



Report

City of Merritt
REGULAR Council Meeting
October 8, 2019

File Number: 1854.37

To: Scott Hildebrand, Chief Administrative Officer
From: Sean Smith, Director of Corporate Services
Date: October 3, 2019
Subject: Snow Angels – Program Launch

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive this report for information.

Background:

The Age Friendly Action plan lists a large number of recommended actions that can be taken to make the City of Merritt more accommodating for our seniors. The very first recommendation on that list is to implement a Snow Angels program (see attached).

A Snow Angel program attempts to unite people who need help clearing their driveways and sidewalks of snow, with eager volunteers from our community who want to help.

When it snows, City crews clear our roadways and property owners clear their sidewalks, driveways/walkways. However, for some members of our community, particularly seniors or those with physical disabilities, moving snow is a difficult task and help is often required. That's where Snow Angels come in! Volunteer Snow Angels work to clear driveways and sidewalks for the person(s) that they are paired with.

Reviewed by:			
Director, Corp. Services Approved - Sean Smith	Director, Finance & IT	Director, Engineering & Development	Chief Administrative Officer:

The Corporate Services department made a concerted effort to get this program started in 2018, but after talking with a number of other communities, we identified that it was essential that our program volunteers receive criminal record checks, as the volunteers will be working with a “vulnerable sector” of the population. The process to get approved with Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General necessitated that the program be launched for the 2019-2020 snow season.

We are happy to announce that starting October 9th, 2019, we will be taking applications from seniors/disabled residents and volunteers who would like to participate in this program. Application forms will be available online and at City Hall.

Who is eligible for assistance?

Those persons eligible for assistance include residents of Merritt who:

- Are 65 years of age or older;
- Are under 65 years of age, with a disability;
- Are unable to clear the snow on your driveway or sidewalk;
- Claim the Seniors or Disability Homeowner Grant;
- Are property owners (tenants should contact their landlord for assistance);
- Do not have able-bodied persons living at their address.

Service recipients are responsible for providing any necessary snow removal equipment. However, many Snow Angels may have their own equipment they are willing to or would prefer to use. These arrangements will be made directly between the Snow Angel and the Service recipient.

Any residents meeting the above criteria must complete an application form, which are available online at Merritt.ca, or can be picked up at City Hall. All applications must be submitted in person at City Hall.

Who can volunteer as a Snow Angel?

Volunteer Requirements:

- 16 years of age or older
- Completed criminal record check
- Adequate physical shape and capable of clearing snow
- Willingness to commit for the entire snow season (excepting breaks for travel or holidays)
- Willingness to communicate with your assigned Service Recipient in the event you are unable to clear their sidewalk and driveway within 24 hours of a snowfall.

Though each volunteer is required to fill in an individual application, we can accommodate circumstances where two or more persons (or whole families!) want to volunteer to be Snow Angels together. All Snow Angel volunteers will be entered in to a draw to win one of two gift baskets worth approximately \$250 each.

How will the program work?

The City will be responsible for vetting volunteers and pairing applicants, based on a hybrid of need and proximity. Once paired, the City will reach out to Service Recipients via phone or e-mail to introduce them to their Snow Angel and facilitate the exchange of contact information.

Once paired, it will be the responsibility of the Snow Angel and the Service Recipient to communicate directly to ensure that driveways and sidewalks are cleared within 24 hours of a snowfall.

There may be valid instances where the Snow Angel is unable to clear snow for the Service Recipient, such as sickness or holidays. To that end, Snow Angels are encouraged to communicate directly with their Service Recipient, so that they can make alternative plans to have their driveway and sidewalk cleared. The City doesn't have the resources to organize substitutes at this time, though we will look for opportunities to improve this program and add this service in future years, by partnering with a volunteer organization.

Will every applicant be successfully matched with a Snow Angel?

We hope to see a large number of volunteers to support this program, but depending on numbers of applications and volunteers, it is wholly possible that not every applicant will be paired with a Snow Angel for the upcoming season.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Smith
Deputy CAO/Director of Corporate Services