

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. LS-2025-0005

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COUNCIL**

June 18, 2025

SUBJECT: 2025 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE PILOT PROJECT UPDATE

1. RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Council receive Report No. LS-2025-0005 prepared by the Municipal Law Enforcement Division, Legislative Services dated June 18th, 2025, respecting an update on the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project.
2. That Council make the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project a permanent program from December 15th in each year to April 15th of the following year.

2. PURPOSE:

This report provides an update on the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project and seeks Council's approval to make the Pilot Project permanent from December 15th in each year to April 15th of the following year.

3. BACKGROUND:

On July 12th, 2023, Council received Report No. LS-2023-0009 from the Municipal Law Enforcement Division, including information from the Off-Road Vehicle Working Group, and authorized a public consultation process to collect information about permitting Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs) on Town roads. Council directed staff to report back on the results of the public consultation process with updated options and recommendations concerning the possible permissibility of ORVs on Town of Georgina highways.

On November 22nd, 2023, Council received Report No. LS-2023-0019 from the Municipal Law Enforcement Division presenting the results of the public consultation process and options for ORV use going forward. Council passed Resolution No. C-2023-0399 directing staff to "return with a By-law for the use of off-road vehicles on Town roads within the Waterfront Park Buffer Area (Attachment 1) during daylight hours as a pilot project from January 17th, 2024 to April 15th, 2024, said pilot project to include all types of off-road vehicles excluding dirt bikes and potentially including golf carts, subject to compliance with Provincial regulations, ensuring drivers are fully licensed, educated/trained and insured, and that a communication plan be put into place."

Further, Council passed Resolution No. C-2023-0400 expanding the pilot project “to include the Ward 5 Catchment Area east of Park Road inside the boundaries of Park Road, Old Homestead Road, Weir's Sideroad, Ravenshoe Road, Lakeridge Road and Highway 48 (Attachment 2), from January 17th, 2024 to April 15th, 2024 for the purpose of crossing Highway 48 and accessing the waterfront park buffer zone to access the lake or rivers for ice fishing, excluding all Regional roads and Regional forests within said boundary area.”

On January 17th, 2024, Council enacted By-law No. 2024-0003 (REG-1), which caused the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project to immediately come into effect. The Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project ran from January 17th, 2024, to April 15th, 2024. An extensive communication plan was undertaken to educate the public about the pilot project, which included the use of the Town's website, the Town's social media, printed materials distributed to Town facilities, posters erected at Town facilities, and signage erected throughout the Town.

On May 29th, 2024, Council passed Resolution No. C-2024-0178 to extend the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project to continue during the period from December 15th, 2024 to April 15th, 2025.

4. ANALYSIS:

The first phase of the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project occurred between December 15th, 2023 and April 15th, 2024. During this time, most of the lake remained inaccessible to ORVs due to warm temperatures. Neither York Regional Police nor the Municipal Law Enforcement Division observed as many ORVs on Town roads during the pilot project as expected. Council and staff felt that it was important to extend the pilot project into the next winter with hopes that the weather would be more favourable for ORV use.

The second phase of the Off-Road Vehicle Pilot Project occurred between December 15th, 2024 and April 15th, 2025. By the end of February 2025, Georgina had received 240 centimeters of snow. More than two feet (69 centimeters, or 27 inches) of snow fell in a single week. This week saw more than half of the total snow received during the entire previous winter. Lake Simcoe froze, and the conditions were perfect for ice fishing. Surprisingly, with the conditions ideal for ice fishing and more ORVs on the road, the Municipal Law Enforcement Division did not see an increase in complaints regarding ORV use across the Town. The Municipal Law Enforcement Division received approximately the same amount of ORV complaints in 2025 as in 2024. After excluding Off-Road Motorcycle complaints (dirt bikes), there were less than 10 complaints.

Furthermore, the small number of complaints received by the Municipal Law Enforcement Division included complaints that were not necessarily violations under the ORV By-law. For example, complaints were received about a property where

ORV users gathered in the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone before going out onto Lake Simcoe. In most cases, there was no legal action resulting from complaints. In staff's assessment, ORV users have proven that they can follow the rules and use ORVs on Town roads responsibly.

Although the Municipal Law Enforcement Division did not receive a lot of complaints about the ORVs that were included in the Pilot Project, complaints continue to come in year-round regarding dirt bikes. It is important to note that dirt bikes were not included in the Pilot Project and were specifically prohibited in the Off-Road Vehicle By-law to be used on Town roads. Illegal dirt bike usage on Town roads should not be associated with the legal and responsible use of other ORVs on Town roads during the Pilot Project.

As was the case following the first year of the ORV Pilot Project, moving forward, Council has several options to consider:

One option is simply to repeal Off-Road Vehicle By-law No. 2024-0003 (REG-1), in which case all ORV operation would be prohibited on Town roads, and enforcement of ORV use on Town roads would revert to York Regional Police. The Municipal Law Enforcement Division would continue to enforce the prohibition of motorized vehicles in Town parks and on Town trails.

Option two is to repeal the Off-Road Vehicle By-law and enact a new by-law to prohibit the use of Off-Road Vehicles on all Town roads at all times of the year. If option two is chosen by Council, then the Municipal Law Enforcement Division would have the ability to enforce the prohibition of all ORVs on all Town roads in cooperation with York Regional Police. The only difference between option one and option two is that under option two the Municipal Law Enforcement Division would be able to enforce illegal use of ORVs along with York Regional Police.

A third option is to amend the Off-Road Vehicle By-law to open the boundaries of the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone and the Ward 5 Catchment Area to permit ORV use in all areas of the Town between December 15th in each year and April 15th of the following year. If this option is chosen by Council, Council may still regulate the times of the day and how ORVs are operated within the Town. Council could also choose to permit ORVs all year round.

A fourth option for Council to consider is to continue to permit ORVs between December 15th of each year and April 15th of the following year within the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone, but to allow ORVs all year round in certain other areas of the Town, such as the Ward 5 Catchment Area. Permitting ORVs in the Ward 5 Catchment Area year-round might be considered feasible due to the Ward's rural nature. There are existing connections in Ward 5 that ORV users have been permitted to use between private parcels of land in areas that are enclosed by Regional Roads.

Option five, which is recommended by staff, is to make the Off-Road Vehicle By-law permanent in its current format, so that ORVs would be permitted from December 15th in each year until April 15th of the following year. Making the ORV By-law permanent would permit ORV use within the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone and the Ward 5 Catchment Area during the defined time periods. If Council chooses this option, no amendment to the By-law will be necessary since the By-law already prohibits all ORV use on Town roads between April 16th in each year and December 14th of the following year. The by-law will continue to be enforced by the Municipal Law Enforcement Division and York Regional Police.

Regardless of which option is chosen by Council, dirt bikes will remain illegal on all Town roads within Georgina. Municipal Law Enforcement staff are currently working on an enforcement plan with York Regional Police to address the illegal use of dirt bikes within the Town of Georgina.

5. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Continuing to permit ORV use between December 15th in each year and April 15th of the following year on Town roads within the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone and the Ward 5 Catchment Area will contribute to the 'Diversifying our Local Economy' pillar in the Town's Strategic Plan through continued support of Georgina's tourism sector, especially within the affected areas.

6. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

There is no expected financial or budgetary impact associated with the staff recommendation.

7. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

Although there is no required public consultation process, staff previously held extensive consultations prior to instituting the Pilot Project. Communication of the program to the public through various methods including signage, social media, and the Town's website will continue to be an important feature of the program.

8. CONCLUSION:

Staff recommend keeping the Off-Road Vehicle By-law in its current format, which will make the ORV program permanent and permit the use of ORVs in the Waterfront Park Buffer Zone and the Ward 5 Catchment Area between December 15th in each year and April 15th of the following year.

APPROVALS

Prepared By: Mike Hutchinson, Manager, Municipal Law Enforcement

Recommended By: Michael Bigioni, Director, Legislative Services

Approved By: Ryan Cronsberry, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Map of Waterfront Park Buffer Zone

Attachment 2 – Map of Ward 5 Catchment Area