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Calgary council to vote on tow truck program

By Jason Markusoff, Calgary Herald January 18, 2010 7:29 AM [Be the first to post a comment](#)

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A tow truck driver surveys the process of untangling of the wreckage of an accident during a snowfall last February.

Photograph by: Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - Tow trucks could soon be at the ready to whisk banged-up or stalled cars off major city roadways if aldermen approve taking \$636,000 from rainy-day reserves to fund a one-year test of a program that Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart has long urged.

The Ward 13 representative said she'd prefer that the city recoup those towing fees, like it does for vehicles impounded for parking violations.

But since city officials are cool to the idea of bundling this trial project in with its parking and police tow contract, Colley-Urquhart said she'd urge colleagues to tap the fiscal stability reserve, the emergency fund that sits at \$148 million, and keep property taxes low.

Colley-Urquhart said she's loath to tap the reserve fund, but demanding city officials find an extra \$636,000 is tricky.

"They really are tight with their budgets," she said.

According to a report, the city would have to pay \$84.80 an hour per truck to have tow trucks at standby during weekday rush hours at five traffic choke points:

- Macleod Trail between Anderson and 162nd Avenue;
- Crowchild Trail N.W. over the Bow River;
- Glenmore Trail between Crowchild and 14th Street;
- Memorial between Edmonton Trail and Deerfoot; and

-A truck roving Deerfoot,

In the past, the city has hired standby trucks during construction on Macleod Trail and Glenmore. In eight months patrolling Glenmore in 2005 and 2006, a city-paid truck cleared out 18 collisions or stalls, shaving between five and 30 minutes off the normal tow-truck response time.

"It's the biggest complaint, really, the traffic backups with an accident and the accident stays on the road," said Ald. Linda Fox-Mellway.

If an aldermanic committee endorses the plan this week and council does next month, the trucks could be ready within weeks, said city traffic manager Troy McLeod.

However, he said it's difficult to recoup costs, because while people intentionally flout parking rules, they don't mean to get into a crash and could use their own service plans to get their cars off the road.

Fox-Mellway agreed it's unfair to charge those unlucky drivers.

"It's called an accident for a reason," she said.

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Photograph by: Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald

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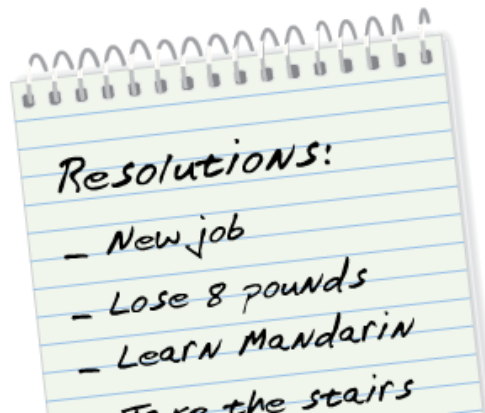
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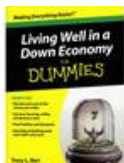
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