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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON AUGUST 13, 2019
FROM:	SCOTT STAFFORD MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION
SUBJECT:	INFORMATION REPORT PARKS WINTER GARBAGE COLLECTION

RECOMMENDATION

That on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks and Recreation, the Parks Winter Garbage Collection program information and options described herein **BE RECEIVED** for information in response to a request to resume year round garbage collection in City parks.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

None

BACKGROUND

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a response to the following Resolution from the June 17, 2019 Community & Protective Services meeting:

That Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back at the August 13, 2019 meeting of the Community and Protective Services Committee with the costing related to resuming year round garbage collection in City parks; it being noted that a communication dated April 4, 2019 from Councillor E. Peloza was received with respect to this matter.

This report provides considerations related to this service and the cost implications for increasing garbage collection in the winter from the current service level to match the summer level.

Current Garbage Collection Program

The City of London maintains 470 parks, including an all-season garbage collection program. Cans are placed at convenient locations like park entrances, playgrounds and sports fields and courts, and are emptied by parks staff twice per week in the summer and once per week in the winter.

In the **spring/summer/fall** park season (about May 1 to October 15), approximately 650 cans are placed and emptied at a cost of approximately \$200,000. In the last 3 years, the Parks maintenance program has shifted to include increased service on weekends and evenings for the growing number of events and community activities, like movie nights. This includes additional garbage collection on top of the regular program at a cost of approximately \$42,000. This service does not continue through the winter months, except for servicing community skating rinks, as needed.

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The City also services 4 dog parks with a unique underground system of large cans that requires less visits, but specialized equipment to lift the large and heavy bags. There are several of these cans in Springbank Park as well to service the main picnic areas. These sites cost an additional \$4500 per month. At our dog parks, this service continues through the winter months.

In the **winter**, 260 cans are placed in 143 parks where City pick-up trucks can easily access parks - at plowed parking lots or on pathways, without additional snow plowing. The exception to the rule is in Springbank and Victoria Parks, where the tradition has been that all pathways are plowed by Parks staff on a more regular basis, to a higher standard. Winter garbage collection comes with additional time to provide the service and on-going issues due to snow and ice around, on and in cans and due to extreme weather conditions.

While some of the City's larger parks remain busy all-season, there is generally far less use in most parks over the winter. Accordingly, a reduced garbage collection service level has been the standard. It also aligns with the City's ability to provide services in parks, as staffing levels drop from 225 permanent and seasonal staff in the summer to 6 permanent staff in the winter. Most Parks permanent staff switch to providing full services in our arenas by early October. The remaining Parks staff are assigned to: snow clearing in our major parks like Victoria and Springbank and portions of the Thames Valley Parkway; all season washroom servicing in major parks; all other "park" needs and issues that arise city-wide, and; garbage pick-up. City-wide weekly garbage duties take up approximately half of their time.

INCREASED SERVICE LEVEL AND ASSOCIATED COSTS

To "resume year round garbage collection" at the same twice weekly service level as summer, an additional 390 cans would have to be placed in parks and be picked up more often. This adds significantly to the staff compliment and budget.

The greater difficulty is placing those cans in the traditional "summer" locations which are generally not accessible from the street for most of the winter, as most park pathways are not plowed. Sixty one parks have various levels of parking lot and pathway plowing - mostly associated with access to schools and key street to street connections at a cost of \$36,000 for each snow event, which varies yearly. Plowing the majority of all park pathways to a standard that would permit safe access for trucks and staff would increase park pathway plowing costs from 5 to 8 times what is currently spent. Additional analysis would be required to refine this estimate based on actual can placement per park and developing pathway plowing plans to minimize costs.

Combining the additional staff costs, vehicle costs and additional plowing costs, the increase to the budget would be substantial. This funding is not currently available in the Parks and Recreation annual operational budget. If Council would like to enhance the waste collection service as described above, staff can carry out additional analyses and prepare a business case for consideration through the multi-year budget process.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS AND POSSIBLE ENHANCEMENTS

In recent years, the park use "season" has been extending earlier into the spring and later in the fall. And winter use, especially dog walking, has been on the increase. At times, residents have expressed their concerns and desires for an extended summer service level and improved winter garbage pick-up. To address these situations, staff have explored many options to provide services within current budget allocations, such as:

- Adding the large underground cans in Springbank park to better service large picnics;
- Additional smaller dog waste litter containers in busy winter-use parks;

- A pilot where cans were placed at the curb of parks for pick up as part of the normal residential collection system;
- A pilot where residents take their garbage from their local park back home, where existing waste and recycling collection services are already being provided, and;
- Adjustments to the annual parks / arenas spring and fall staff compliments to continue the “summer” service longer.

In providing normal garbage collection services, the Parks Operations teams deal with many issues outside of “normal” park garbage: the dumping of larger debris; extra bags of household waste deposited in or beside our cans; wildlife interactions at cans; forts and debris in wooded areas; litter pick up; dog waste not picked up or bags left on fences / in trees / on benches, and; cans that are dumped over.

Over the years, the Solid Waste Collection Area has worked with the Parks team to look at alternative methods to pick up waste in City parks and address the issues above. Through the Solid Waste programs, enhanced garbage and recycling activities occur at major events in Victoria and Harris Parks. Staff also continue to refine weekly service levels to suit the variable and expanding nature of events, and park uses that are weather dependant.

On-going discussions with the Solid Waste Collection Division have flagged other possible options worth exploring in the future that may enhance garbage pick-up, introduce recycling in larger parks and/or reduce the cost of this service:

- expand recycling in large, well-used parks where the consumption of beverages is more likely;
- including parks with picnic sites in the future Green Bin system;
- retesting the “take it home” pilot, as people seem more engaged in “environmental” issues and existing collection systems are in place at home;
- testing “smart” cans that signal staff when they’re full;
- alternative larger, wheeled carts that are mechanically tipped into a garbage truck, and;
- dedicated collection of dog waste for the purpose of delivery to an anaerobic digester.

SUMMARY

Options may exist to improve the service level of garbage pick-up in parks in the winter, and in the summer. At this time, Parks staff will continue to work with the Solid Waste Collection group to examine alternative ways to provide and improve this service.

PREPARED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
ANDREW MACPHERSON DIVISION MANAGER, PARKS PLANNING AND OPERATIONS PARKS AND RECREATION	SCOTT STAFFORD MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION