

INSIDE AURORA: Windrow Woes

By Scott Johnston

It may seem an unlikely subject as the temperatures in Town finally hover around 20 degrees, but windrows, the piles of snow left by plows, have been in the news lately.

Apparently, after the big mid-April ice/snow storm people were justifiably annoyed at the heavy precipitation heaped at the ends of their driveways. Adding insult to injury, the temperatures immediately froze them into impenetrable ice walls that seemed to rival the one that features so prominently in Game of Thrones.

The Town says that it can consider adding windrow clearing to the road plowing contract for next year. This would involve a second truck coming by, hopefully within an hour or two, to dig out the end of your driveway after the first plow had sealed it with snow.

It's doable, but at a cost, potentially a 2% tax increase, maybe more.

So basically, we'd be paying to have the snow cleared from the streets and dumped at the ends of our driveways, then paying even more to have it removed.

Am I the only one who sees some sort of twisted irony in this?

I don't think I'm harkening back too far, but I remember a time in Aurora when the plows did not leave windrows at the ends of our driveways. I believe the trucks had some sort of double blade. The main blade pushed the snow up onto the curb as usual, but when the vehicle passed a driveway, a second blade was lowered that prevented the snow from being deposited there. Once past the driveway, the second blade was lifted and snow was piled up at the side of the road as always.

It was simple. It was effective. And needless to say, it was pretty handy for homeowners.

I'm not sure why this service was discontinued. Perhaps a new ?double blade-less? vendor got the next snow clearing contract. But it got me thinking; this is a municipality where Council, no matter who's sitting on it, regularly congratulates itself for limiting annual tax increases to single digit percentages.

If a service worth 2% or more of taxes was discontinued, we should have gotten some sort of tax rebate.

Yeah, I don't remember that, either, especially since a credit like that would have had the Council of the time patting itself on the back with such enthusiasm that it would have subsequently necessitated chiropractic adjustments.

I may be wrong. Perhaps we did get a credit, and it was just overshadowed by other tax increases at the time. Or maybe the vehicles equipped with these double blades just happened to do my neighbourhood, and this was not a universal service in Town, although that seems unlikely.

In either case, this did happen at one point here in Aurora.

I'm no expert on road maintenance, but I'm curious why the Town is considering an obviously more expensive plan of having an additional fleet of vehicles following the snowplows and individually clearing everyone's windrows.

Maybe, like the skills used to make Roman cement or Stradivari violins, the double blade plow technology has already been lost to time. Or perhaps reintroducing it, compared to using a double fleet of snow clearing vehicles, would require a 20% tax increase.

With the Town's budget set for 2018, and the snow clearing weather behind us for the next several months, I guess we won't have to worry about all this until next year.

Unless, of course, winter comes early.

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