

---

# Haldimand County

## Report RDS-01-2026 Rural Roadside Mowing Program

For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 12, 2026

---



### Objective:

To seek Council approval to transition the successful roadside mowing pilot program into a permanent and ongoing operational program with the associated staffing and operational budget.

### Recommendations:

1. THAT Report RDS-01-2026 Rural Roadside Mowing Program be received;
2. AND THAT the In-House Rural Roadside Mowing Pilot Program be adopted as a permanent and ongoing maintenance program including the necessary Full Time Equivalents (FTE) and operating budget.

**Prepared by:** Bobbi-Jo Grant, Project Manager, Roads Operations

**Reviewed by:** Dennis Wardell, Manager, Roads Operations

**Respectfully submitted:** Dan McKinnon, General Manager, Public Works Operations

**Approved:** Michael Di Lullo, MPA, CMM III, Chief Administrative Officer

### Executive Summary:

The rural roadside mowing pilot program was implemented in 2023 to evaluate the benefits of completing roadside grass cutting on Class 4, 5 and 6 roadways using in-house staff, supplemented by six additional students for trimming as opposed to the traditional approach of using contracted services. The pilot demonstrated clear operational benefits, including improved efficiency, optimized resource use and enhanced roadway maintenance. Anecdotal information received from the community also signalled a positive benefit from an aesthetic perspective for the community. Based on these results, staff recommend transitioning the program to a permanent in house model ensuring consistent service delivery and supporting Haldimand County's commitment to operational excellence and continuous improvement.

### Background:

Granular road maintenance had been a core service provided by Roads Operations for many years. Through the progression of the Granular Road Conversion Program, we experienced a transition in the daily tasks of the division, mainly the reduction in tasks associated with maintaining the granular road network. As of 2022, the majority of granular roads had been converted, the last of the roads were converted in 2023. As such, core tasks of granular resurfacing, grading and dust control were no longer required. Roadway maintenance work on the newly converted surface roads required less daily maintenance resulting in an opportunity to reallocate staffing resources.

Roadside mowing is a core service, mainly provided by outside contracted providers, that has been identified as a service area to reallocate staff resources. Roadside mowing is a high priority service delivery area where staff and members of Council, receive a high number of service requests.

## **Analysis:**

In 2023, Roads Operations implemented a pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of completing mowing on Class 4, 5 and 6 roadways using in-house staff, supported by six additional students to perform trimming tasks. The purpose of the pilot was to determine whether this approach could improve efficiency, optimize resources, and maintain consistent roadway safety and aesthetics.

Throughout the pilot, the program demonstrated measurable benefits. In-house completion of mowing allowed for more flexible scheduling and improved quality control, while the addition of student staff enabled timely completion of trimming along road shoulders, ditches and other areas not easily accessed by standard equipment. The pilot also provided valuable insights into staffing requirements, equipment needs and operational procedures, confirming that the combined in-house and student approach was both practical and allows for cost certainty and we will not be reliant on market pricing from contractors.

Based on these results, transitioning the program from a pilot to a permanent routine practice is recommended. Adopting this model as standard operations will ensure consistent service delivery across Class 4, 5 and 6 roadways, improve operational efficiency and support Haldimand County's commitment to proactive road maintenance and continuous improvement.

In 2023, the Roads Operations program included roadside grass cutting as well as brush cutting which are two different activities. The actual 2023 cost of the program described above was \$136,240. The 2023 Roadside Mowing Contracted Services base budget was reduced by \$60,000 and the Brush Cutting contracted services budget was reduced by a further \$110,000. Some of these funds, (\$60,000) were reallocated to this pilot project to fund the cost of hiring six additional students, renting two extra mowers and pickup trucks and fueling the rental units. The balance of the brush cutting, \$110,000 was eliminated from the budget. The net impact to the Roads Operations Operating Budget was an increase of \$76,240 (2023) and was funded one-time from the Contingency Reserve.

## **Financial/Legal Implications:**

This pilot program has been included in the tax supported operating budget on a temporary basis since 2023, with funding from the Contingency Reserve, with the expectation that a report would be brought back to speak to whether this program would be required on an ongoing basis.

This investment was justified by improved service quality, faster response times and cost stabilization by mitigating potential increases in contracted service pricing. An additional benefit was providing meaningful work, training and business exposure for local youth. Supporting the attraction, recruitment, and retention of future skilled staff was a key focus in 2023 and this initiative directly contributed to that objective.

Should Council choose to adopt this pilot program as permanent, the following operating budget items would also become permanent in 2026:

<b>Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Salaries, Wages & Benefits (1.98 FTEs)	\$78,240
Uniforms	\$140
Cell Phone Charges	\$1,200
Fuel	\$13,600
Contracted Services	(\$60,000)
Equipment Rental	\$60,000
Transfers to CRR Machinery and Equipment	\$960
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$94,140</b>

Table 1: Operating Budget Impacts

**Stakeholder Impacts:**

Not applicable.

**Report Impacts:**

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

**References:**

1. None.

**Attachments:**

1. None.