

End-of-driveway plowing could cost 1 ? 2% tax hike

By Brock Weir

Windrows. They're a dark reality of the Canadian winter.

You can spend a good hour shovelling out your driveway to go to work in the morning, only to have the snow plow come down your street and block you in with a fresh mound to clear.

But, how much is it worth to you to make this a thing of the past?

You might just have to consider that.

This is a question that was on the lips of local lawmakers last week as Aurorans continued to dig out from this month's unusual ice storm.

Floated by Councillor John Abel on social media, and once again around the Council table last week by Councillor Harold Kim, there could be a solution to this age-old problem, but it comes with a hefty price tag.

Yesterday, we had 262 calls to Access Aurora regarding the storm over the last couple of days and a large portion of that was about windrows, said Councillor Kim at last Tuesday's General Committee meeting. There was a lot of discussion amongst residents and Council alike on increasing the service levels to have windrow removal next winter.

Given that Aurora's 2018 Capital Budget is already a done deal, Councillor Kim questioned how reviewing winter service levels could be back on the table.

This would be a significant change in service level, cautioned Aurora CAO Doug Nadorozny. It has been estimated it is probably between 1 and 2 per cent levy increase just to provide that service and that is a very rough number, it could even be more. It depends on the rigour you would want to bring to this. It is one thing to say you will eventually get to everybody's driveway to clean their windrow out. It is another thing to say you will get there within one hour of the plow going by. You would have a very different attack plan and strategy.

The expense could be very significantly different. To consider that for the winter of 2018 to 2019, Council would have to consider a new service level recommendation going forward and to fund it in 2018 since the budget has been done, they would have to draw on another funding source to provide that funding for 2018 with the assumption that would be in the base budget for 2019.

Winter maintenance service levels are a continual source of discussion at Council, from the timing and frequency of the plows, to the amount of snow that has to accumulate on roads before the snow removal team is ultimately deployed.

Should Council decide to up the ante and provide windrow removal in time for the snowfalls this fall and early winter, funding would come out of reserves and any further service January and beyond would be reflected on tax bills.

A notice of motion, however, would need to be put on the table by a Council member before this is fully discussed and costed out, added Mr. Nadorozny.