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| <p>3. Motion – Councillor Brown - Living Snow Fence Pilot Program</p> <p>Motion – Conseiller Brown - Programme pilote de pare-neige vivant</p> |
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Committee recommendation(s)

That Council approve that the City engage with the RVCA and other conservation authorities to design a living snow fence grant program for rural Ottawa on a pilot basis with the goal of delivering this program during 2025; and

- a) that the program be designed and structured in such a way as to compensate landowners for allowing for trees, shrubs, and other natural features to be planted on their property so as to provide for a living snow fence and some natural habitat space; and**
- b) that compensation provided to landowners be set at a rate that is appropriate given the costs of forgoing the land's productive use; and**
- c) that benefiting properties be eligible for a maximum of \$15,000 per property followed by an annual land retirement payment consistent with the corn row fencing program at 2.5 times market value of unharvested crops for a minimum of 10 years; and**
- d) that the program be structured in such a way that the City will be responsible for covering program costs and the conservation authorities will administer the program (including with respect to grant allocation, planting, and maintaining new features) on behalf of the City; and**
- e) that, prior to pilot program implementation, staff be directed to survey how other municipalities throughout Canada operate similar programs so as to use lessons from those municipalities when designing the pilot; and**
- f) that initial funding for this pilot project be drawn from existing funding under the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program; and**

- g) that staff be directed to engage with a wide a range of government and non-governmental partners, including organizations such as ALUS, in order to secure additional funding for the program; and**
- h) that City staff report back to Council through the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on lessons learned from the pilot in Q4 2025; and**
- i) that as part of this report, staff recommend whether the living snow fence pilot program should be expanded into a permanent City program.**

Recommandation(s) du comité

Que le conseil approuve que la Ville s'engage avec l'OPNVR et d'autres offices de protection de la nature à concevoir un programme pilote de subventions pour les pare-neiges vivants dans les régions rurales d'Ottawa, dans le but d'offrir ce programme en 2025; et

- a) que le programme soit conçu et structuré de manière à indemniser les propriétaires fonciers qui autorisent la plantation d'arbres, d'arbustes et d'autres éléments naturels sur leur propriété afin de créer des pare-neiges vivants ainsi qu'un espace d'habitat naturel; et**
- b) que l'indemnisation accordée aux propriétaires fonciers soit fixée à un taux approprié compte tenu des coûts liés à l'abandon de l'utilisation productive des terres; et**
- c) que le propriétés bénéficiaires soient admissibles à un montant maximum de 15 000 dollars par propriété, suivi d'un paiement annuel d'abandon des terres agricoles conforme au programme de clôture des rangs de maïs, à hauteur de 2,5 fois la valeur marchande des cultures non récoltées pendant un minimum de 10 ans; et**
- d) que le programme soit structuré de manière à ce que la Ville soit responsable de la couverture des coûts du programme et que les offices de protection de la nature administrent le programme (y**

compris en ce qui concerne l'allocation des subventions, la plantation et l'entretien des nouveaux éléments) au nom de la Ville; et

- e) que la mise en œuvre du programme pilote, le personnel soit chargé d'enquêter sur la façon dont d'autres municipalités au Canada gèrent des programmes similaires, afin d'utiliser les leçons tirées de ces municipalités lors de la conception du programme pilote; et**
- f) que le conseil approuve que la Ville s'engage le financement initial de ce projet pilote provienne des fonds existants dans le cadre du Programme d'assainissement de l'eau en milieu rural d'Ottawa; et**
- g) de demander au personnel de s'engager auprès d'un large éventail de partenaires gouvernementaux et non gouvernementaux, y compris des organismes tels qu'ALUS, afin d'obtenir un financement supplémentaire pour le programme; et**
- h) que le personnel de la Ville rende compte au Conseil, par l'intermédiaire du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales, des enseignements tirés du projet pilote au quatrième trimestre 2025; et**
- i) dans le cadre de ce rapport, le personnel recommande que le programme pilote de pare-neiges vivants soit étendu à un programme permanent de la Ville.**

Documentation/Documentation

- 1 Report from the Committee Coordinator, dated June 6, 2024
(ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0060)

Rapport de la coordonnatrice du comité, daté le 6 juin 2024
(ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0060)
- 2 Extract of draft Minutes, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, June 6, 2024.

Extrait de l'ébauche du procès-verbal du Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales, le 6 juin 2024.

Motion – Councillor Brown - Living Snow Fence Pilot Program

ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0060 – ACS2024-OCC-CCS-0060

The Committee heard from the following delegations, in support, prior to considering the motion:

1. William van Geest
2. Andrea Sissons and Pam Chiles from Rural Woodlands Ottawa

Following questions of the delegations the Committee carried the motion as presented.

WHEREAS trees provide a wide range of benefits to the environment, including by sequestering atmospheric carbon, providing habitat space, reducing erosion, and more; and

WHEREAS planting trees and preserving Ottawa's tree canopy are priorities for the City as established in the Climate Change Master Plan; and

WHEREAS in rural Ottawa, artificial snow fences are commonly installed in the winter to reduce wind and blowing snow on rural roads; and

WHEREAS according to the Ottawa Fatal Collision Review Committee 2020 annual report, rural Ottawa has the highest percentage of fatal collisions within the City, representing 37% of all fatal in Ottawa collisions despite having only 9% of all reportable collisions; and

WHEREAS the installation of winter snow fences provides significant benefits for drivers' safety during the winter in rural Ottawa; and

WHEREAS the cost of installing wood slat snow fences in 2018 in Ottawa was approximately \$8.14 per meter plus maintenance costs; and

WHEREAS wood slat snow fences can create potential risks to farm equipment when fence components are not fully removed from the site; and

WHEREAS other municipalities make use of trees and shrubs as “living snow fences;” and

WHEREAS once established, living snow fences are far more effective than artificial snow fences at providing safety benefits; and

WHEREAS living snow fences could play a significant role in improving the natural environment and character of rural Ottawa, including through sequestering roughly 5.5 tonnes of carbon per km of windbreak; and

WHEREAS according to data from Ontario’s Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, windbreaks can reduce wind erosion on farms and can improve crop yields by up to 15%, meaning that these living snow fences more than offset the reduction of arable land that is necessary for their installation; and

WHEREAS the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has estimated that similar living snow fences return ecosystem benefits worth \$1,023/hectare, including through atmospheric regulation, pollinator services, reduced soil runoff, habitat creation and protection, improved water quality, and more; and

WHEREAS other municipalities in Ontario – including Peel Region, Dufferin, Grand River, Wellington County, and more – are running programs that provide incentives for living snow fences; and

WHEREAS the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has indicated an interest in administering a pilot program for living snow fences; and

WHEREAS the RVCA and other conservation authorities already administer programs such as the Rural Clean Water Program (RCWP), which provides grants and annual land retirement payments

to property owners who undertake stewardship projects like windbreaks; and

WHEREAS the RVCA has prepared a detailed proposal, in partnership with neighbouring conservation authorities and in consultation with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; and

WHEREAS the RVCA has indicated that the current funding envelope under the RCWP is sufficient to support a modest pilot program; and

WHEREAS there are a wide range of funding sources that the City could explore leveraging for the purpose of providing incentives for a living snow fence program, such as ALUS Canada, which is a national, non-profit charitable organization that partners with local organizations and community leaders to implement nature-based solutions on farmland, including through the planting of trees and windbreaks as living snow fences; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City engage with the RVCA and other conservation authorities to design a living snow fence grant program for rural Ottawa on a pilot basis with the goal of delivering this program during 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program be designed and structured in such a way as to compensate landowners for allowing for trees, shrubs, and other natural features to be planted on their property so as to provide for a living snow fence and some natural habitat space; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that compensation provided to landowners be set at a rate that is appropriate given the costs of forgoing the land's productive use; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that benefiting properties be eligible for a maximum of \$15,000 per property followed by an annual land retirement payment consistent with the corn row fencing program at 2.5 times market value of unharvested crops for a minimum of 10 years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program be structured in such a way that the City will be responsible for covering program costs and

the conservation authorities will administer the program (including with respect to grant allocation, planting, and maintaining new features) on behalf of the City; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, prior to pilot program implementation, staff be directed to survey how other municipalities throughout Canada operate similar programs so as to use lessons from those municipalities when designing the pilot; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that initial funding for this pilot project be drawn from existing funding under the Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that staff be directed to engage with a wide a range of government and non-governmental partners, including organizations such as ALUS, in order to secure additional funding for the program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that City staff report back to Council through the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on lessons learned from the pilot in Q4 2025; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as part of this report, staff recommend whether the living snow fence pilot program should be expanded into a permanent City program.

Carried