SUBJECT: Residential Snow Removal Program Implementation  
(SPH05048/PW05152) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Social and Public Health Services Committee support the Hamilton Snow Angels Awareness Program to address the Compassionate Hardship Fund for residential snow removal for the City of Hamilton.

(b) That funding in the amount of $30,000 be included for the Hamilton Snow Angels Awareness Program as a budget enhancement in Public Health and Community Services as part of the 2006 budget deliberations.

(c) That item D – Compassionate Hardship Fund for Sidewalk Snow Clearing of the Social & Public Health Services Committee outstanding business list be removed.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As of 2003, Council approved the Sidewalk Snow Clearing – Harmonization and Enforcement Report. As a result, all residential sidewalks within the City of Hamilton must be cleared within 24 hours of a winter storm event. Non-compliance with the by-law could result in a homeowner facing a set fine of $300.00. Realizing that in the case of low-income seniors or persons with disabilities who may not be able to afford the market rate for snow removal on their sidewalks, Council identified the need for what was originally referred to as the Compassionate/Hardship Program (now referred to as the Residential Snow Removal Program).

The Public Health and Community Services Department was given the lead in identifying some potential program delivery models for this program. Working in partnership with staff from the Public Works Department and with the assistance of external consulting services, the “Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program” was completed by Lura consulting in September 2005.

The consultants’ report, which included demographic information, feedback obtained from focus groups with service providers and potential snow removal program users, and a municipal comparison suggests that Council adopt the “Hybrid Program Delivery Model”. This model combines elements of several other models the consultants reviewed and includes a volunteer component (Hamilton Snow Angels), partnerships with local service providers already delivering snow removal programs, and some components of service delivery being provided by the City.

In addition to the five models presented by the consultants’ report, staff have also included three models for the consideration of Council: Hamilton Snow Angels (a blend of the volunteer program with linkages to non-profits through the Contact centre), a City Coordinated Program (City would determine the eligibility through the Public Health and Community Services Department and contract to deliver the service), and a City-Wide Sidewalk Clearing Program (All sidewalks would be cleared across the City of Hamilton under the direction of Public Works).

Staff are recommending that Council pursue the Hamilton Snow Angels Awareness Program. This recommendation is being made due to the challenges in predicting demand for the program as well as the potential prohibitive costs of Options two and three presented as presented in Table 2.

BACKGROUND:

In October of 2003, the Public Works and Planning Departments tabled the “Sidewalk Snow Clearing – Harmonization and Enforcement Report (PW03130a/PD03226a). Although the Snow Removal By-Law was enacted on October 15, 2003, recommendations referring to the “Snow Clearing Policy” were deferred.
Prior to amalgamation, four municipalities (Hamilton, Dundas, Flamborough and Glanbrook) had practices/policies under which the municipality\(^1\) was responsible for removing the snow and ice from sidewalks not adjoining privately owned properties. The City of Stoney Creek had a broader scope to its snow clearing program and the Town of Ancaster essentially cleared all sidewalks within the Town.

On August 11, 2004, Committee of the Whole approved the by-law harmonizing snow clearing standards across all of the City of Hamilton resulting in one standard for the entire City of Hamilton and the recommendation that the set fine of $300.00 be applied across the City (including Stoney Creek and Ancaster). As a result, residential property owners are required to clear snow and ice from the sidewalks adjoining their properties within 24 hours of the cessation of a winter storm event or within 24 hours of the cessation of a series of consecutive winter storm events.

Recognizing that the changes in the Snow Removal By-Law could present some hardship for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities who are unable to pay the current market rate for this service, the Public Works, Infrastructure and Environment Committee also recommended the establishment of a “Compassionate/Hardship Program” in their August 11, 2004 report.

The recommendation to develop a Compassionate/Hardship Program (now referred to as the Residential Snow Removal Program) was then forwarded to the Social and Public Health Services Committee on April 18, 2005 (PW Report 05-007).

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

Staff from the Program Policy and Planning and the Public Works Department formed a small project team to oversee the work required to forward a proposed model and eligibility criteria for the Snow and Ice Removal Compassionate/Hardship Program. In order to complete the work required in a timely manner, external consulting services were obtained. To that end, a request for quotations was developed outlining the scope of the work required, a suggested methodology, deliverables, and timelines. The objectives were as follows:

1. Review selected municipalities to determine approach;
2. Develop a reliable and supportable estimate for the need for a program based on existing City and non-government organization activity in this area;
3. Consult potential users on important program parameters;
4. Identify best practice models for program delivery; and,
5. Prepare a draft report and final report with recommendations.

Lura Consulting was the successful proponent of the request for quotations process and worked on the project from July to September 2005. A full copy of the Lura report is attached as Appendix A.

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\(^1\) Either the Town or City at that time.
2. **Residential Snow Removal Programs — Municipal Comparisons:**

The consultants used the internet and made calls directly to over thirty-three municipalities to ascertain whether or not they had a snow removal program for citizens. From that initial list, six municipalities in Ontario (Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, St. Catharine’s, Richmond Hill and Windsor) and two municipalities outside of Ontario (Calgary and Halifax) were identified as having citizen snow removal programs. The consultants completed a telephone survey with representatives from these municipalities in order to obtain more detailed information on their residential snow removal programs.

Based upon the surveys conducted, the consultants determined that the programs varied with respect to their program delivery models. The consultants’ review identified the following program delivery methods for municipal residential snow removal programs:²

- **Community-based, social marketing campaign** to encourage residents to assist those in need (Volunteer Program – Calgary & Halifax)
- **Volunteer-recipient match program** (organized by municipality—Windsor)
- **Municipal reimbursement** to homeowners for snow removal ranging from $100 - $150/eligible household (once per season, the client must pay for the service first and then provide evidence for reimbursement—Mississauga & Brampton)
- **Fully municipally-delivered services** (delivered by municipal staff- St. Catharines, Richmond Hill & Toronto)

In addition to program delivery methods, the consultants also asked the municipalities about the scope of their varying residential snow removal programs. Municipalities completing the consultants’ telephone survey specified the scope of their programs as ranging from sidewalks only to sidewalks, driveways, and windrows. The only standard for the municipal programs reviewed was that sidewalks were included as part of all the programs reviewed with some municipalities choosing to go beyond that standard.

Focus group participants also encouraged the City to consider extending the scope of any city residential snow clearing programs beyond sidewalks. However, since the City of Hamilton does not currently have a residential snow clearing program in place, and the potential liability issues that could occur by providing snow clearing beyond sidewalks, it is suggested that the City of Hamilton focus on “sidewalks” only in 2006. Consideration for enhancing the scope of any City of Hamilton programs could be considered once additional information is obtained once a residential snow clearing program is actually initiated for the City of Hamilton.

2. **Eligibility Criteria:**

The consultants obtained information on eligibility criteria from the municipal comparators, non-profits providing snow removal programs, and potential users of a

² For complete data on the municipal comparisons, please refer to Appendix A, *Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program, City of Hamilton*, Lura Consulting, 2005.
residential snow removal program. Regardless of which group the consultants interviewed, some key themes emerged with respect to eligibility criteria that the City should consider for a residential snow removal program.

These key criteria are:

1. That there be an “age” requirement (suggested range was 60+ or 65+) or
2. That the person has an “ability” issue i.e. a permanent disability supported by some form of third party verification
3. That the applicant demonstrate an inability to pay for the snow clearing and
4. That there is a “residency requirement”, i.e. that the eligible person must either own/occupy the property and
5. That there is no one else in the home who could safely clear the snow

In addition to these five elements that were similar among other municipalities and focus group participants, the following two additional criteria for consideration were provided by service providers and potential users only. These criteria centred on developing a priority system for those with medical emergencies or those who rely on services to be provided in the home (meals on wheels, therapy, etc.) and that consideration be given to those eligible who are also using DARTS.

Since the eligibility criteria for DARTS is currently under review and that the Bias Free Advisory Committee is also in the process of completing its report, staff recommend that this issue be deferred until more data is available.

2. **Estimated Need for a City of Hamilton Residential Snow Removal Program:**

The consultants faced a significant challenge in attempting to estimate the need for a residential snow removal program. Other municipalities offering similar types of residential snow removal programs shared this challenge.

The consultants’ estimate of need for a residential snow removal program was based on:
- Input from the service providers and user focus groups
- Data on clients being served by local service providers offering a snow removal program
- Service usage in other municipalities
- Socio-economic information available from the City of Hamilton
- A review of available census data (2001)
- Demographic and property tax support information provided by the City of Hamilton (Seniors Tax Credit Program)

With respect to the need for the program, it is worth noting that the consultants found strong support for both the need and increased demand for a residential snow removal type of program. This message was conveyed to the consultants both from the survey

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3 There was some debate among potential users as to whether the City should also consider those with a temporary disability.
conducted with other municipalities (whether they actually offered a snow removal program for citizens or not) and the focus group participants.

The consultants’ report concludes that the City could expect to provide snow removal services to approximately 1,500 to 2,000 eligible households depending on the eligibility criteria adopted and depth and scope of the services in the model chosen. They arrived at this projection using a combination of census data (41,945 or 26.2% of the total population is comprised of low-income seniors –16,155 and persons with disabilities – 25,790), service use statistics from local non-profits providing snow clearing (700 households in 2004), 2004 service statistics from Public Health & Community Services Helping Hands program (240 clients, 979 jobs), the average number of households served by the municipalities surveyed (672\(^4\)), and the up-take for the 2004 Senior’s Property Tax Credit (2,483).

D. Potential Service Delivery Models – City of Hamilton Residential Snow Removal Program—Consultant’s Perspective

One of the key pieces of work for the consultants was to identify a range of service models for a residential snow removal program for the City of Hamilton. Based upon the information from other municipalities and data obtained from the focus groups, the consultants identified five potential models for the City’s consideration. Table 1 below summarizes the models and some of its key characteristics.

Table 1: Summary of Consultant’s Draft Program Models for a City of Hamilton Residential Snow Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>KEY FEATURES</th>
<th>CITY’S RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Hamilton Snow Angels Program            | ✫ Totally volunteer driven  
✫ Promotes being a good “neighbour”  
✫ Community Development Approach      | ✫ To promote the program & provide some financial support for awareness materials |
| 2. City – Non-Profit Partnership           | ✫ City works with local non-profit providers to link up potential users requiring subsidy for snow removal with community agencies | ✫ Provide financial subsidies for those eligible  
✫ Liability/monitoring with non-profits to ensure program standards are met |
| 3. City Coordinated & Delivered Program    | ✫ The City coordinates, administers, and delivers the program  
✫ Single point of access for potential users  
✫ Could augment the capacity of non-profit providers | ✫ Determine eligibility and coordinate service delivery |
| 4. Direct Client Reimbursement             | ✫ Potential user can choose whom they wish to provide the service  
✫ Requires those eligible to purchase the | ✫ Determines eligibility criteria  
✫ Review submitted                          |

\(^4\) Excludes the City of Toronto. The number of households served by the City of Toronto is significantly higher than the other municipalities and including their data would have skewed the average figure.
In order to utilize the best components found in a number of the models reviewed, the consultants suggest that the Hybrid Model (#5 in Table 1) be considered by the City as it brings together the Hamilton Snow Angels concept, potential for partnering with non-profits already delivering snow removal programs, and the City’s ability to fill in service gaps due to the limited capacity of the current non-profit sector.

### E. Staff Recommended Service Delivery Models – City of Hamilton Residential Snow Removal Program

Staff from both Public Health & Community Services and Public Works reviewed the consultants’ recommendations and would like to put forward three additional options for the consideration of Council. Table 2 summarizes the options, potential costs, and pros and cons for each of the proposed options.

**Table 2: Draft Program Models for a 2006 City of Hamilton Residential Snow Removal Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MODEL</th>
<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>CITY COSTS</th>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hamilton Snow Angels — Link to non-profits</td>
<td>Program would promote the concept of being a good neighbour and urge citizens to assist their neighbours with snow clearing</td>
<td>It is estimated that the City would require an investment of $30,000 for the development and deliver of a communications plan</td>
<td>Totally volunteer driven</td>
<td>Demand could exceed the number of volunteers able to assist with snow clearing and the current capacity of non-profits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hybrid Model – Consultant recommended model</td>
<td>Combines Item 1, 2, and 3 above into a comprehensive model</td>
<td></td>
<td>City would be responsible for developing the social marketing campaign, determining eligibility criteria, contracting with a range of non-profit agencies, and potentially contract with or deliver snow clearing to those eligible, but can not be accommodated through the non-profit agencies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODEL</td>
<td>FEATURES</td>
<td>CITY COSTS</td>
<td>PROS</td>
<td>CONS</td>
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<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>✷ Would provide linkage to non-profits through the Contact Centre for those requiring assistance.</td>
<td>✷ Eligibility would be determined by a special income case aid position requiring an additional 1.0 full time equivalent at a cost of $59,392. As well, an additional $5,000 would be required for one-time capital investment (computer, work station, telephone etc.).</td>
<td>✷ Services that already exist in the non-profit sector for snow clearing for seniors and persons with disabilities.</td>
<td>✷ Would require a program enhancement in 2006.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. City Coordinated Program
- The City would determine eligibility through Public Health & Community Services.
- City would contract with local non-profit or for-profit contractors to deliver the service.
- Service would be delivered on a per request basis dependent upon severity of snow event and client need.
- Eligibility would need to be determined.
- Service requests could be mapped to consolidate service delivery and increase efficiency.
- City would have sole responsibility for determining eligibility.
- City might be in a better position to meet demand for the service.
- Could have implications for monitoring complaints i.e. cases where contractors have not adequately completed the tasks, or client complaints.
- Wide distribution of households requiring service could challenge service delivery within time frames compliant with the by-law.

3. City Wide Sidewalk Clearing Program (Ward 12 exempt) 6
- City would provide sidewalk clearing on all sidewalks in the City of Hamilton.
- Eligibility would not need to be determined.
- All sidewalks would be cleared increasing accessibility.
- City can control the.
- Cost prohibitive. Option goes beyond the intended target group (seniors).

---

5 Costs based on $12.00 per household (area covered --15 meter average frontage/flankage, hours required -- 8 hours per day + 2 hours transporting charge for a total of 10 hours per day, equipments costs per hour --$60.00, and total number of properties that could be completed in a day – 50 properties). $12.00 per household X 12 or 15 = $144 to $180 per season. Estimated program cost * 2,000 potential users = $288,000 to $360,000.

6 In comparison to the program costs associated with ward 12, a significant increase is clearly identified when accounting for the higher density urbanized neighbourhoods where most if not all properties are fronted with sidewalk infrastructure. In semi-urban/rural neighborhoods such as some areas in Ancaster, the sidewalk inventory is sporadic in fashion and only exists in parts of neighborhoods, how ever the cost
Since staff from both the Public Health and Community Services and Public Works is unclear as to how many households (depending upon eligibility) would request assistance with snow clearing and the potential prohibitive costs of Options 2 and 3 presented in Table 2, staff are recommending that Council pursue the Hamilton Snow Angels Program in 2006.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

The consultants’ report attached to staff report (SPH05048) provides greater detail on the pros and cons of each of the service delivery models identified. In addition, Council could alternatively consider making those persons with limited ability to pay who are eligible to be exempt from the by-law.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

**Financial:**
Depending upon the option selected by Council, the costs could range from $30,000 for Option 1 to $454,000 for Option 2 or $8,650,000 for Option 3. In either case, the financial impact of whatever option council approves would need to be included as a budget pressure and be included in the 2006 budget deliberations.

**Staffing:**
There are minimal staffing implications for Option 1. In Option 2, an enhancement of 1.0 full time equivalent would be required to complete the eligibility assessments. There may also be additional staff time required to monitor complaints, evaluate service quality, and assess property damage throughout the winter season. This would require one .5 full time equivalent administrator/coordinator position in Public Works. In Option 3, staff time would be required to coordinate the city-wide initiative and to monitor snow clearing.

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7 Costs based upon .25 cents per linear meter of sidewalk and 2,200 kilometers approximately of inventory city wide. 2,200 kilometers X 1000 meters = 2,200,000 meters X .25 = $550,000 per snow event.
contracts. This would require a minimum of five full time equivalent field staff investigator/supervisors and one full time equivalent contract coordinator/administrator.

**Legal:**
Option 1 would have no legal impact on the City. Options 2 and 3 may require advice from legal services with respect to contracts with potential non-profits or for-profit agencies or contractors providing snow clearing services on behalf of the City.

**Policies Affecting Proposal:**
Under the current Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2001), municipalities must seek the advice of their Advisory Committees for Persons with Disabilities whenever the municipality purchases, renovates, leases, or provides services through a particular premise. As well, the municipality is required to take into consideration persons with disabilities when procuring either goods or services.

To assist the City in completing its Accessibility Plans, the Bias Free Advisory Committee has been constituted supported by the Access and Equity Coordinator. They plan to complete their work by December 31, 2005. It is the understanding of staff from the Public Health and Community Services Department that recommendations will be included in this report with respect to the removal of snow for persons with disabilities. It is imperative that any program developed by the City be consistent with the recommendations made by the Bias free Advisory Committee.

**Relevant Consultation:**
This report was completed collaboratively with staff from both of the Public Health and Community Services and the Public Works Departments. As well, the report was circulated to the Access and Equity Coordinator for comment.

As part of the work completed by the consultant, a focus group was held with local non-profit service providers, and four focus groups were held with potential users of the Citizen Snow Removal Program. As well as these focus groups with potential service users, staff from Program Policy and Planning and representatives from Lura Consulting attended the September meetings of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities and the Seniors Advisory Committee.

**City Strategic Commitment:**
By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
The Residential Snow Clearing Program is specifically targeted towards providing assistance to seniors or persons with disabilities with limited income to purchase snow clearing assistance.

**Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑️ Yes ☐ No
Option 1 promotes a good neighbour approach to residential snow clearing for seniors and persons with disabilities with limited income to purchase snow clearing services. Since it is likely that volunteers would in close geographic proximity to those they are assisting, this reduces the need for lengthy commutes to deliver the service. Also, most volunteers may be using a manual (shovels) approach to the snow clearing as opposed to snow blowers limited air emissions and demand for fuel to run this type of machinery.

**Economic Well-Being is enhanced.** ☑️ Yes ☐ No
Option 1 recommended by staff can be provided with little financial investment from the City. This option would promote the spirit of volunteerism within the City and partner with those non-profit agencies already providing residential snow clearing programs.

**Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?**

☑️ Yes ☐ No

**Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?**

☑️ Yes ☐ No

The City would be promoting social responsibility and being a good neighbour. These types of activities might attract employees who share similar philosophical values.
APPENDIX A: SPH05048/PW05152

City of Hamilton

Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program for Seniors and Persons With Disabilities

September, 2005

Report prepared for the City of Hamilton by:
Lura Consulting
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Hamilton, Ontario
L8L 1K1
# Table of Contents

Executive Summary  ................................................................. 2

1.0 Background ........................................................................ 4

2.0 Snow and Ice Removal Support Programs in Selected Municipalities ................................................................. 6
  2.1 Methodology ..................................................................... 6
  2.2 Development and Administration of Survey ......................... 7
  2.4 Summary ....................................................................... 9

3.0 Current Snow Removal Programs in the City of Hamilton ........... 10
  3.1 Snow and Ice Removal Programs in Hamilton ..................... 10

4.0 Service Provider Focus Group ............................................. 13
  4.1 Purpose of Service Provider Focus Groups ......................... 13
  4.2 Results ..................................................................... 13
  4.3 Summary ..................................................................... 17

5.0 Consultation with Potential Users of a Snow Removal Program ...................................................... 17
  5.1 Purpose of Focus Groups .................................................. 18
  5.2 Results ..................................................................... 18
  5.3 Summary ..................................................................... 20

6.0 Additional Discussions ......................................................... 20

7.0 Assessment of Need and Program Costs ................................. 21
  7.1 Potential Number of Eligible Recipients .............................. 21
  7.2 Operating Cost ............................................................... 23

8.0 Service Delivery Models ..................................................... 24
  8.1 Program Considerations .................................................. 24
  8.2 Optional Service Delivery Models ....................................... 25

9.0 Conclusions & Recommendations ........................................ 30

Appendix A
  Review of Snow and Ice Removal Services and Programs in Selected Municipalities ........................................... i

Appendix B
  Focus Group Report ............................................................. xix
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Executive Summary

The City of Hamilton is exploring the feasibility of a snow and ice removal program for low income seniors and persons with disabilities. Lura Consulting conducted a needs assessment, reviewed programs in selected municipalities, consulted with service providers and potential users of a City program and developed models for consideration by the City in deciding how to approach a snow and ice removal program.

The study identified that both service providers and potential users of the program strongly believe that there is the need for a snow and ice removal program in the City for seniors and persons with disabilities and that this program should be directed at those most in need of the service. However, based on available information it is estimated that there are 1500-2000 households in the City that may be eligible for the program. Should a program be implemented, the use should be monitored in the first year to determine actual demand.

Of the 33 selected municipalities that Lura researched, eight have snow and ice removal programs for seniors and persons with disabilities. These existing programs range from a volunteer based operation to a program that reimburses eligible recipients for contracting the removal of snow from their property. Program service levels also range considerably. For example, one municipality provides a service that includes removing snow from sidewalks, windrows, walkways and driveways through their regular winter maintenance program while some only clear sidewalks and windrows. Another municipality developed a partnership program with service providers for snow removal on private property. This research highlighted the diversity of existing programs.

Focus groups were helpful in identifying existing problems and opportunities. Both service providers and potential users suggested that a snow and ice removal program should ensure that sidewalks, windrows, walkways and driveways are cleared to ensure that there is access for agencies that provide assistance to these homes, to provide for possible emergencies, and to ensure that homeowners can access bus stops, DARTs and local services. They indicated that the City should make the program eligible to people over 60-65 years of age and persons that are disabled who own and occupy a house where no one in the home can clear the snow; that priority of service should be given to those most in need and that the person is able to prove need in a reasonable way.

Those who were consulted also identified the need for the City to ensure that sidewalks in front of public areas (bus stops, senior’s centres, libraries, etc.) and sidewalks adjacent to commercial properties are cleared in a timely manner to ensure that seniors and persons with disabilities are able to be mobile in the winter time.

Based on the discussions and research, five models for service delivery were developed and evaluated against the objectives of the program. The approach that best meets all objectives is a “hybrid” approach that includes a social marketing/volunteer component.

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1 This estimate is based on the number of households currently receiving the seniors property tax rebate i.e. seniors living in their own homes who are accessing the rebate because they receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Data indicating the number of low income or disabled residents living in their own home is currently not available.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

to promote neighbours helping neighbours and a partnership between the City and community service providers and/or the private sector to deliver snow and ice removal services to eligible homeowners.

It is recommended that should the City decide to move forward with this program that it be phased in to better establish the level of need, get a more accurate cost estimate and to sort out the administration and logistics. The first year of the program should consist of:

- Establishment of a City Coordinator and an Advisory Committee
- A social marketing program to promote neighbours helping neighbours
- Development of the eligibility criteria
- Identification of service providers with an interest in the program
- Discussions with DARTs to define the snow removal needs for their clients
- Coordination with the Barrier Free Standards Development project
- A pilot project to work out administrative logistics, costs and demand for the program

There appears to be significant support for this type of program in the community. The above approach would provide the City with an opportunity to develop a program that best meets its resident’s needs in an affordable and practical way. The City should also continue to explore other municipal approaches to snow removal for seniors and persons with disabilities such as the one that is being developed in Toronto.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

1.0 Background

The City of Hamilton is exploring the development of a snow removal policy for seniors and persons with disabilities across the City of Hamilton.

The following background serves as a backdrop to the development of this policy:

- The City of Hamilton enacted a snow removal by-law No. 296 on October 15, 2003. One key provision is that occupants or property owners shall clear their snow and ice from sidewalks abutting their property, within a 24-hour period following the end of a storm.
- On August 11, 2004, the Committee of the Whole considered a Sidewalk Clearing Harmonization and Enforcement staff report. The Committee amended the report to include provisions for the establishment of a fund to support seniors and persons with disabilities.
- On Sept. 8, 2004, the Committee of the Whole tabled original subsection of the Sidewalk Snow Clearing-Harmonization and Enforcement (PW03130a/PD03226a) (City Wide) (Item 7.2) “That a base budget amount of $70,000, from the reduction in sidewalk snow removal costs resulting from the revised sidewalk snow clearing standard, be transferred from the Roads section budget to the Building and Licensing/Animal Control Services Enforcement Operations budget to support the cost of increased monitoring and enforcement of uncleared snow and ice on City sidewalks for the months of November and December of 2004 and the year of 2005 and subsequent years” until the report on the compassionate hardship fund is provided to committee.
- On April 4 and April 18, 2005 the Public Works and Infrastructure and Environment Committee referred the development of the compassionate fund to the Social and Public Health Committee.

Purpose and Scope of the Project

In July 2005, the City’s Public Health & Community Services Department retained Hamilton-based Lura Consulting, a firm specializing in social and environmental policy issues, to conduct the study. In July and August, Lura conducted a study to assess the feasibility of a program to support seniors with activity limitations with snow and ice removal on sidewalks abutting their properties (frontage and flankage) within the City of Hamilton.

The City set out objectives for the study which were:

1. Develop a reliable and supportable estimate for the need for a program, based on existing City and non-government organization activity in this area;
2. Review selected municipalities to determine approach;
3. Consult potential users on important program parameters
4. Identify best practice models for program delivery; and,
5. Prepare a draft report and final report with recommendations.
Lura’s approach to the study included:

- **Conducting a Needs Estimate.** To address the lack of data regarding the number of eligible residents, potential service usage, and geographic distribution, Lura approached this question as follows:
  - convened one focus group with service providers and providers of existing programs within the City of Hamilton;
  - conducted telephone interviews with additional service providers; and,
  - reviewed existing socio-economic information available from the City of Hamilton.
  - Projected need based information obtained through the first three tasks, service usage in other municipalities, and service take-up in Hamilton by existing service providers.

- **Reviewing Practices in selected Municipalities** – Lura conducted a municipal survey to determine current practices in similar communities;

- **Community consultation with potential users** – Lura convened four focus groups within the City of Hamilton; and,

- **Development of models of service delivery** – based on the research conducted during this study, a number of service delivery models have been developed for consideration by the City, along with suggestions for implementation.

The following sections report on our findings.
2.0 Snow and Ice Removal Support Programs in Selected Municipalities

This section summarizes the survey of programs for snow and ice removal in selected municipalities. Staff from the Public Works, Roads Maintenance Division and the Public Health and Community Services departments confirmed the selection of municipalities and provided input to the survey questions.

2.1 Methodology

The following is an overview of the methodology used to select municipalities and obtain information.

Selection of Municipalities

Hamilton’s Public Works Department provided an initial list of potential municipalities in southern Ontario based on similar population size and weather conditions. This was supplemented through discussions with the Public Health & Community Services Department to include additional municipalities in southern and northern Ontario and elsewhere in Canada that may have snow and ice removal programs based on their size and weather conditions.

Thirty-three municipalities were scanned on the internet and/or contacted directly (see Appendix A for a list of all municipalities contacted) to determine if they have a snow and ice removal program. Six municipalities in Ontario were identified as having snow and ice removal programs (see Table 1). Two municipalities in other provinces were also contacted (Calgary and Halifax).

Table 1: Municipalities with Snow and Ice Removal Polices and Programs

1. The City of Toronto Winter Services, Toronto, Ontario
2. The City of Mississauga, Snow Removal Subsidy, Mississauga, Ontario
3. The City of Brampton, Snow Removal Financial Assistance Program for Seniors and the Physically Challenged, Brampton, Ontario
4. The City of St. Catharines, Snow Removal for Seniors and Physically Challenged Persons, St. Catharines, Ontario
5. The Town of Richmond Hill, Windrow Removal, Richmond Hill, Ontario
6. The City of Windsor, Snow Angels, Windsor, Ontario
7. City of Calgary, Snow Angels Program, Calgary, Alberta
2.2 Development and Administration of Survey

The purpose of the survey was to obtain details on other municipal snow and ice removal programs to assist Hamilton in formulating a policy. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

Results

Appendix A includes tables that provide an overview of the responses to the surveys, the results of the internet scan, a program description including areas covered and eligibility criteria, a website link and contact information.

Areas covered

The programs varied in terms of the areas of property covered. These included:

- Sidewalks only
- Driveway windrows\(^2\) only
- Sidewalks and driveway windrows
- Non-differentiated - Some programs are subsidized and do not differentiate between what part of the property is cleared
- Sidewalks, windrows, and private property

Some municipalities specify the depth of snow and conditions under which snow removal will be provided but most do not.

Service Providers

The programs are primarily administered and coordinated through the municipal Transportation/Roads departments where the municipality takes responsibility for the program. However, in some cases, the municipality provides a reimbursement to eligible participants to hire contractors to remove snow and ice in any or all areas needed on their property. In these cases the Finance Department administers the applications for reimbursement. In one case, the municipality has established a "volunteer match" program, where volunteers are recruited and matched with client needs.

In Toronto, Transportation Services of the Works and Emergency Services Department administers and implements the clearing of sidewalks and windrows for seniors and persons with disabilities. The program for the removal of snow and ice on private property is currently being reviewed to determine the most appropriate role for the City. Toronto currently has several different snow removal models in place that reflect pre-amalgamation. They have set up an Advisory Committee to provide advice and input to the program review. The review is scheduled to be competed in the fall of 2005 and the results should be evaluated as part of Hamilton’s project.

\(^2\) Driveway windrows are the snow buildup in driveways caused by snow plowing.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Number of Households Served

The number of households served varied from 35 (in a new volunteer program in the City of Windsor) to 9700 households in the City of Toronto. Three of the smaller municipalities have a participation rate of 958 to 1433 households but do not always differentiate between seniors and persons with disabilities served in the programs.

Funding

With the exception of volunteer match programs, all the programs that were surveyed were fully funded by the municipalities. Costs range from $304,000 (City of Toronto) to $17,000 (Town of Richmond Hill). However, these costs vary significantly based on the services provided. The City of Toronto appears to include grass cutting as well as snow removal.

Table 2 Surveyed Municipalities: Demographics and Costs of Existing Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Total # of single family households in Municipality (most current census)</th>
<th>Approximate # of Households using Snow Removal Programs</th>
<th>% Of Users compared to total # of single family Households</th>
<th>Total Cost/year</th>
<th>Average Cost per Household</th>
<th>Program type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>1,634,755</td>
<td>9,700</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>$304,000</td>
<td>$31.34</td>
<td>Snow removal and grass cutting for eligible private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>1,634,755</td>
<td>9,700</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Sidewalks and windrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississauga</td>
<td>195,185</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>$15,231</td>
<td>$76.15</td>
<td>Reimbursement up to $100/season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brampton</td>
<td>97,550</td>
<td>1557</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
<td>$160,000</td>
<td>$102.76</td>
<td>Reimbursement up to $100 or $150/season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Catharines</td>
<td>56,725</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>1.84%</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$33.52</td>
<td>Sidewalks and windrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Hill</td>
<td>42,000</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>2.28%</td>
<td>$17,600</td>
<td>$18.37</td>
<td>Windrows only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor*</td>
<td>117,710</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>Volunteers+ Minimal City Administration</td>
<td>Negligible</td>
<td>Sidewalks, driveways, windrows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This program is in its infancy but is considered worthwhile for review.

In comparison, the City of Hamilton does not have a municipal snow and ice removal program but has service providers that deliver this service to approximately 700 households (2004) (See Section 3.0). Hamilton has an estimated 194,154 households (2001 Census Statistics). Based on the Seniors’ Tax Credit data provided by the City of Hamilton, there are at least 2500 seniors’ households that would be eligible for the snow
and ice removal program. There are no accurate estimates of the number of households with low income persons with disabilities. However, one surveyed municipality keeps records of the users of their snow removal program and indicated the number of program users with disabilities averaged 10% of the total number of seniors that used the program.

Eligibility Criteria
There are certain eligibility criteria that are common in each of the municipal programs researched. These include:

- Program participant must be 65 or over; or
- Program participant must have a permanent disability;
- They must own and occupy the property; and
- There must be no one in the home who can clear the snow

Only one municipality indicated the need for the potential participant to verify that they are living on a low/assisted income.

Liability and Insurance
In all cases, the municipal respondents did not indicate how they address liability. The assumption is that where the municipality delivers the service on public property their insurance applies. Volunteers are generally not covered by insurance.

2.4 Summary

Reviewing practices in other municipalities demonstrated that there is a range of service delivery models, areas covered and costs. Program types are categorized below:

- Fully municipally-delivered services
- Municipal reimbursement to homeowners for snow removal ranging from $100 - $150/eligible household
- Volunteer-recipient match program organized by municipality;
- Community-based, social marketing campaign to encourage residents to assist those in need.

This research is based on municipalities that are likely to have a similar population to the City of Hamilton or have the potential for similar weather conditions. While only 18% of the surveyed municipalities had snow removal programs for seniors and persons with disabilities, contact with municipalities both with and without snow removal programs, indicate there is a high demand for this type of program and that municipalities are interested in how others are addressing this need.

The six programs researched in Ontario were found to be quite varied in their approach, their budgets and the service areas that they cover. The City of Toronto was found to have the most comprehensive program.

Our report, “Review of Snow and Ice Removal Services and Programs in Selected Municipalities” is included in Appendix A.
3.0 Current Snow Removal Programs in the City of Hamilton

This study identified six community service providers within the City of Hamilton that currently provide or coordinate snow removal programs throughout much of the City. Each program was found to have differences in their operation. Given the short time frame for this study, no other service providers were brought to our attention, however it is quite probable that faith groups, churches, veteran’s organizations, school volunteers, and service clubs may provide this service and further effort could uncover additional organizations in these sectors.

3.1 Snow and Ice Removal Programs in Hamilton

Two approaches were taken to identify details of community programs, and obtain input from community service providers on issues and obstacles, eligibility criteria, and ideas for a city-wide policy. Lura conducted both telephone interviews and a focus group for service providers in August 2005.

Table 3 provides a summary of information collected from service providers within the City of Hamilton. The programs range in scope and type. In summary, the following parameters are administered by non-profit agencies within the City of Hamilton for their snow removal programs:

- User must be older than age 60-65 or physically handicapped;
- In some cases a small fee is charged (up to $20/snow event), paid directly to the snow shoveller by the client;
- Most programs serve a specific geographic area; only one covers all of Hamilton (Helping Hands). Programs operate in Stoney Creek, Ancaster, Dundas, Glanbrook and Hamilton. No programs were identified in Flamborough;
- Most programs cover snow removal for sidewalks, windrows, driveways and walkways;
- Users are either pre-identified by agency, or call in and request the service;
- Current demand is over 700 households. However, service agencies do not promote this program due to resource shortages, and one agency has a waiting list; and
- The Glanbrook program and some other services are being cut. This is significant as the Glanbrook program serviced 270 clients last year.
### Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Table 3: Description of Snow Removal Programs within the City of Hamilton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provider with Snow Removal Programs</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Type of service (sidewalks, Driveway, Walkway)</th>
<th>Triggers for service (time, depth of snow etc.)</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Volume of service in past 12 months</th>
<th>Insurance/ Liability</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Type of service (volunteers, paid staff)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Joseph’s Home Care – Home Maintenance service in Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Dundas and Ancaster</td>
<td>Lynda Norris, Manager (905) 528-2273</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Worked out with provider and client</td>
<td>Senior (over 60) or permanent disability</td>
<td>Depends on providers – always have a waiting list - 45</td>
<td>Have insurance through agency to cover providers. Also suggest they talk to client re: homeowner liability.</td>
<td>$17/hr and will raise to $20 due to increase in gas prices</td>
<td>Providers get paid – brokerage model, screen/police check, orientation, match to client, provider paid directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glanbrook Home Support Program – not being offered in 2005</td>
<td>Janis Gumbly, ED Carol Taylor, mgr of Snow Removal Program (905) 692-3464</td>
<td>Provide services as per client’s needs.</td>
<td>Roughly 2 – 3 inches of snow. Try to clear snow within 24 hours of snowfall.</td>
<td>No eligibility criteria other than being a senior (60 is the defining age) or a person with a disability.</td>
<td>Approximately 100</td>
<td>No insurance/liability for service providers</td>
<td>$19/lot</td>
<td>Volunteers register with Glanbrook and they are clients are then referred to volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Hands</td>
<td>Heather Todd (905) 546-2424 ext. 2681</td>
<td>Basic shoveling of pathway to all doors, sidewalks and enough room in driveway for a vehicle.</td>
<td>Clients of Helping Hands call in</td>
<td>65+ and unable to do the work, or permanently disabled (medical completed by physician, agency or self referral. A case worker will go to the home and complete an application and a needs test. Applies to all of Hamilton.</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>City of Hamilton</td>
<td>According to assets – some people get it free and some people pay – ODSP asset level</td>
<td>Ontario works program – work practice activity, home maintenance for seniors and disabled.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provider with Snow Removal Programs</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Type of service (sidewalks, Driveway, Walkway)</th>
<th>Triggers for service (time, depth of snow etc.)</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Volume of service in past 12 months</th>
<th>Insurance/ Liability</th>
<th>Fees</th>
<th>Type of service (volunteers, paid staff)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dundas Community Information Services</td>
<td>Lynn Sutton, Coordinator of Info and Volunteer Services (905) 627-5461</td>
<td>The majority of volunteers do driveways, sidewalks and walkways.</td>
<td>There is no trigger for this service; snow removal is usually provided after a heavy snowfall.</td>
<td>There are no eligibility criteria for this service.</td>
<td>Approximately 25 – 30 seniors were provided with service in the past 12 months.</td>
<td>No insurance/liability for service providers</td>
<td>There are no fees associated with this service</td>
<td>Both volunteers and paid staff are referred to clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancaster Information Services</td>
<td>David Caulfield, Info Systems Manager (905) 648-6675</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Match high school students to clients – some clients pay students directly. Clients deal directly with students once matched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOS Stoney Creek</td>
<td>Bill Mitchell, Chair and Manager of Snow Removal Services (905) 664-4576</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Two inches of snow or more. At 2-4 inches the operators call the client and ask if service needed. Over 4 inches automatically go out. Operators set up priority.</td>
<td>Anyone handicapped or 60 years and over and live in Stoney Creek.</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>Have insurance on equipment but don’t have liability from client. Clients sign waiver that not responsible for damage</td>
<td>$10-20 or whatever they can afford.</td>
<td>Providers get paid fees directly by clients. Equipment funded through grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 Service Provider Focus Group

Lura conducted a focus group with 7 non-profit community service agencies on August 15, 2005. The group included organizations providing snow clearing services, as well as organizations that see a need for a program.

4.1 Purpose of Service Provider Focus Groups

The focus groups with community service agencies provided current program information and input on the need for and the scope of a snow and ice removal program. Lura asked:

1. Who are your clients?
2. What residents do you think are not taking advantage of existing snow removal services?
3. What do you think are the greatest challenges for a snow removal program?
4. What are some of the risks associated with a snow removal policy? Why?
5. Based on your experience, what eligibility criteria for participation should be included in a policy?
6. List 3 things would you like to see adopted in a city wide policy?
7. Is a fee for service reasonable? If so, under what circumstances?
8. If a snow removal program is implemented, who should deliver the program?

A detailed report of the focus group discussions can be found in Appendix B.

4.2 Results

Service providers currently provide a range of services to those who are 60-65 years old and older and/or those who are over 16 years old and temporarily or permanently disabled.

Barriers to Client Participation in Program

Three barriers to participation by potential users of a snow and ice removal program were identified by participants in the focus group. The foremost barrier identified was a general lack of awareness of the programs, since advertising is rarely carried out due to cost constraints. Second, frail and elderly clients have difficulty organizing the service without assistance. Efficiency of service can be compromised due to lack of staff,
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

causi ng delays and long wait times of up to three days. There was also a feeling that suggested fees might prohibit low income users from accessing the service. This is however, tempered by users who feel the need, because of pride to monetarily contribute to the service in whatever means they can.

Challenges and Risks for Service Providers

The focus group identified a number of issues facing service providers. Firstly and most frequently mentioned challenge is the administrative and organizational effort required to provide efficient service. Other challenges include:

- Developing and maintaining client lists;
- Coordination of territories for operators/providers;
- Matching clients with volunteers;
- Reassigning clients;
- Obtaining and maintaining equipment
- Price of fuel for equipment;
- Insurance for equipment; and
- Transportation and coordination of equipment.

Secondly, finding available workers to remove snow is a challenge. There are fewer available able-bodied seniors and newly retired individuals who are willing to take on this work. Non-profit agencies have limited resources and therefore are often unable to pay competitive rates. Organizing and obtaining commitments from volunteers is an ongoing, time-consuming activity, along with volunteer “burn-out”.

Three risks were identified by agencies during the focus group:

1. Liability of workers, and the agency for property damage is a concern. One agency deals with this by having the client sign a waiver that the worker is not responsible for property damage.
2. Equipment insurance is also a concern.
3. The safety of clients is an issue. Seniors are afraid of being preyed on by strangers, and need a familiar face that they can trust. This is handled by some agencies by conducting a police check, reference checks, and/or screening and training volunteers and workers. They also develop job descriptions and define boundaries of the role. This additional diligence adds to the administrative requirements and costs. Most non-profit agencies cannot afford police checks on all their volunteers/workers.

Eligibility Criteria

Service agencies do not generally apply official “eligibility criteria” to their snow removal programs since their clients are either pre-identified, or call in for service however, their suggestions for the City’s criteria included:

- Seniors 60 years old and over
- Living in own home or home of parents (not apartments or facilities)
- Priority access for urgent cases, such as medical appointments, work, school or “medical alert” recipients, i.e. with potential for medical emergency access needs.
- People who cannot continue to live in their own homes without this support.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

- Referral by a service provider
- Have physical limitations, possibly supported with a doctor’s certificate. Most saw the doctor’s certificate as a problem because it costs money and it makes doctors the gatekeepers for the program.

Participants believed that the City should determine eligibility and access to the program. In general, the service should be available to those over 60 or 65 and unable to remove snow and those who are physically (permanently or temporarily) disabled, own their own home and do not have anyone who can help them.

Program Financing

Perspectives on this question varied. Some participants felt that a fee is reasonable so the program is not abused, and believed that most people want to contribute some amount towards the cost. However, clients do not wish to be charged an additional amount if the worker has to come back to clean the windrows left by City snow plows. If the fee is excessive, low-income seniors won’t use the service. Most service providers felt that a fee will result in the very needy not being able to access the service.

If the program includes reduced fees, then the access to reduced fees must be made known to potential users. Currently there are reduced fees available for some services but most people don’t know about them.

If fees are to be charged, the fee schedule needs to be flexible, and based on the ability to pay.

Service providers will need flexibility to respond to rising costs of gas prices if volunteers are using snow blowers.

Other Suggestions and Issues

Suggestions related to administration, implementation and accessibility to a future City snow and ice removal program included:

- The City should coordinate the service and partner with service providers in the community to implement it;
- Do not create unmanageable administrative requirements for service providers;
- There is no support for a program that would be coordinated and implemented entirely by the City;
- There is a need to develop mechanisms to inform potential clients who do not use the services provided by non-government or government agencies;
- The City’s current snow plowing creates windrows on driveways and this is a significant problem for persons with disabilities and seniors. Even if they are fairly mobile, people have a difficult time removing the windrows especially on major roads. DARTs for example, will not deliver passengers to areas that are unsafe to place a ramp. In addition, the City does not always remove snow from sidewalks in front of public spaces in a timely way and this inhibits walking to bus stops, local services etc. A snow removal program should address these issues;
- Sidewalks adjacent to commercial areas are often not shoveled and this inhibits mobility;
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

- There is a need to consider the merits of a volunteer match or volunteer worker program when developing the policy model;
- Ensure good communication of the program and use methods that reflect how seniors get information e.g. seniors mostly frequently get information from radio, TV, newspapers and service providers, not via computers;
- Make the program as universal as possible and as stigma free as possible;
- Provide a dependable service with snow removal within 24 hours (no longer) of the end of the snow storm, in line with the bylaw requirements; and
- Provide a badge or some identifier for the program workers.

Program Development and Administration

There is wide-ranging and strong support for a City-sponsored snow clearing policy for seniors and persons with disabilities. A clear service delivery model emerged during the discussions for consideration by the City, that of a City-Service Provider partnership.

In this model, the City could serve as central coordinator for the service in partnership with service provider(s) who would administer and deliver the program. This would enable access to data such as Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support program, and Guaranteed Income Supplement recipients, helping to ensure that all potential clients are reached and serviced. Participants did not feel that the City should deliver the program, due to increased bureaucracy and higher service delivery costs. In addition, if the City were to provide the snow removal service, there would be no continuity in workers, which is a major concern to the target client group.

In delivering this function, the City could establish a direct line, live-answering service that would enable clients to talk directly to the City’s coordinator who sets up the service. The coordinator needs to be consistent (i.e. City should not change the person in this position) so that they are familiar with all of the service providers and aware of all facets of the program. In addition, this will ease the burden on service providers if there is consistency in this function, resulting in improved efficiencies and client service. Alternately there could be coordinators for each major area of the City. This would create a small team of staff who are aware of the program and who can cover for each other. Coordinator positions are not full time positions in other municipalities however, it may take more time to set up the program here.

The City coordinator would coordinate applications, and arrange for the client to receive the service with the appropriate service provider.

Service providers believe that the program should be self-regulating with the service providers and workers screening clients to ensure that the people who need the service receive it. However, there would need to be monitoring by the City to ensure that the program is being used by those who fit the eligibility criteria.

In terms of funding, the City should consider ways to fund service providers on a regular basis, without requiring annual applications and excessive administration. If service providers see the administration of this program as a burden they will not be interested in participating in the program.
4.3 Summary

The following points summarize the issues and suggestions of the community service provider focus group:

- Service providers strongly support the implementation of a City-sponsored snow removal policy and program for seniors and persons with disabilities;
- Service providers are facing high demand, with increasing costs and challenges, such as insurance, liability, difficulty in retaining workers, cost of gasoline for snow blowers and volunteer burnout;
- Generally, there is a lack of awareness among the client group that programs exist. In addition, the client group is thought to be generally concerned about using strangers to provide services, and some have difficulty organizing assistance;
- Eligibility criteria should focus on low income seniors and low income disabled persons, with priority given to those with the potential for medical emergency, those who receive home care and meal delivery. However, it is also important for those who must work outside the home and access community services such as doctor’s appointments. DARTs clients must be able to access the DARTs vehicles and must be able to return home to an area that is accessible to the DARTs ramps;
- Where possible, no fees or flexible/reduced fees should be charged;
- A communications and recruitment program should be initiated;
- Community service providers may not have the capacity to service the entire City and therefore, the program may require support from private sector companies or City staff;
- The program should be a partnership between the City and non-government service providers, with the City providing administration and co-ordination services; and
- There are issues with snow removal in the City in general that make it difficult for seniors and person with disabilities to be mobile in the winter. The City’s regular maintenance program should address these issues e.g. windrows; sidewalk clearance adjacent to commercial and public property and residences where snow is not routinely cleared.

5.0 Consultation with Potential Users of a Snow Removal Program

Lura conducted four focus groups with potential users of a City-sponsored snow removal program. They were held in:

- Downtown Hamilton (Pinky Lewis Recreation Centre)
- The Mountain (Sackville Hill Seniors Centre)
- Dundas (Dundas Community Centre)
- Stoney Creek (Riverdale Community Centre)

Service providers in each area and in Waterdown, Ancaster and Glanbrook were asked to suggest participants for the focus groups. Notices also were sent to seniors’ centres, service clubs, veteran’s organizations and a faith organization. In addition, the City’s
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Department of Health and Community Services Department distributed a notice to programs funded under the Community Partnership Program (social and public health stream) to advise them of the focus groups.

Thirty-four people attended the focus groups for potential service users. Participants were offered compensation for their participation as is customary for focus groups. Some service providers also attended these sessions.

5.1 Purpose of Focus Groups

The focus groups with potential users of the program provided input on the need for and the scope of a snow and ice removal program. Lura asked:

- How do you currently handle snow removal?
- Do you have trouble finding assistance for snow removal? If so why?
- If the City is considering developing a snow clearing policy/programs, what advice would you offer?
- In your opinion, who should be eligible to participate in a City Snow Removal program?
- Should there be a user fee for this service? If not - why not? If yes, how should a fee be determined?
- If a program is implemented, should it be operated by the City or in partnership with community service providers?

5.2 Results

Results of the focus groups have been grouped into the following categories and reported below:

- Current services and issues
- Eligibility criteria
- Administrative and program components

Current Services and Issues

Focus group participants indicated that they either rely on their neighbours or use contractors to clear snow after heavy snow falls, but often have to wait long periods of time for this service. If snow isn’t cleared around parked vehicles, they can be ticketed. Of concern is the number of able bodied people who do not shovel their snow. This creates safety hazards for seniors and the disabled who are walking by – as they have to walk around these sidewalks.

Rural areas pose a problem if there are long driveways or walkways and service providers can’t deliver meals or access these homes in emergencies.

Windrows left by City plows were frequently mentioned as an obstacle of concern – especially if slush turns to ice. Even able-bodied seniors can’t deal with this.
Other issues with current services included:

- Absentee landlords in Downtown Hamilton should be required to clean their walkways;
- Volunteer programs have been cut by the City because of insurance costs thereby reducing the availability of the service;
- The City does not clean its own sidewalks for parks etc.;
- The fees associated with current programs is a problem for many clients; and
- Program information is difficult to access.

Eligibility Criteria

The following suggestions were made by focus group participants:

- Some form of verification that potential clients are unable to shovel their driveways would help deter abuse of the program. Suggestions included a doctor’s certificate, or recommendation from a service provider organization;
- In order of priority, low income disabled and seniors should be considered first. The Program should be geared to those in need, and should be used to ensure that access is possible for at least one vehicle in the driveway, all of the walkway and sidewalk.

Suggested Administration and Program Components

A list of ideas was generated across the focus groups:

- The Program should be developed as a City initiative in partnership with service providers. It was thought that the program would be too costly for the City to do with its own staff;
- There is a need for program coordination with other services like DARTS i.e. if DARTS needs to access a property they should be able to call the service and have the property plowed by the time they get there;
- There should be access to the program by telephone to a “live” person;
- The City should develop a list of approved contractors;
- Exempt seniors and disabled from the By-law if the snow is not cleared;
- Develop a strong marketing and communications program, including window signage (like Block Parent) indicating need;
- Develop a client registry;
- Need to recognize that rural areas may need a different approach because of long driveways; and
- Limit service to sidewalk, path/driveway to front door, and windrow clearing;
- While there was no agreement on fee-for-service, low-income seniors and persons with disabilities should not have to pay for the service. Arrangements could be made for payment from those who wished to contribute something.
5.3 Summary

The following is a concise summary of the results of the focus groups:

- Participants support the need for a snow and ice removal program for low income seniors and those who are disabled;
- Most people advise against charging a fee for service, although there should be flexibility;
- The City should coordinate the program in partnership with the community service providers who would remove snow from properties. The program should be accessed through one coordinator at the City;
- Implementation of a good marketing plan and communication of the program is important;
- When developing the program, recognize the difference between the needs of the rural and urban users of the service; and
- The Program should apply to sidewalks, walkways, windrows and driveways.

6.0 Additional Discussions

In addition to the focus groups with service providers and potential users of a program, the Project Team presented the results of the focus groups and the five models to the Seniors Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities – both advisory committees to City Council.

Both Committees strongly supported the development of this program. They indicated that there are many seniors and persons with disabilities who are not able to leave their homes in the winter. They are concerned that the new by-law will not be enforced for able bodied persons who routinely do not shovel their sidewalks and for sidewalks in front of commercial property. They also expressed the need for the City to be diligent in removing snow and ice from sidewalks adjacent to City facilities.

They echoed the issues that had been raised in the focus groups. They also suggested some additional ideas for the models. For example, they suggested that new immigrants are often willing and able to be good neighbours but may not understand what is required to shovel snow. In the Snow Angels Program (option 1) there could be provision for an education/training program for new immigrants on how to maintain property standards in the summer and winter.

The City is currently developing Barrier Free Standards and any snow removal program must be coordinated with these standards to ensure consistency in application.

The one window approach was strongly supported. Both committees recommended that a hybrid approach be adopted. They recommended that a reimbursement program not be adopted as it puts too much onus on the eligible households who are least able to pay and to organize a contractor.
7.0 Assessment of Need and Program Costs

Identifying the number of potentially eligible Hamilton residents who could access this program posed a number of challenges, due to the lack of data. Initially it was thought that estimates could be developed by identifying the number of clients served by the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement. However, these data were not available during the study time frame.

Our approach therefore was based on:

- input from the service providers (including service take-up data where available) and potential users through focus groups and telephone interviews;
- service usage in other municipalities;
- socio-economic information available from the City of Hamilton;
- a review of available census data (2001); and,
- demographic and property tax support information provided by the City of Hamilton

The results of our analysis are reported in this section.

7.1 Potential Number of Eligible Recipients

Lura reviewed information provided by the City (principally Statistics Canada Census 2001 data and information from the Finance Department) to develop an estimate of the number of eligible clients for the service.

In the City of Hamilton the total population for 2001 was 490,268 (Statistics Canada Census).

*Statistics Canada 2001 Census data* reports a total of 66,220 seniors (over the age of 65), and 87,815 disabled people over the age of 15 living in the City of Hamilton, totaling 154,000 people in a potential target client group.

Of these, there are 16,155 low income seniors and 25,790 low income people with disabilities, totaling 41,945 people, or 26.62%. Statistics Canada Census 2001 data does not indicate how many of these people live in their own homes.

*Annual demographics* indicates that more than half of the seniors in the City (38,331) are between the ages of 65 and 74. There are 25,542 seniors between the ages of 75 and 84. There are 7,125 seniors who are over 85.

*Statistics Canada 2001 Census data* indicates that between 10.1% and 23.5% of people in the City of Hamilton provide unpaid care or assistance to seniors in their neighbourhoods.

*City of Hamilton Finance Department* indicates that 2,483 seniors take advantage of the property tax credit.
Table 4: City of Hamilton Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Group</th>
<th>Number of population in client group</th>
<th>% of Hamilton’s Population in client group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior age &gt;65</td>
<td>66,220</td>
<td>13.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled persons</td>
<td>87,815</td>
<td>17.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income seniors</td>
<td>16,155</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income disabled</td>
<td>25,790</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior age 65-74</td>
<td>38,331</td>
<td>7.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior age 75-84</td>
<td>25,542</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior age &gt;85</td>
<td>7,125</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From these data, and following a review of the numbers of people utilizing the service in both Hamilton and other jurisdictions studied, we can make the following assumptions:

- A minimum of 31.4% of Hamilton’s population is in the category of senior citizen and disabled. Of this, a minimum of 8.5% of Hamilton’s population is in the category of low income senior or low income disabled;
- 1.94% of households take advantage of the City’s property tax credit;
- Between 1.6% and 2.28% of households in cities with comprehensive programs (reimbursement or fully paid) utilize a snow clearing policy (policy or program);
- Service providers in Hamilton service roughly 700 households, representing 0.36% of total households. This number is achieved with little or no advertising; and
- User fees are charged in most cases that could act as a deterrent to adding more clients to the program.

The number of potential users and the cost of a City wide snow clearing program will vary based on the level of promotion, eligibility criteria, cost to the user and service level provided.

A survey of municipalities that currently have comprehensive, no cost to the user snow removal programs indicate that an average of 1.9% of municipal households use the service. This number is significantly higher than the number of current users in Hamilton (0.36% - based on information provided by the service providers).

While it should be noted that a snow removal service is not currently provided equitably across the City of Hamilton, it is estimated that at least 700 to 800 residents in the City of Hamilton currently rely on non-profit service providers to clear snow from their property. Focus group results indicate that the target client group relies on neighbours and family, or contract snow clearing services.

In 2004 approximately 2,483 residents in the City of Hamilton received a senior’s property tax credit. This is a good indicator of the number of seniors living on their own property. Not all of these households would require assistance with snow removal as a percentage will have neighbours or family who help them.
Therefore, an estimated number of eligible users of a City wide snow and ice removal service could be approximately 1,500 to 2,000 households. This number is based on:

- Average number of households serviced per total population in other municipal snow removal programs;
- The number of people using services currently provided by community service groups in the City of Hamilton;
- The percentage of households that take advantage of the City property tax credit;
- Anecdotal evidence from research regarding the estimated percentage of seniors and disabled which have neighbours, family or caretakers remove snow from their properties.

The number of program users will be dependent on the parameter of a program and would vary based on the guidelines and eligibility criteria set out by the City.

### 7.2 Operating Cost

The estimated cost for a City wide snow removal program would depend on several factors including the level of promotion and the type of service delivery model implemented. Information obtained from Ontario municipalities that have a snow removal program indicate an average program cost of approximately $44.00 per user. Unfortunately, service providers in the City of Hamilton that offer snow removal programs do not have reliable data that could be used to estimate program cost. However, one provider indicated that workers charge between $17.00 and $20.00/hour (if equipment is provided). This would provide only 4 hours of snow clearing services per season. Where volunteers are utilized (and provide their own equipment), the cost per hour would need to be calculated based on the price of gasoline needed to run the equipment.

Therefore, based on the information from municipal programs, an estimated cost to implement a city-wide snow removal program for low income, eligible clients could be in the range of approximately $66,000.00 to $88,000.00 annually. Actual program costs would vary depending on the type of service delivery model chosen, the equipment provided and whether or not volunteers are utilized. Should a program reimbursement option be selected, the cost would escalate to between $150,000 and $200,000 based on providing a reimbursement of $100-150/household per winter season. This would not include the staff costs of administering this program.

Most municipalities (with the exception of Toronto) indicated that the administration of their programs required a part time coordinator. However, it may be time-consuming to set up the program in the first year therefore, the City may require more administration assistance at the beginning of the program. Based on the information from other municipal programs, the City should be able to reduce the number of staff for administration once the program is established.

Over time, the City can expect increased program take-up, and with increased growth and an aging population, the user rate could increase to 1.5%-2% of the total number of households. This would increase the estimated number to 2,700 households.
8.0 Service Delivery Models

In developing a range of service delivery models for consideration by the City of Hamilton, consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Scope of service
- Eligibility Criteria
- Program Funding and Fees
- Program Administration and Operations

Each of these considerations is discussed briefly below, based on the findings of our study, followed by a summary chart.

From this, we have identified five potential models and assessed each model against four criteria:

1. Provision of a city wide program;
2. Maximized effectiveness;
3. Affordability for both the City and the users of the program; and
4. Feasibility.

8.1 Program Considerations

Need for Service: Snow removal programs for seniors and persons with disabilities are demonstrated to contribute to the health and well being of Hamilton’s residents. They have multiple benefits, including enabling people to remain in their own homes and maintain activities of daily living. At the same time, people’s needs vary. For example, some people are clients of visiting social and health services; persons with short-term and chronic disabilities (and their assistive devices) need access to pathways and transportation to get to work; and, medical emergencies are unpredictable. Hence, any snow and ice removal policy needs to be flexible and responsive.

Scope of Service: Senior residents and disabled residents in Hamilton who are unable to clear their snow and ice would benefit from a comprehensive service that covers sidewalks, walkways, driveways and windrows.

Eligibility Criteria: Suggestions for eligibility criteria include:

- Program participants must be 60-65 years old and over, or must be disabled;
- They must own and occupy the property;
- There can be no one in the home who can clear the snow;
- The client is referred by service provider or is able to prove need in a reasonable way; and
- Priority should be given to low income disabled residents and seniors.

Eligibility established through means testing can be an intrusive process and costly to implement, and may not be appropriate in all instances e.g. for “lace curtain poverty”
persons whose only asset is their home. Other means of establishing eligibility such as physician’s certificates attesting to need are hard to get: physician offices may not be accessible, some people may not have a family doctor and there may be a fee for the doctor’s note.

**Program Funding and Fees:** Program funding can range from a fee-for-service program, funding reimbursement, to one that is fully funded by the City. Volunteers can be used to reduce the costs. The estimated number of users for an initial Hamilton program ranges from 1500 – 2000 households (between 0.7% and 1% of total households for a cost of $66,000 - $88,000 per annum – approximately $41.00 per household. If a program reimbursement program is implemented, the cost would increase to between $150,000 to 200,000. As the program becomes more established, and the population ages, it is expected that user take-up will increase to between 1.5 and 2% of total households.

There are disadvantages to programs that require clients to pay for services up front and be reimbursed at a later time. Direct client reimbursement of snow removal places the onus on the client to have money available for snow removal and requires that the person have the capacity to retain a contractor and keep receipts. This would be difficult for those who are most needy. A fixed reimbursement cost per registered client does not take into account the number of snow removals required per season. Fees for snow removal can both deter abuse but also can deter persons in need from accessing the program.

**Program Administration and Operations:** A number of service delivery models were reviewed. These range from City-operated programs, to those administered by community organizations. The program should be coordinated by a City employee but implemented by service providers and where necessary supplemented by the private sector. Administration should also not be made onerous for service providers. Furthermore, the program should be harmonized with the Public Works winter maintenance program that addresses problem areas cased by City plows, access to bus tops an City services. It should also focus on by-law enforcement in commercial areas and for able bodied residents who do not clear their snow.

### 8.2 Optional Service Delivery Models

Four discrete service delivery models have been identified and evaluated for consideration by the City. However, no one individual model may suffice and therefore a fifth program model representing a hybrid approach is also outlined. It is useful to consider both a demand management strategy (one that mitigates demand on the City-provided services, and encourages good neighbourliness); and a supply management strategy consistent with community values to ensure persons’ needs are met; and that an approach is city wide, effective and affordable.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Options are built on the following assumptions for policy/program design:

Assumptions: A snow and ice removal policy for seniors and persons with disabilities…..

- is City wide;
- responds appropriately to urban and rural needs;
- is sustainable and feasible;
- promotes equitable access;
- includes both voluntary and fee for service providers;
- standardizes client eligibility criteria across providers;
- complements existing snow removal by-laws and their enforcement;
- provides for the cleaning of windrows for identified clients; and
- is championed by Hamilton politicians and other community leaders.

Option 1: Social Marketing Campaign - Hamilton Snow Angels

The Snow Angel program in the City of Calgary is a community-based social marketing initiative designed to encourage good neighbourliness. The City of Windsor has also initiated a Snow Angels Program. Details can be found in our report on municipal practices, in Appendix A.

Developing a “Hamilton Snow Angels” program would promote neighbourliness and community pride. Hamilton residents are encouraged to volunteer to shovel the sidewalk, path to front door and access to driveway for neighbours who cannot shovel themselves or who might put themselves at risk in heavy snowfall. According to our focus group research and Statistics Canada Census information, there is significant activity in this area already. By promoting these efforts and by recognizing and rewarding participation, demand for the funded program can be mitigated.

The program could be promoted by means of a City campaign together with community service providers and agencies such as the Volunteer Centre of Hamilton, faith communities, school boards and veterans organizations and businesses. It could be linked, for example, with high school student volunteer program requirements. The Hamilton Spectator could profile snow angels and they could be recognized on an annual basis during volunteer week in April (April is the month of the volunteer) nominated by their neighbours, families etc. The City coordinates the campaign.

This Option, for example, could be coordinated with programs that provide orientation to new immigrants. Often new immigrants are unaware of property standard expectations and would not be expected to have the knowledge of how to remove snow if that is not their experience.
Option 2: City-Service Provider Partnership Model

In this option, the City would determine eligibility and coordinate access to the program through service providers that currently offer the program or could offer the program. This would ensure standardized eligibility criteria and priority clients, and a base unit cost funded by the City.

The City of Hamilton would invite expressions of interest from non-government service providers for snow removal for all Hamilton communities. A base cost allocation would be specified (x dollars per unit of service). The City refers clients to service providers, who in turn assess client requirements to estimate job size. Service providers would then prioritize clients in the first instance on the basis of agreed upon priorities among providers and the City as program sponsor and funder.

Priority considerations would be assessed based on medical emergencies, DARTS bookings, and social and health appointments (in home and external), and work and school needs.

This model builds on existing programs and effective outcomes, a preference for local non-bureaucratic program management, an opportunity to strengthen worker/volunteer engagement and coverage with committed funding. As well, the approach acknowledges that community providers “know” their clients and are in a good position to respond in flexible, timely and appropriate ways to their needs, and to allocate worker and volunteer resources accordingly. City funding is a lever to promote expanded coverage, equity of access and routine evaluation. What is unknown at this point is any risk of administrative burden for the service provider. The availability of snow removal equipment, worker liability and insurance costs would need to be thoroughly assessed prior to embarking on such a program.

Option 3: City Managed Outsourcing to Private Contractors

In this more traditional, public-private model the City would manage, coordinate and oversee the entire program.

The City of Hamilton would invite expressions of interest from the private sector for snow removal for seniors and persons with disabilities in all Hamilton communities and provide a base allocation (x dollars per unit of service). The City coordinates requests for service, matching clients with area providers. Priority considerations will be drawn from among medical emergencies, DARTS bookings, social and health appointments (in home and external), work and school.

The model provides a single point of access for service. City funding and delivery is a lever for expanded area coverage, standardized service, and standardized eligibility criteria. However, this approach would not guarantee the same relationship that the service provider has to clients. Since safety and trust are major factors for the clients in this program, this model may not be acceptable to them. It may also cost more if the private sector cannot provide the service for the estimated budget.
Option 4: Direct Client Reimbursement

The City of Hamilton would provide a direct fixed reimbursement per winter season to eligible households for snow removal. In other municipalities, households are reimbursed for $100 (frontage) or $150 (side and frontage) regardless of the number of times a snow removal service is needed for that season.

Eligibility criteria include persons over 65 years of age and persons with short term (3 months) and permanent disability. Implementation requires standard proof of eligibility, guidelines for submission of request and reimbursement of clients. Typically this program is administered in a municipal Finance Department.

This program puts the onus on the program clients to organize their own contractors for snow removal and to retain receipts and submit them to the municipality. While this type of program exists and is used in Ontario, it puts the onus on the clients and the most needy are the least likely to be able to do this level of organization.

Option 5: Hybrid Option

As noted previously, components from each of the options described above could be combined into one hybrid options. It is suggested that consideration be given to a social marketing program (snow angel program –option 1), a City-Service Provider partnership and where gaps exist with community service providers and possibly to rural areas, outsourcing to private contractors.

The table on the page opposite provides an evaluation of these five options.
# Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Table 5: Evaluation of Potential Service Delivery Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Opportunities/Risks</th>
<th>Enablers</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Feasible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Hamilton Snow Angels                     | A demand management strategy Hamilton citizens volunteer to shovel neighbours' paths | Promotes neighborliness and good citizenship  
Reduces demand for organized snow removal programs  
Risks: Uneven coverage across areas of City  
Consistency unpredictable | ✓ Hamilton citizens committed to volunteerism  
✓ Legacy of neighbourhood watch programs  
✓ Champion roles ascribed to Volunteer Centre of Hamilton, local politicians  
✓ Snow Angel volunteer recognition program  
✓ Data base to track volunteer activity over time  
✓ City coordinated and financed campaign in partnership with local media, and others | Can be implemented City wide  
Is an effective way to involve the community but will only address a part of the issue  
Affordable because it requires minimal administrative costs | Feasible  |
| 2. City coordinated snow removal program    | City coordinates access to area programs providing volunteer and/or fee for service snow shoveling to persons in need.  
City subsidizes programs on a per unit cost basis  
Hamilton’s peer community – population and maintained road lanes - (Brampton) is the benchmark for Hamilton’s pilot program for demand estimates and costs. | City funding levered expanded coverage, equity of access routine evaluation, standardized eligibility criteria and priority clients for all subsidized programs/services  
City policy and subsidies strengthen volunteer and worker engagement (the City cares)  
Risks: Admin burden for provider complying with application and accountability requirements | ✓ Existing programs' experience and outcomes, community based providers knowledge of their clients and consumer and provider preference for non City managed program  
✓ Responsiveness of services “closer to home”  
✓ Appropriate and modest application and accountability requirements of area providers - non profit or fee for service - by the City  
✓ Shared data base to track activity “units of service” against population data at the neighbourhood level  
✓ City subsidy – X$ per unit of service | Can be provided City Wide if there are service providers willing to take it on.  
Effective collaboration of City and service provider  
Affordable but would require administrative and operational costs | Feasible if there are service providers interested in collaborating with the City,  |
| 3. City managed snow removal program        | City managed snow removal program through purchase of service agreements with non profit and private providers  
The City coordinates requests for service, matching clients with area providers  
Single point of access for clients | Single point of access  
City funding & delivery is a lever for expanded coverage and standardized service eligibility criteria.  
Risks: Provider appetite to work with a City managed and delivered program  
Does not build on and leverage value added of existing and effective resources | ✓ Local politicians as champions  
✓ City maintained data base to track demand “units of service” against population data, and other snow removal program activity at the local level | Could be provided City Wide  
Effective with City as Coordinator  
Affordable if need and demand are in line with the budget  
Feasible as long as there are private sector companies interested in bidding on the project. |
## Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Key Features</th>
<th>Opportunities/Risks</th>
<th>Enablers</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Direct Client reimbursement</td>
<td>City of Hamilton provides a direct fixed reimbursement to Hamilton citizens for snow removal Program complements existing area snow removal programs.</td>
<td>Standardized eligibility requirements Easy to implement Risks: Burden on consumer to pay in advance Uptake of persons over age 65 with reasonable incomes to apply for reimbursement with no policy cap on income Proof of eligibility beyond age and disability status may be cumbersome Missed opportunity to leverage existing program capacity for sustainability through city program funding</td>
<td>✓ Application requirements: standard proof of eligibility and guidelines for submission of request and reimbursement of clients ✓ City maintained data base to track demand “units of service” against population data, and other snow removal program activity at the local level ✓ Minimal burden on clients</td>
<td>Can be offered City wide Is not effective as it requires the client to take the lead and organize the snow removal Not likely to be affordable to most eligible persons. This is one of the simplest programs to implement for the City but unlikely the least effective and most costly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Comprehensive Snow Angel Program</td>
<td>Bundles complementary initiatives for a comprehensive snow removal program: a) Hamilton snow angels (volunteers) b) A city coordinated snow removal program delivered by volunteers</td>
<td>Consistent with Hamilton’s Social Vision (2002), the option a) Promotes active citizenship and a sense of responsibility b) helps build neighbourhoods c) Leverages capacity and assets d) Models Hamilton cares attitude Engages both demand and supply management strategies Supports local area flexibility and responsiveness Risks: Sustaining a multi pronged approach</td>
<td>✓ Local politicians as champions ✓ Consumer and provider preference for flexibility ✓ Shared data base to track activity “units of service” against population data at the neighbourhood level</td>
<td>Can be provided City wide Effective because it recognizes the strengths and weakness of each model Affordable for the City and participants Feasible to implement but requires more coordination and administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

The information received from other municipal programs, from the service providers, potential users and Committees of Council were extremely useful in helping to define options for a snow and ice removal program. Discussions with those groups helped to define the problems that are being experienced and the possible solutions.
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

The identified problems include:

- Access to current programs is uneven. There is limited knowledge of the programs and where there are fees this may be restricting access;
- Sidewalk clearance alone is not sufficient. Windrows created by the road plows are a major problem. Also, walkways and driveways must be cleared;
- The people who most need this service are sometimes least able to access services;
- Sidewalks adjacent to public facilities and commercial properties are not always cleaned in a timely way if at all;
- Access to bus stops is critical;
- Ability for DARTs to access clients is critical; and
- Those who are able-bodied do not always clean their sidewalks and this creates problems of accessibility in getting to bus stops etc.

The feedback indicated that the City should consider the following:

- The elderly may not be able to organize access to services on their own so the program should put the onus on the City to communicate and administer the program;
- Not all persons who need the service are connected to a service provider;
- Consistency of personnel, safety and trust of workers by recipients of the program are major factors - people must recognize and trust whoever is working on their property;
- The City should be the one window for coordinating but should work with others to implement the program;
- Participation by service providers should not result in excessive administration;
- The program should not be restricted to sidewalk clearance;
- There needs to be coordination with other City programs such as barrier free standards development, programs such as DARTs and programs to provide training to new immigrants; and
- The Program should include a monitoring provision.

The most effective model appears to be a hybrid model that incorporate elements of Options 1, 2 and 3 and include partnering with service providers, filling gaps in service delivery using private contractors and developing a community outreach program to promote neighbours helping neighbours. This will require a multi-pronged approach that may take a period to establish. To facilitate a timely implementation it is recommended that the City phase in the program. In addition, the City needs to consider how its regular maintenance and snow removal program could be modified to address the issue of windrows and removal of snow from sidewalks adjacent to bus shelters, Darts collection locations, etc. in a timely way. The City should also consider a campaign that clearly outlines how the new by-law will be enforced and who will be targeted for enforcement.

Phased Approach

In the first year, the City could:

- Establish the City coordinator’s position;
- establish an Advisory Committee (similar to Toronto);
- carry out a social marketing program (promoting neighbours helping neighbours);
- develop the eligibility criteria;
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

- identify the service providers who are willing to work with the City and where there are gaps in the provision of the service or in the ability of service providers to provide snow removal;
- have further discussions with DARTs to define the snow removal need for their clients;
- ensure that the program is coordinated with the Barrier Free Standards Development project; and
- Carry out a pilot project to work out the administrative logistics and monitor its effectiveness and to determine the demand for the program.

Once this work is completed, the City will be in a better position to more accurately develop a detailed business plan and begin to implement the project in the following year. It is not clear how much time would be required by a Coordinator. Other municipal programs do not require a full time coordinator but in general those programs only include one approach to providing this service. The City needs to explore the best model for a one window approach and the role of a City staff coordinator. The City may want to explore Toronto’s model further.

After the first year of the implementation program, the City should conduct a customer satisfaction survey to determine what is working and what is not working and to modify the program accordingly.

Other municipalities are interested in what Hamilton is doing for snow removal for seniors and persons with disabilities and the City should continue to explore other municipal models as they become known.
Appendix A

Review of Snow and Ice Removal Services and Programs in Selected Municipalities
Review of Snow and Ice Removal Services and Programs in Selected Municipalities
Interim Report

City of Hamilton - Feasibility of Support Program for Snow and Ice Removal

Prepared for:
City of Hamilton,
Public Health & Community Services Department

Prepared by:
Lura Consulting
INTRODUCTION
The City of Hamilton, Public Health & Community Services Department retained Lura Consulting to determine the feasibility of a support program for snow and ice removal. This interim report summarizes the work carried out to date on the review of programs for snow and ice removal in other municipalities (Task 3.3 in Lura’s proposal). Staff from the Public Works, Roads Maintenance Division were also contacted to confirm the selection of municipalities and to provide input to the survey questions.

METHODOLOGY
The following is an overview of the methodology used to select municipalities and obtain information.

Selection of Municipalities
The City’s Public Works Department provided an initial list of potential municipalities in southern Ontario based on similar population size and weather conditions as Hamilton. This was supplemented through discussions with Public Health & Community Services Department to include additional municipalities in southern and northern Ontario and elsewhere in Canada that may have snow and ice removal programs based on their size and weather conditions.

Thirty-one municipalities were scanned on the internet and/or contacted directly (see Appendix A for a list of all municipalities contacted) to determine if they have a snow and ice removal program. Eight municipalities were identified as having snow and ice removal programs (see Table 1).
Table 1: Municipalities with Snow and Ice Removal Policies and Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. The City of Toronto Winter Services, Toronto, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The City of Mississauga, Snow Removal Subsidy, Mississauga, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The City of Brampton, Snow Removal Financial Assistance Program for Seniors and the Physically Challenged, Brampton, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The City of St. Catharine, Snow Removal for Seniors and Physically Challenged Persons, St. Catharine, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The Town of Richmond Hill, Windrow Removal, Richmond Hill, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The City of Windsor, Snow Angels, Windsor, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The City of Calgary, Snow Angels, Calgary, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The City of Halifax, Seniors Snow Removal Program, Halifax, Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Development and Administration of Survey
The purpose of the survey was to obtain details on the municipal snow and ice removal programs to assist Hamilton in formulating a policy. The survey questions are included in Appendix B.

RESULTS
The following tables provide an overview of the responses to the surveys and the results of the internet scan. For each municipal program a description is provided of the program’s purpose, the areas covered by the program and the eligibility criteria for those wishing to use the program. For each program, there is a website link included for additional information. Contacts for each municipal program are provided in Appendix C.

Service areas covered:
The programs were varied in the service areas that they covered. These included:
- Sidewalks only
- Driveway windrows only
- Sidewalks and driveway windrows
- Non-differentiated - Some programs are subsidized and do not differentiate between what part of the property is cleared

Some municipalities specify the depth of snow and conditions under which snow removal will be provided but most do not.

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3 Driveway windrows are the snow buildup in driveways caused by snow plowing.
Service Providers:
Service providers are generally the municipal Transportation/Roads Departments where
the municipality takes responsibility for the program. However, in some cases, the
municipality provides a subsidy to eligible participants and they are able to hire any
service provider to remove snow and ice in any or all areas needed on their property.

Number of Households Served:
The number of households served varied from 35 (in a volunteer program in the City of
Windsor) to 9700 households in the City of Toronto. Three of the smaller municipalities
have a participation rate of 958 to 1433 households but do not differentiate between
seniors and persons with disabilities.

Funding:
With the exception of volunteer match programs, all the programs that were surveyed
were fully funded by the municipalities. Costs range from $304,000 (City of Toronto) to
$17,000 (Town of Richmond Hill). The subsidized program in Brampton costs $160,000
per annum. The population of Brampton is most similar to Hamilton at 412, 503 and 2,
596 kilometers of road lanes maintained.

Eligibility Criteria
There were certain eligibility criteria that were found to be common to all the programs. These included:
- Program participant must be 65 or over;
- Program participant must have a permanent disability;
- They must own and occupy the property;
- There must be no one in the home who can clear the snow

None of the material reviewed indicates the need for the potential participant to show
that they are living on a low/assisted income.

Liability and Insurance
Respondents were unsure of the liability and insurance requirements for their programs
or the information was not readily available.
# Municipal Snow and Ice Removal Services and Programs – results of surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The City of Toronto</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Approximately 3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road kms.</td>
<td>5,365 kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Winter Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Program</td>
<td>The City of Toronto clears the snow from most sidewalks except for those where it is not mechanically possible such as the downtown core. In these instances, the City will manually clear the sidewalks in front of their homes for seniors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Covered by Program</td>
<td>Toronto’s snow and ice removal program applies to sidewalks only as the windrows (driveways) are already cleared for all residences as part of the City’s ordinary snow removal services provided by the Transportation Services Department. In order for snow removal services to occur, there must be 8 centimetres of snowfall or icy conditions. Precipitation must be substantially stopped before snow removal begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>Currently, services are funded through the Transportation Services of the Works and Emergency Services Department and through the Community Services Grants Program of the Community Partnership and Investment Program. However, in 2005, the funds from the Transportation Services Department are being transferred to the Community Services section of the Community Partnership and Investment Program in 2005 that will now be solely responsible for the program’s administration. Municipal staff carries out the snow and ice removal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households Served</td>
<td>9,700 households (This number has not been broken down into categories, i.e. seniors or persons with disabilities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources/Annual Budget</td>
<td>The City of Toronto pays the cost of snow and ice removal services and the program is fully funded by the municipality. The program is controlled by Community Neighbourhood Services and has an annual budget of $304,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Criteria</td>
<td>Participants must be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Persons over 65 and own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Persons with permanent disabilities who own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have no one in the home who can clear the snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income is not a criterion because the City finds it difficult to justify snow removal based on income and prefers to distinguish based on physical ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance/Liability</td>
<td>The respondent from the City of Toronto was unsure of the liability and insurance requirements for their program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to receive Assistance</td>
<td>The application process for sidewalk clearing varies from application forms to telephone application to verification from a physician.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td><a href="http://search.toronto.ca/cgi-bin/query?mss=search&amp;q=snow+clearing+i=TorontoWeb">http://search.toronto.ca/cgi-bin/query?mss=search&amp;q=snow+clearing+i=TorontoWeb</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The City of Mississauga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>650,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road kms.</td>
<td>2,000 kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Snow Removal Subsidy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Program</td>
<td>The City of Mississauga discontinued their previous volunteer-senior match program at the end of the 2004-2005 winter season. However, they also had a simultaneous subsidy program in place which still exists. Under the subsidy program, the City may provide a subsidy for disabled persons who currently receive assistance under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 or the Ontario Works Act, 1997 or seniors who currently receive the guaranteed income supplement under Part 2 of the Old Age Security Act (Canada). Participants are eligible to receive up to $100 per year to cover the costs of snow removal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Covered by Program</td>
<td>Because this is a subsidy, the areas covered are not differentiated as long as the snow removal falls within the maximum amount that is compensated by the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>The client may select any service provider they wish to in order to have their snow cleared. The City’s Financial Department administers the financial subsidy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households Served</td>
<td>200 applicants were granted the City’s subsidy last winter, with 376 being denied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources/Annual Budget</td>
<td>$15,231.00 was paid out for the 2004-2005 winter season. Future budgets are drafted based on these numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Criteria</td>
<td>Subsidy recipients must be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A Mississauga resident who resides as owner or legal tenant in the residential property for which the snow removal subsidy is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Able to provide receipts or other documentation verifying the claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not living in a high-rise or similar multi-unit building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The only person making application for subsidy at this municipal address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Either 65 years of age or more or in receipt of benefits under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 or assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance/Liability</td>
<td>Insurance/liability is not an issue because the snow removal services are provided by an outside third-party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Receive Assistance</td>
<td>Subsidy applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the subsidy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/snowclearingoperations">http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/snowclearingoperations</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The City of Brampton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>412,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road kms.</td>
<td>2,596 kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Snow Removal Financial Assistance Program for Seniors and the Physically Challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Program</td>
<td>The City of Brampton will subsidize eligible candidates up to $100 per household for non-corner lots and $150 for corner lots with two abutting sidewalks, both not being cleared by the City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Covered by Program</td>
<td>Because this is a subsidy, the areas covered are not differentiated as long as the snow removal services fall within the maximum amount ($100 for non-corner lots and $150 for corner lots) that is compensated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

## Service Provider
- Under the subsidy, the municipality accepts anyone as the snow removal service provider; the only stipulation is that the client receives a signature from the service provider on something which also states the date and amount.
- The subsidy is administered by the municipal staff through the Business Services Section of the Works and Transportation Department.

## Number of Households Served
- There are 1,433 households of seniors who receive this service. There are an additional 124 households of people with disabilities receiving this service.

## Funding Sources/Annual Budget
- Eligible homeowners who are then subsidized by the municipality pay for the snow and ice removal initially.
- This subsidy is fully funded by the City of Brampton from their tax base with an annual budget of $160,000.

## Eligibility Criteria
- Participants must be:
  - Be at least 65 at the date of application or permanently disabled in such a way to restrict mobility
  - Own and occupy the property on which the application is made
  - Not have claimed a credit on any other property for that year;
  - Not live in a condominium where snow removal is the responsibility of the condo corporation; and
  - Provide date of birth and/or medical proof of physical disability

## Insurance/Liability
- Insurance/liability is not an issue because the snow removal services are provided by an outside third-party.

## How to receive Assistance
- Subsidy applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the subsidy.

## Links
- [http://www.city.brampton.on.ca/press/04-004.tml](http://www.city.brampton.on.ca/press/04-004.tml)

## Municipality
- The City of St. Catharines
- Population: 134,996
- Road kms.: 1,100 kilometres
- Name of Program: Snow Removal for Seniors and Physically Challenged Persons
- Description of Program: The program consists of snow removal from sidewalks and windrows at driveway entrances.
- Area Covered by Program: This snow and ice removal program applies to the sidewalks and windrows in front of the homes of seniors and those with disabilities. The trigger for the provision of this service is that the sidewalks be ice or snow covered.
- Service Provider: This service is provided by contractors and administered by both City staff and the contractor.
- Number of Households Served: There are 1,044 households served by this program. (This number has not been broken down into categories, i.e. seniors or persons with disabilities).
- Funding Sources/Annual Budget: The municipality pays the cost of the snow and ice removal service and the program is fully funded by the municipality itself. The annual budget for these services is $35,000.
# Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility Criteria</th>
<th>Participants must:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be over 65 and own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be persons with permanent disabilities who own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Be persons with temporary disabilities who own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have no one in their home who can clear the snow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have a certified medical doctor sign the application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Reside in a single-family, semi-detached, or duplex dwelling unit located in the city’s urban area; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Agree to a waiver of claims against the city with respect to any property or other damage which might arise out of the service being provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Income is not a criterion because the City finds it difficult to justify snow removal based on income and prefers to distinguish based on physical ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insurance/Liability</th>
<th>The respondent from the City of St. Catharines was unsure of the liability and insurance requirements for their program.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to receive Assistance</th>
<th>Program applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the service.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The Town of Richmond Hill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>162,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Kms</td>
<td>564 kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Windrow Removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Program</td>
<td>The Town of Richmond Hill provides snow removal of windrows at no cost to seniors or those who are physically challenged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Covered by Program</td>
<td>This program is specifically geared towards clearing the windrows left by the snowplows from the ends of homeowner driveways. The municipality uses four centimetres as their trigger for snow clearing operations. The general rule-of-thumb is that if the roads are plowed, the windrows are cleared. While in the past there was a 48-hour response time from the end of the storm (not the time of the windrow) this has recently been changed to 30 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>Municipal staff are responsible for carrying out the clearing of snow and ice. Municipal staff are also responsible for administering the program thorough the Engineering and Public Works Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households Served</td>
<td>In the winter of 2004-2005, 958 households used this service. (This number has not been broken down into categories, i.e. seniors or persons with disabilities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources/Annual Budget</td>
<td>The Town of Richmond Hill pays all the costs associated with this windrow removal program. The program is also fully funded by the municipality with an annual budget of $17,600.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Criteria</td>
<td>Participants:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Must be either 65 or older or be physically challenged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insurance/Liability</th>
<th>Because this is a city-provided service, the providers are covered under the same insurance they are always covered by.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to receive Assistance</td>
<td>Program applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links</td>
<td><a href="http://www.town.richmond-hill.on.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=leisure_snow_information">http://www.town.richmond-hill.on.ca/subpage.asp?pageid=leisure_snow_information</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The City of Windsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Kms</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Snow Angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Program</td>
<td>This is a volunteer match snow removal program. Volunteers are matched with clients who need assistance removing snow from their property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Covered by Program</td>
<td>This program applies to the sidewalks, walkways and windrows in front of the homes of seniors and those with permanent disabilities. The services are provided whenever there is a snowfall with the specific terms being negotiated between the client and the volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td>Volunteers recruited from schools, social services agencies and faith organizations carry out the snow removal. The City’s Public Works Department is responsible for administering the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Households Served</td>
<td>In the winter of 2004-2005, 35 households were successfully served by the Snow Angels program. However, the City reports that the demand for the program far exceeds the supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources/Annual Budget</td>
<td>As the snow removal services in this program are provided by volunteers, there is no substantial budget necessary for its administration. The budget required for the coordination of the program is minimal and is covered as part of a full-time employee’s job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility Criteria</td>
<td>Participants must:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be over 65 and own and live in their own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be a person with a permanent disability and provide a certified medical doctor’s signature; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have no one in the home who can clear the snow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | • Income is not a criterion because the City finds it difficult to justify snow removal based on income and prefers to
# Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>distinguish based on physical ability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insurance/Liability</strong></td>
<td>There is no insurance coverage for the volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to receive Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Program applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.citywindsor.ca/001532.asp">http://www.citywindsor.ca/001532.asp</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Municipality
- **The City of Calgary**

## Population
- Unknown

## Road Kms
- Unknown

## Name of Program
- Snow Angels

## Description of Program
- Snow Angels is a social marketing campaign initiated by The City of Calgary, Seniors Services Division and Bylaw Services to raise awareness with the citizens of Calgary of the need to remember their neighbours when shoveling snow, especially if they’re seniors or if they have health concerns that prevent them from clearing their own walks. Snow Angels is NOT a snow clearing program for seniors. It is a way to encourage people to be good neighbours.

## Area Covered by Program
- Because this is not really a snow-clearing program, (in that there is no administration) but instead a social marketing campaign, the areas cleared of snow cannot be differentiated.

## Service Provider
- Volunteers and neighbours of those in need are the service providers. There is no administration of this program necessary as it is simply a social marketing campaign.

## Number of Households Served
- This is extremely difficult to know due to the lack of administration.

## Funding Sources/Annual Budget
- N/A

## Eligibility Criteria
- N/A

## Insurance/Liability
- N/A

## How to receive Assistance
- N/A

## Links
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>The City of Halifax</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Kms</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Program</td>
<td>Seniors Snow Removal Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of Program**

Halifax Regional Municipality is partnering with Seniors Groups and other volunteer groups in the community to provide a program to assist seniors (65+) and other persons with disabilities with snow removal this winter. The program operates as a referral service. Those who qualify and are pre-registered are referred to a volunteer, generally students recruited from schools in the community.

**Area Covered by Program**

This program applies to the sidewalks, walkways, front and back steps and access to fuel tanks of the homes of seniors and those with permanent disabilities. The volunteer waits for the client to call for the service.

**Service Provider**

Volunteers recruited from schools in the community provide these services. The City of Halifax funds the service but it is coordinated by five community centers that they have designated.

**Number of Households Served**

241 households were served by this program in the winter of 2004-2005.

**Funding Sources/Annual Budget**

In the winter of 2004-2005, the budget for this program was approximately $60,000, including the $10,000 salary of the part-time coordinator. The salary, and consequently, overall budget, is expected to be increased to $12,000.

**Eligibility Criteria**

Participants must:
- Pre-register for the program, and register before December 15th
- Provide shovel and salt
- Call the volunteer for service
- Not be a landlord

**Insurance/Liability**

The respondent from the City of Halifax was unaware of an answer.

**How to receive Assistance**

Program applicants submit a form to the City in order to receive the service.

**Links**

http://www.halifax.ca/services/seniorssnow.html
Conclusions
There appear to be very few municipal snow and ice removal programs in Ontario. The eight programs are quite varied in their approach, their budgets and the service areas that they cover.

APPENDIX
A – List of Municipalities Contacted
B – Survey Questions for Municipalities that Offer Snow Removal Programs
C – Contact Information for Municipalities Surveyed
APPENDIX A
List of Municipalities Contacted

1. City of Hamilton
2. Region of Niagara
3. City of Niagara Falls
4. City of Brampton
5. County of Simcoe
6. Region of Waterloo
7. City of Cambridge
8. City of Kitchener
9. City of Vaughan
10. City of London
11. Town of Markham
12. City of Barrie
13. City of Guelph
14. Town of Richmond Hill
15. Town of Newmarket
16. Town of Oakville
17. City of Burlington
18. City of Welland
19. City of Brantford
20. City of St. Thomas
21. Town of Milton
22. City of St. Catharines
23. City of Toronto
24. City of Mississauga
25. Region of Peel
26. City of Orillia
27. City of Windsor
28. City of Ottawa
29. City of Edmonton
30. City of Kenora
31. City of Halifax
32. City of Calgary
APPENDIX B

Survey Questions for Municipalities that Offer Snow Removal Programs

Information on the Program
1. Does the regular municipal snow clearing program include all sidewalks?
2. Does the municipality have a snow removal program for individuals who are unable to remove their snow because of physical disabilities?
3. What does the snow and ice removal service apply to?
   - Sidewalks
   - Walkways
   - Driveways
   - All of the above
   - Other
     Please specify – driveway windrows
4. Who carries out the snow and ice removal?
   - municipal staff
   - volunteers
     - Youth
     - Social Services agency
     - Faith community
     - Other (please specify ___________________)
   - Non government agencies (please specify)
   - Other
5. How many households receive this service per year (i.e. November 1 to March 31)
   - _____ Seniors
   - _____ Persons with Disabilities
6. Who pays for the snow and ice removal service?
   - Eligible home owners are subsidized by the municipality for part of the cost (specify %)
   - Municipality pays all of the cost
   - Other agency covers the costs (please specify)
7. Is there insurance coverage for the provider? If so, what advice would you provide on insurance coverage?
   - No
   - Yes
8. What are the triggers for provision of service?
   - Depth of snowfall _____cm
   - Other

Provision of the Service
9. Who administers and coordinates the snow and ice removal program in your municipality?
   - Municipal Staff
     Specify Department – Public Works
     # full time employees – 1 (not a full-time job for this employee)
   - Social Services Organization
     Specify Organization(s) _____________
Feasibility of a Snow and Ice Removal Program

Service Organization
- Specify Organization(s) ______________
- Faith Community
  - Specify _________________________
- Combination
  - Please specify ____________________

10. What are the criteria for accessing the service?
- Seniors over 65 who own and live in their own home
- Persons with permanent disabilities who own and live in their own home
- Persons with temporary disabilities who own and live in their own home
- Have no one in the home who can provide the service
- Have a certified medical doctor sign the application
- Low income
  - Specify what is considered low income:
    ___________________________________________________________
- Other
  - Please specify __________________________________________

Funding Sources
11. Are these services:
- Fully funded by the municipality
- Funded by non municipal organizations
- Funded by other levels of government (Specify funding source: ____________)
- Volunteer
- Other
- Please specify __________________

12. If the service is funded, what is the annual budget for this service (per lane km)?

13. If the service is volunteer, how are volunteers recruited?
APPENDIX C

Contact Information for Municipalities Surveyed

City of Toronto
Name: Rob Burlie
Position: Manager of Road Operations, Scarborough District
Department: Transportation Services Division
Phone: 416-396-4823
Email: rburlie@toronto.ca

City of Mississauga
Name: Sheila Wilson
Position: Manager of Program Development
Department: Recreation and Parks
Phone: 905-896-5357
Email: Sheila.Wilson@mississauga.ca

City of Brampton
Name: Nancy Brown
Position: Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner of Works and Transportation
Department: Works and Transportation
Phone: 905-874-2507
Email: nancy.brown@brampton.ca

City of St. Catharines
Name: Anne Crawford
Position: Office Manager
Department: Transportation and Environmental Services
Phone: 905-688-5601 ext 2146
Email: acrawford@stcatharines.ca

City of Richmond Hill
Name: John Armstrong
Position: Manager of Roads, Water and Wastewater
Department: Engineering and Public Works, Operations and Main Division
Phone: 905-884-8013, ext. 4409
Email: jarmstrong@richmondhill.ca
City of Windsor
Name: Pete Matheson
Position: Manager in charge of Snow Removal
Department: Public Works
Phone: 519-255-6560, ext. 255
Email: psmatheson@city.windsor.on.ca

City of Calgary
Name: Ed Dantoni
Position: Unknown
Department: Roads Maintenance
Phone: 1-403-268-2489
Email: Unknown

City of Halifax
Name: Deborah Dostal
Position: Executive Director of Spencer House
Phone: 1-902-421-6131
Email: ddostal@spencerhouse.ca
Appendix B

Focus Group Report
City of Hamilton

Draft
Consolidated Focus Group Meeting Report
Re: Hamilton Snow Clearing Policy

August 2005
This meeting summary was prepared by Lura Consulting. It presents the key discussion points and outcomes from the August 15, 16, 18, 19 and 22, 2005 Snow Removal Policy focus group sessions hosted by The City of Hamilton. If you have any questions or comments regarding the report, please contact:

John Smith
Senior Project Director
Lura Consulting
Telephone: 905 527 0754
Email: smithj@lura.ca
Background and Context

The City of Hamilton is in the process of examining the feasibility to establish a snow clearing policy to support low-income residents and those with activity limitations. In August 2005, the initiative was commenced and it is now being considered by the Social and Public Health Committee of Council.

The City completed 5 focus group sessions to consult service agencies and potential users to assess the feasibility of a snow and ice removal program and identify issues and important program parameters.

The objectives of the focus group meetings were to obtain input from stakeholders including service providers and service recipients to develop:

- A reliable and supportable estimate of the need for a snow removal program; and
- Criteria to establish a snow clearing policy to support residents with activity limitations.

Participant Feedback

This section provides an overview of the feedback received from participants at both the community service agency and potential user meetings. Section 2.1 is a summary of responses from the community service agency focus group and section 2.2 provides a summary of responses from the 4 focus group sessions for potential users.

Prior to each focus group discussion, participants were asked to consider the following principles when discussing a future City policy:

- Persons eligible for any program developed by the City could be seniors, individuals with disabilities who are physically unable to remove snow and ice, and those who cannot afford to pay market rate from private service providers;
- The program benefits must be maximized, while minimizing program cost; and,
- Any program would be implemented on a City-wide basis.

2.1 Summary of Community Service Provider Focus Session

Focus Group Question #1. Who are your clients?

The majority of focus group participants stated that their clients are senior people age 50 and up. Two of the community service provider participants have clients other than seniors. Their clients include disables persons age 16 and up and geriatric persons.
Focus Group Question #2. What residents are not taking advantages of existing snow removal services?

The majority of participants identified lack of awareness as the main reason potential users do not take advantage of current snow removal services. Participants also concurred that potential users may not have the capacity to contact service providers. Other responses raised by participants include:

- Some seniors are too proud to ask for help;
- Some people don’t want to be classified as seniors – hard to contact them;
- Cost is a factor for some individuals because they are on a fixed income;
- Senior’s want to be independent and are reluctant to ask for assistance; and
- Some people have neighbours/family to shovel the snow.

Focus Question #3. What do you think are the greatest challenges for a snow removal program?

Participants listed administration, coordination of services, establishing eligibility criteria and managing the issue of liability as the most significant challenges regarding the operation of a snow removal program. Furthermore, not for profit groups have difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Focus Question #4. What are some of the risks associated with a snow removal policy?

In no order of importance, participants associated the following risks with a City Snow Removal program:

- Liability
- damage to property
- injury to service providers volunteers
- some clients won’t feel safe having a stranger come to their home
- dependability of volunteers
- screening of volunteers
- WSIB

Focus Question #5. Based on your experience, what eligibility criteria should be included in a policy?

When asked what criteria should be used to identify eligible candidates for inclusion in a City snow removal program, participants indicated that candidates should be seniors over 60 years of age. They should be living in their own home and unable to remove snow from their property due to physical limitations documented by a doctor or service provider.
Focus Question #6: List 3 things you would like to see adopted in a city wide policy?

The three elements that the community agencies were most likely to want included in a city wide snow removal policy was the development of a communications strategy to ensure reach to the target audience; a nominal service fees for users that can afford to pay and no fees for those who cannot; and a prioritization of clients so that users with medical conditions would be receive priority service.

The following items were also raised by focus group participants:

- That a policy provide universal accessibility and be administrated in such a manner as to be free of stigma e.g. people should not feel ashamed to use the service;
- The policy should give careful consideration to eligibility criteria; and
- The City should create a means to identify users in a community such as they do for block parents by placing a block parent sign in the window.

Focus Question #7: Is a fee for service reasonable? If so under what circumstances?

Participants suggested that there be a two tier or flexible fee applied to user of the service with the exception of those people on a pension or welfare and who otherwise cannot afford to pay for the service. One participant stated that a flexible or suggested fee is important because seniors have pride and want to contribute what they can.

Focus Question #8: If a snow removal program is implemented, who should deliver the program?

The majority of participants agreed that a snow removal program should be delivered through a City/community service provider partnership. Many participants stated that it would be too costly for the City to operate the program using the City’s workforce. They felt the best option for program delivery would be for the City to administrate the program and the community agencies to provide the service. Participants felt their organizations are better positioned to provide the service to the community than the City workforce but that administration is a burden on their organizations which the City could effectively provide.

One participant stated the City should privatize the service and another said the City should only provide funding to not for profit organizations and let the community agencies deliver the service. Also, when discussing the issue of service delivery, participants raised the issue of gathering confidential information about users and questioned how the City would deal with this issue?
2.2 Summary of Potential Users Focus Sessions

Focus Group Question #1: How do you currently handle snow removal?

When asked how they handle snow removal from their properties, participants were most likely to remove the snow themselves, rely on a neighbour or family member, contact a volunteer group such as SOS in Stoney Creek, and pay a neighbourhood youth or private service.

Additional issues that were raised included:

- Risks involved regarding the health of seniors who shovel their own snow;
- Ice is a major concern on both public and private property;
- The City does not properly clear snow from sidewalk ramps, bus shelters, public access to City buildings;
- Some seniors may be able to remove snow from their property under most conditions except when a heavy snowfall occurs or windrows become heavy or icy;
- Service providers such as meals on wheels and Darts cannot access a resident’s home if the egress to the users front door is not cleared of snow;
- Seniors and disables people can become trapped in their house after a snowfall if their property or neighbouring sidewalks are not cleared; and
- The City should enlist high school students to clear snow as part of the mandated 40 hours of community service each student must complete.

Focus Group Question #2: Do you have trouble finding assistance for snow removal?

Some participants indicated that it was difficult to find someone to remove snow from their property or to find someone or a service that is reliable. Also, many private service providers will only clear driveways or sidewalks and do not clear the complete egress from the house to the sidewalk or they may clear snow but not ice.

Many people cannot afford to hire a service and therefore must rely on neighbours or family. Users who rely on neighbours sometimes have to wait a day or more to have their snow cleared because neighbours work long hours or too busy to clear the snow immediately.

Participants also stated that the community service programs are not advertised effectively and many potential users are not aware of existing snow removal services or cannot locate contact information.
Focus Group Question #3: If the City developed a snow clearing policy/program, what advice would you offer?

Participants provided a range of advice that included eligibility criteria, promotion and operational parameters. The following is a list of advice from the participants:

- Policy criteria should be geared to people that need the service but not necessarily everyone with disabilities e.g. people living with able bodied family members should not receive the service;
- Any snow clearing program must remove snow from the house to the sidewalk;
- City needs to enforce the snow removal by-law in conjunction with providing a snow clearing policy. A snow clearing policy will have limited success if sidewalks and ramps adjacent to potential user properties are not cleared;
- Any program developed by the City must be accompanied by a comprehensive communications strategy including types of communications and media applicable to the target audience;
- The program should be limited to clearing snow from the sidewalk, a path to the front door and the driveway width of one car; and
- The program should be delivered at no cost to the users.

Focus Question #4: In your opinion, who should be eligible to participate in a City snow removal program?

The response from participants to this question was unanimous to include low income seniors and disabled persons providing that no able bodied individuals reside in the same household. When asked how the City would identify potential users, participants suggested that qualifying residents could be referred by community agencies such as Darts or SOS, doctors and caregivers.

Individual comments from participants included:
- You should receive assistance from the snow removal program if you are on social security;
- If people are low-income but able-bodied they should shovel their own snow but the City could possibly provide shovels free of charge;
- If applying on grounds of disability, the applicant should have proof (doctors certificate, physiotherapy, medical provider, etc.);
- Seniors should not shovel their own snow. They overestimate their physical abilities and risk heart attack;
- Eligible persons should be those receiving seniors cheques, ODSP (disability benefits, OW) – candidates/have to apply;
- How will the City define disabled;
- City should provide a standard and easy form for potential users to complete;
- Eligible candidates should include families that have disabled children.

Focus Question #5: Should there be a user fee for this service?

The majority of participants believe no user fee should be attached to the program if provided only for people with low income. They felt that the service benefits the community the same as other social services. If the program were to apply to all seniors then some participants argued for a fee. They felt that users who could afford to pay should do so. Participants suggested that many seniors would want to contribute to the
program and therefore proposed the City implement a nominal or suggested fee that would allow people to pay what they could afford.

Additional comments from participants included the following:

- The program should be paid for through municipal taxes;
- Whether or not to charge a fee would depend on the criteria used for eligibility;
- A fee should be whatever people deem reasonable and should be based on operating cost;
- User should be asked to pay what you can afford;
- Criteria must ensure that users are inclusive and don’t deprive those who need the service;
- The City through community agencies, could fund raise to cover program operating costs;

Focus Group Question #6: If a program is implemented, should it be operated by the City or in partnership with community service providers?

Participants unanimously agreed that the City should operate a snow removal program in partnership with community service providers. Cost of the program was the main reason participants in support of a partnership. They felt that community agencies could mobilize inexpensive or free labour and manage snow clearing more effectively than the City could using its own staff. The number of community service agencies with the ability to provide snow clearing and the reliability of using volunteers were two main concerns raised by participants regarding the option of partnering with community service providers.

Additional comments raised by participants included:

- As part of a snow removal program the City should develop a promotional campaign to raise awareness of people in need of snow removal and advocate neighbours helping neighbours;
- Encourage High School students to volunteer and receive credit as part of their mandatory 40 hours of community service;
- Liability is an obstacle to community service agencies who provide snow clearing and more agencies might become involved if they could operate under a City administered program;
- The City should investigate employing human resources form the Ontario Works program;
- Regardless of who operates the program, to be successful the program must have a good communications strategy to ensure potential users are aware of and have access to the program.
- The program would be too costly if the City used its own workforce or the private sector to provide the service;
- Using community service providers to clear snow may work in urban areas but not necessarily in rural areas. Long driveways and deep snow drifts associated with rural areas may require larger snow removal equipment not available to community organizations.
Concluding Remarks

The meetings concluded with a few comments from the participants:

- Mixed environmentally friendly products (rather than solely salt or sand) should be used on sidewalks and roads as part of the program
- Assess existing snow removal by-law, seems they waste a lot of time, effort when not needed, but cry when they do need it
- It is imperative that the program provide accessibility in and out of home as well as neighbouring sidewalks otherwise service providers cannot access clients because of liability issues and potential users cannot access municipal services.