perceptions and understanding of the Loose Leaf Collection program. The survey was released October 23, 2019 and closed November 4, 2019. A total of 185 residents participated in the survey. Of those responding, 93.5% were aware of the City's Leaf Collection program and the Regional Yard Waste program. Approximately 82% of those responding to the survey use the City's Loose Leaf program. There are some

residents that only use the regional yard waste program, due to their volume of leaves or reliance on a landscape company. Smaller numbers stated they left the leaves on their lawn or compost at home.

The responses indicated that the education and information campaigns about the program are effective.

Conclusion:

Covid-19 will have a material impact on RPF's ability to deliver the Loose Leaf Collection Program at the same collection levels of past years. It is recommended that the program be reduced to One Collection for all areas of the city receiving this service and that homeowners be encouraged to compost and mulch leaves on their property where ever possible and to utilize the Region's curb side yard waste pick up by bagging any additional leaves as described in Option 3.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Adam

Manager of Roads Operations

X6170

Appendices:

N/A

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.

Approved by:

Mary Battaglia, Director of Roads, Parks and Forestry

Allan Magi, Executive Director, Environment, Infrastructure & Community Services

Tim Commisso, City Manager