

Memorandum

Meeting: General Committee Meeting

Date: September 9, 2025

To: Members of Council

From: Katie Sawyers, Age-Friendly Coordinator, Community Services

Subject: Outdoor Maintenance Assistance Program Update

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide Members of Council with an update on the Outdoor Maintenance Assistance Program (OMAP).

BACKGROUND

The Outdoor Maintenance Assistance Program (OMAP) was launched in 2025 as an evolution of the Snow Removal Financial Assistance Program, originally introduced in Fall 2022. Currently the program supports eligible older adults 65+ receiving Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), 75+ regardless of income, and persons with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), in maintaining safe and accessible outdoor spaces by offering financial support in the form of an annual grant towards services such as snow removal, lawn care, leaf raking, and basic garden upkeep.

Program Milestones and History:

- September to December 2022: Snow Removal Financial Assistance Program launched; the program funded 93 applications at \$350 per application totaling \$32,550 in grant funds distributed.
- January to March 2023: 59 applications at \$350 per application were funded totaling \$20,650 in grant funds distributed.
- 2023: Council approved the grant amount to increase from \$350 to \$500 per applicant, per year starting October 2023. From October to November 2023 the program funded 66 applications at \$500 per application, totaling \$33,000 in grant funds distributed.
- November 2023: Council approved a motion to expand program eligibility to include all residents aged 75+ with proof of age and residence. Starting December 2023 with extended eligibility, the program funded 104 applications at \$500 per application totaling \$52,000.
- July 9, 2024: Council approved the transition and review of the program to a year-round maintenance support fund and authorized updates to allow applications to be received from

January to December in place of October – December and January - March following winter the winter season.

- January to March 2024 the program funded 93 applications at \$500 per application totaling \$46,500.
- In Fall 2024, the program was paused to enable a review and streamline service delivery to support the yearly offering (January to December). During this period, staff integrated OMAP with the Older Adult (65+) and Persons with Disabilities Tax Subsidy Program, which has improved administrative efficiency and client service.

As part of the program review, staff identified and implemented improvements across five key areas to enhance program delivery and client service:

- **Simplified Application Process:** Paper and online application forms for both OMAP and the Older Adult (65+) and Persons with a Disability Tax Subsidy Program were combined and simplified to reduce duplication of information and minimize the administrative burden on applicants.
- **Enhanced Customer Service:** Service Caledon was designated as the primary point of contact for all inquiries and application processing, resulting in more consistent communication and improved response times.
- **System Optimization:** Low-cost internal system enhancements were introduced to streamline processing workflows, reduce delays, and lessen the workload for staff.
- **Process Monitoring:** Staff initiated tracking of internal processing times for both simple and complex applications to identify service bottlenecks and inform future improvements.
- **Enhanced program communication strategies** to support greater utilization and community impact.

DISCUSSION

Since its launch in January 2025, the Outdoor Maintenance Assistance Program (OMAP) has received an overwhelming response from the community. A combination of strong resident interest and an exceptionally snowy winter resulted in the program reaching its application funding cap of 300 residents (\$150,000) within the first two months of operation.

The high volume of applications placed significant pressure on staff capacity, as substantial time was required for intake, eligibility verification, coordination with service providers, and responding to resident inquiries. To help manage expectations, applicants were advised of a 30-day processing timeline and were encouraged to follow up only after that period.

In response to the influx of applications Council approved a motion during the February 25, 2025, Town Council meeting that additional financial resources of \$50,000 be allocated from Tax Funded Operating Contingency Reserve to the Outdoor Maintenance Assistance Program up to March 21, 2025 and staff be directed to review the program. This brought the total 2025 budget to \$200,000, supporting a total of 400 applicants.

As of the date of this memorandum, 425 residents have accessed the 2025 program. The increased 2025 program budget of \$200,000 has been fully expended. The program remains open currently, pending Council direction regarding either the allocation of additional funding or formal closure of the program.

Staff anticipate that an additional 60 residents (estimated at approximately 15 per month) may seek to access the program prior to the end of 2025. It is important to note that, with the program now accommodating fall clean-up, and in the event the Town experiences increased weather activity or significant snow events, this number could rise substantially. This projected demand would place additional pressure on an already exhausted budget.

KEY FINDINGS TO DATE

- Ongoing Demand: Demand has exceeded the initial funding allocation and the increased 2025 budget of \$200,000 has been fully expended in June of 2025.
- Primary Demographic: The largest group of applicants are residents aged 75 and older, regardless of income.
- Eligibility Feedback: Many residents have expressed interest in lowering the age of eligibility to 65+, regardless of income. This would result in a significant increase in applicants and would require an increase in funding.
- Geographic Concentration: Most applicants are from Bolton, based on postal code data, followed by rural community hamlets such as Caledon East and Caledon Village.
- Application Format: Submissions are evenly split between online and paper formats.
- Application Processing Time:
 - Non-complex applications: estimated 9 hours per application
 - Complex applications (e.g., missing, or incorrect information): estimated 11 hours per application.

Staff will continue monitoring and reviewing the program to maintain service quality and ensure resource alignment with operational requirements.

ATTACHMENTS

None.