

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - SEPTEMBER 20, 2004

ROAD SALT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works recommends:

1. That in accordance with Environment Canada's Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts, the City advise Environment Canada of its intention to develop and implement a Salt Management Plan;
2. That such notification be before October 4, 2004; and;
3. That sufficient funds be included for consideration in the 2005 Capital Budget process to hire a consultant to assist staff in the preparation of the City's Salt Management Plan, in accordance with the Code of Practice.

Purpose

To comply with Environment Canada's Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts, and to advise Council of the associated costs with preparing the master plan.

Background - Analysis and Options

Road Salts are used in Canada as de-icing and anti-icing chemicals for winter road maintenance, with some use as summer dust suppressants.

A comprehensive five-year scientific assessment by Environment Canada determined that in sufficient concentrations, road salts pose a risk to plants, animals and the aquatic environment. A Risk Management Strategy for Road Salts was subsequently developed to outline the measures that Environment Canada proposes in order to manage the risks associated with road salts.

Under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, the Government of Canada published a Code of Practice for the Environmental Management of Road Salts on April 3, 2004. The Code is designed to help municipalities and other road authorities better manage their use of road salts in a way that reduces harm they cause to the environment while maintaining road safety.

The Code of Practice was developed in consultation with a Multi-stakeholder Working Group for Road Salts. It recommends that road authorities prepare salt management plans that identify actions they will take to improve their practices in salt storage, general use on roads and snow disposal. The criteria for the plan is set at municipalities using over 500 tonnes of road salts per year, and organizations that have vulnerable areas in their territory that could potentially be impacted by road salts. The Code does not apply to private or institutional or domestic uses.

The Code asks municipalities to advise Environment Canada, before October 4, 2004, of their intentions to prepare a Salt Management Plan. The Code also sets in place various reporting timelines and record keeping requirements that the City would need to follow as part of the plan.

The Government of Canada is not banning the use of road salts or proposing any measures that would compromise or reduce road safety. Instead, they are looking to municipalities to develop comprehensive Salt Management Plans to address the major areas of consideration, those being related to storage, snow disposal, roadway application, and identifying areas that are environmentally vulnerable to road salts.

The City has taken great steps to manage road salts in an environmentally sound manner through such things as: providing additional covered salt storage facilities, requiring computerized spreading devices in all of the contracted and City owned road salting equipment, calibrating the road salting spreading equipment to ensure consistent rates of application, and testing alternative de-icing chemicals. However, there is more to preparing the plan than resting on past accomplishments. The plan must not only look at what is taking place today, but plan for the future to ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are protected without compromising road safety. It also looks at ways to further reduce salt usage through such things as Road Weather Information Systems (RWIS), anti-icing applications (pro-active applications of materials), new equipment, education for employees involved in winter road maintenance activities, and general public awareness concerning road salts.

In order to comply with the Code, it is recommended that a consultant be retained in 2005 to assist staff in completing the work, especially concerning the environmentally sensitive areas. The plan would then be submitted to Council for approval, and action. Based on information from other municipalities and a number of consulting firms involved in this line of work, prices to prepare a Salt Management Plan are approximately \$30,000-35,000.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council; however, the necessary resources are not available in the 2004 budget year to hire a consultant. Therefore, staff will submit a request for funding as part of the 2005 Capital Budget process.

Conclusion

The City, being a significant user of road salts (approx. 30,000 tonnes annually), needs to advise Environment Canada of its intentions with respect to a Salt Management Plan. Given Vaughan's dedication to the environment through past practices, and the commitment of Council to the environment, as stated in the Vaughan Vision, it is recommended that by October 4, 2004, the City advise Environment Canada of its intentions to prepare a Salt Management Plan, and that sufficient funds be requested through the 2005 budget process to hire a consultant to provide assistance in preparing the plan.

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