

Plowed snow will be dumped at Lambert Willson Park

By Brock Weir

With three snowfalls in May alone, Aurorans might already be bracing for winter before summer even arrives ? but as rains flooded Wellington Street West on Tuesday, Councillors' minds were focused firmly on future snow.

Designs for a \$950,000 ?snow dump? are expected to make a significant leap forward this week as Council formally approves a new snow storage facility near Lambert Willson Park.

The snow facility has been a long-planned project to coincide with Aurora's new, extensive Joint Operations Centre on Industrial Parkway North. The project received tentative approval at the Committee Level last week. It was first planned in 2007 and has received numerous tweaks and cost adjustments along the way.

While some Councillors have expressed concern of salt and other contaminants getting into Tannery Creek and the local wellhead areas coming from the snowmelt on the site, Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure reported the Lambert Willson Site, behind the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, is the best site from an environmental standpoint.

?Site selection for a snow storage site was based on an assessment of a number of factors, including operational and environmental considerations,? said Mr. Simanovskis in his report. ?The environmental assessment and detailed design work was submitted to the Ministry of the Environment upon completion and a Certificate of Approval was issued for the project.

?This approved status is desirable as environmental approval requirements continue to change and increased considerations, such as source water protection, add further complexity to the approval and operational requirements. Considering the limited number of available sites and the suitability and approval status of the proposed site, it is both economically and operationally beneficial to continue considering the Lambert Willson site for the proposed snow storage facility.?

The last time Council considered the snow dump, they tasked staff with determining whether it would be beneficial both practically and cost-effectively to combine its construction with the Joint Operations Centre. Considering they will now be adjacent to each other, they brought the plans forward at the same time.

By the time it returned to the table last week, Councillors were largely in favour of the plans, although Councillor Evelyn Buck, previously a highly vocal critic of the plan, was not at the meeting, but environmental effects were still at issue.

?We have Ministry of the Environment approval to construct the snow storage facility and that approval was in place for a period of five years up until 2017,? Mr. Simanovskis told Councillors. ?It could be as simple as a re-application if we don't build it or we choose to build it at a later date. However, with the changing environment and the changing protection, things may change where there may be more stringent considerations.

?Right now that snow dump is within the wellhead protection area and there are a number of Regional wells. There could be a change in the future when the Region or the Province may say it is not an appropriate land use within those wellhead protection areas. It is a small risk and I just want you to make sure that risk is known.?

The issue of salt making it into the water and watercourses, he said, were already part of the analysis made during the environmental assessment process two years ago. Consultants noted, he said, that salt is negligible.

?It is actually significantly lower than what would be expected because you're moving snow which hasn't been effected by the salt.?

If Council approves building the snow dump in conjunction with the Joint Operations Centre, there will be a number of benefits to the Town, Mr. Simanovskis added. These include efficiencies in trucks and workers being able to use the facilities in tandem as well

as a chance to make some money. The Region of York, he said, would be interested in having access to the site.

?Revenue potential is based on limited surplus storage volume and regional requirements but can be further explored once a facility is in place,? he said.