

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE NOVEMBER 18, 2002

HIGHWAY 400 RAMP CLEAN-UP

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, in consultation with the Commissioner of Community Services, recommends that:

1. Council request the Provincial Minister of Transportation to immediately take steps to include the following provisions in the Ministry of Transportation's Area Maintenance Contract(s):
 - A quarterly clean-up of all garbage, litter, and debris within their jurisdiction at all Highway 400 on/off ramps located within the City of Vaughan's boundaries; and,
 - A monthly cutting of all vegetation growing within their jurisdiction at all Highway 400 on/off ramps areas located within the City of Vaughan's boundaries, between the months of May and October inclusive.
2. That staff of the Public Works and Parks Departments jointly investigate some of the various anti-littering programs in place, or proposed, across the GTA, and provide a further report to Council outlining options for implementing an anti-littering campaign for the City of Vaughan, and the estimated costs of such a program.

Purpose

To update Council with respect to the cleaning of the Highway 400 interchange ramps within the City of Vaughan's boundaries, and petition the Province to upgrade their current standards for maintenance of the Highway 400 ramp areas.

Background - Analysis and Options

At a recent Committee meeting, Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio brought forward a concern with respect to the cleanliness of the Highway 400 on/off ramps that fall within the City of Vaughan's boundaries. In addition to the concerns regarding litter and garbage at these locations, there was the issue of tall grass and weeds growing at these locations. As a result, staff were directed to take action with respect to this matter.

On September 9, 2002, staff met with representatives from the Ministry of Transportation and York Region, to discuss the ongoing litter and debris problems at the Highway 400 on/off ramps.

MTO's Role

The Highway 400 on/off ramps are under the jurisdiction of the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Transportation. Over the past number of years, the Ministry has taken to contracting out all maintenance activities on a number of its highways. The MTO Area Maintenance Contract (AMC) for this district defines debris control as follows:

"Debris Control is the physical removal from the right-of-way and the subsequent disposal of objectionable items such as, but not limited to, roadside rubbish, dead animals, unlawful signs, fallen trees, loose brush and fallen rocks on the driving surface and shoulders."

The contract goes on further to state that:

“All debris within the right-of-way which is greater than 0.15 cubic metres or may result in a health hazard shall be removed and disposed of within 24 hours.

Based on the size limitations, items such as coffee cups, pop tins, cigarette packages and butts, etc., are not considered debris under the contract.

As for the weeds and long grass, the AMC only requires the contractor to cut vegetation when it interferes with sight visibility, as defined in a table included with the contract. There is no provision in the contract for performing vegetation cutting at the ramps for aesthetic reasons.

As the MTO is bound by their AMC's, they were unable to provide much in the way of immediate assistance in resolving the litter and weed complaints.

City and York Region Combined Clean-up Effort

As was indicated earlier, Council was concerned with the image of the City that visitors and residents were getting as a result of the debris and weeds growing at these ramps, and as such, asked City staff to take action. As the on/off ramps from Highway 400 lead to Regional roads, staff also contacted the Region and asked that their staff to become involved in a combined clean-up effort.

The debris clean-up and weed cutting at the Highway 400 on/off ramps took almost two weeks to do, and the work was completed on October 18, 2002. The labour and equipment cost for City staff has been estimated at \$10,850, and the Region has estimated it's contribution for labour and equipment was approximately \$3,465. An outside traffic control contractor was also hired, as the City does not have the necessary traffic control equipment for this work. The cost for the traffic control was approximately \$3,000. The cost for waste disposal has not been determined. In total, over \$17,000 of local and Regional tax dollars was spent on the clean-up of property that is the responsibility of, and is under the jurisdiction of, the Province of Ontario.

Based on the above, it is appropriate to petition the Provincial Minister of Transportation to amend the MTO's current Area Maintenance Contract(s) and make provisions for:

- A quarterly clean-up of all garbage, litter, and debris within their jurisdiction at all Highway 400 on/off ramps within the City of Vaughan's boundaries; and,
- A monthly cutting of all vegetation growing within their jurisdiction at all Highway 400 on/off ramp areas within the City of Vaughan's boundaries, between the months of May and October inclusive.

Anti-Littering Campaign

Despite a by-law prohibiting such activity, littering and illegal dumping appears to be on the rise. This is a problem not only faced by Vaughan Council. The City of Toronto, as well as the City of Mississauga are very concerned about the amount of debris that is being dropped in their public spaces as well as on roadways. Both are investigating strong anti-littering campaigns in an attempt to reduce or eliminate this problem, and the associated costs involved. In some areas of Nova Scotia, Tim Horton's is sponsoring an anti-littering program.

As littering is a growing problem, it is recommended that staff of the Public Works and Parks Departments jointly investigate some of the various anti-littering programs that are in place, or proposed, across the GTA, and provide a further report to Council outlining options and costs involved with implementing an anti-littering campaign for the City of Vaughan.

Conclusion

The current MTO's Area Maintenance Contract(s) does not provide for the routine cutting of vegetation for aesthetic reasons, nor does it adequately address the litter problems associated with the Highway 400 on/off ramps located within the City of Vaughan. Therefore, it is appropriate for Council to request the Provincial Minister of Transportation to take immediate action to amend their Area Maintenance Contract(s) with respect to these issues, to ensure that provisions are made for the quarterly clean-up of all garbage, litter, and debris from the Highway 400 on/off ramps, and, from the months of May to October inclusive, provide for a monthly cutting of all vegetation within the ramp areas.

As both Public Works and Parks staff are involved with litter clean up throughout the City, it is appropriate for staff to jointly investigate other municipalities' anti-littering campaigns and provide a further report to Council on implementing an anti-littering campaign for the City of Vaughan.

Attachments

N/A

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Respectfully submitted,

Bill Robinson, P. Eng.
Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works

Brian T. Anthony
Director of Public Works