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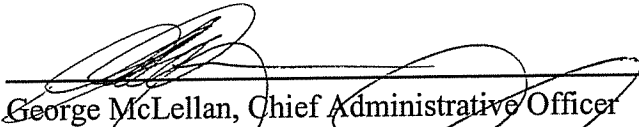
Halifax Regional Council

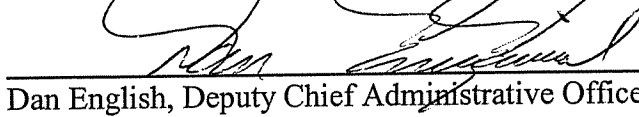
June 28, 2005

*July 5, 2005*

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

  
Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 17, 2005

**SUBJECT:** 2005-06 Area Rates for Sidewalk Snowplowing

**ORIGIN**

During debate of the 2005-06 Operating and Capital Budgets in March 2005, Regional Council requested that sidewalk snowplowing service be extended to include intersections in the former City of Halifax. Council also requested that the cost of plowing sidewalk intersections for the entire serviced area be funded from the general urban tax rate. Consideration was also given to extending sidewalk snowplowing service to areas which became part of Districts 15 or 17 as the result of changes to District boundaries.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that :**

1. For the 2005-06 Fiscal Year, that Sidewalk Snowplowing shall be set at the rate of \$0.014 to the residential, resource and commercial assessment, including business occupancy, for all areas which currently receive the service and for those mapped areas within Districts 15 and 17 identified in Appendix "A" which would begin receiving the service in 2005-06;
2. The Prior Years Deficit for Sidewalk Snowplowing shall be set at the rate of \$0.002 to the residential, resource and commercial assessment, including business occupancy, for all areas which currently receive the service;
3. The cost of clearing sidewalks adjacent to intersections in the serviced area no longer be included in the area rate and instead be included in the general rate; and
4. Effective 2005-06, the service be extended to include sidewalks adjacent to intersections in the former City of Halifax, the cost of which will be included in the general rate.

## **BACKGROUND**

Effective with the 2003-04 fiscal year, Regional Council implemented a single common area rate throughout the serviced area for sidewalk snowplowing. Separate area rates for deficits incurred prior to March 31, 2003 remained in effect for 2003-04 and 2004-05. These deficits and the area rates associated with them have now been retired.

During budget deliberations in March 2005, Regional Council indicated the desire to extend the service to include sidewalks adjacent to intersections in the former City of Halifax and fund the cost from the general tax rate. For equity, Council indicated that funding for the cost of plowing sidewalks adjacent to intersections throughout the serviced area should be transferred from the area rate to the general tax rate.

Consideration was also given to extending sidewalk snowplowing service to areas which became part of Districts 15 or 17 as the result of changes to District boundaries. This report includes a determination as to whether the Interim Area Rate Guidelines were followed to ensure that the public in these areas received sufficient opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they wished to pay for this service through an area rate. The areas affected are mapped in Appendix "A".

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Sidewalks adjacent to Intersections**

During budget deliberations in March 2005, staff advised Council that the cost of plowing sidewalks adjacent to intersections in the former City of Halifax would be about \$440,000 annually. This is based on 1,100 intersections at a cost of approximately \$400 each.

There are an additional 1,745 intersections with adjacent sidewalks throughout the current serviced area. Because these intersections are plowed along with the remainder of the sidewalks along the streets, the cost per intersection is much lower at approximately \$40 each. Therefore, the total annual cost of plowing these intersections is about \$70,000. These costs will be deducted from the area rate calculation and will now be recovered through the general rate.

The \$510,000 in additional costs to the general operating budget identified above will be managed within the overall snow and ice clearing program. Therefore, there is no impact on the general tax rates as approved by Council on March 8, 2005.

### **Extending the Service and Area Rate to Mapped Areas in Appendix "A"**

The current status of the proposed extension of the sidewalk snowplowing area rate to these areas in Districts 15 and 17 in terms of the Interim Area Rate Guidelines is as follows:

1. *Area rates can only be used for the provision of services within the municipal mandate; services traditionally provided by the municipality.*

Section 65 (f) of the Municipal Government Act states that "Council may expend money required by the municipality for snow and ice removal." The Halifax Regional Municipality and its predecessor municipal units with the exception of the former City of Halifax have provided sidewalk snow plowing. Since amalgamation, area rates have been used to fund this service.

- 2. Area rates are not to be used to provide different levels of a municipal service within urban and suburban areas where said service is covered by the general tax rate.***

Sidewalk snow plowing is provided through area rates within the old boundaries of Districts 15 and 16 as they were prior to November 2, 2004, the former City of Dartmouth, Town of Bedford and urban areas of the former County of Halifax.

- 3. In order for a proposed new area rate to move to the process as outlined in #4 below, it must have the support of the area's Councillor(s).***

The mapped areas where the area rate would be extended falls entirely within the boundaries of District 15 or 17 as revised effective November 2, 2004. The Councillors for these Districts conducted a public information meeting on May 2, 2005 to determine if there was sufficient support within the mapped areas for the area rate. The results of the vote are indicated below.

- 4. Proposals for new area rates must be advertised publicly, clearly identifying affected areas, the purpose for the rate, rate information and the duration the rate is expected to be charged. A public meeting will be held and those attending the meeting will be informed of the rationale for the rate and consulted on its appropriateness.***

In mid-April 2005, a letter was sent to each property owner in District 15 and 17 who did not have sidewalk snowplowing service. The letter advised property owners of the date, time and location of a public information meeting and the purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss whether sidewalk snowplowing service and the area rate for it should be extended to those areas. A copy of the letter sent to property owners in District 15 is included in Appendix "B", and a copy of the letter sent to property owners in District 17 is included in Appendix "C".

At the public information meeting held on May 2, 2005, a presentation was given by Councillors Walker and Mosher regarding the pros and cons of having the Municipality provide sidewalk snowplowing service. Questions from those present were then answered. Before the vote was taken, those present were advised that they had to own property in the areas affected in order to be eligible to vote. Ballots were then handed out to those who indicated they were eligible. The ballot gave the property owner the opportunity to vote in secret either for or against paying an area rate of \$0.016 for the service. A copy of the ballot is included in Appendix "D". The ballots were counted at the meeting and those present advised of the results.

The results of the voting process are as follows:

	Votes	Percentage of Total
Property Owners in Attendance	66	
District 15: Votes in Favour	46	85% of District 15 Votes
District 15: Votes Against	8	15% of District 15 Votes
District 17: Votes in Favour	8	67% of District 17 Votes
District 17: Votes Against	4	33% of District 17 Votes

5. *With the concurrence of the Councillor, the request is forwarded to the Community Council for review and a recommendation to Halifax Regional Council. Where a Community Council does not exist, the request will go directly to Halifax Regional Council.*

At a meeting of the Chebucto Community Council on May 2, 2005 which immediately followed the public information meeting regarding the area rate, the following motion was put and passed unanimously:

MOVED BY Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Hum that Chebucto Community Council recommend Regional Council:

1. Approve a sidewalk snow removal area rate in the amount of \$16 (0.016) per \$100,000.00 of assessment for District 15 and part of District 17 along Joseph Howe Drive including the following streets off Joseph Howe Drive:

Glenora Avenue - all  
 Glen Eagle Way - all  
 Joseph Howe Drive - from the Armdale Rotary to the Bicentennial Highway  
 Arlington Avenue - Civic numbers 2, 4, 6, 8  
 Springvale Avenue - from Civic # 2 to Civic # 22, on the South side and from Civic # 3 to Civic # 13 on the North side.

6. *Any proposed new area rates recommended by a Community Council (or, in the absence of a Community Council, the Councillor for the area) will be submitted to Halifax Regional Council through a staff report with a recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer. The staff report will identify the implications to the Municipality along with the results of any public meeting.*

Part of the recommendation contained within this report recommends that the area rate for sidewalk snowplowing be extended to those areas of District 15 and 17 which currently do not receive the

service (mapped areas in Appendix "A").

**7. Halifax Regional Council is responsible for approving all area rates.**

Completion of this step is contingent on Regional Council approving the recommendation contained in this report.

Because the areas mapped in Appendix "A" would not begin receiving the service until 2005-06, they would not share in funding the deficit incurred for this service in 2004-05. As a result, the area rate in the mapped areas would be \$0.014 per \$100 of assessed value which is \$0.002 less than the area rates in the remainder of the serviced area. The budget and area rates proposed for 2005-06 are as follows:

<b>Serviced Area</b>	<b>2005/06 Net Budget</b>	<b>Deficit</b>	<b>2005/06 Area Rate</b>
All Districts currently receiving the Service, plus the mapped area in Appendix "A"	\$1,735,900	N/A	<b>\$0.014</b>
All Districts currently receiving the Service	N/A	\$178,613	<b>\$0.002</b>

Therefore, the total proposed sidewalk snowplowing area rate is \$0.014 for the mapped areas in Appendix "A", and \$0.016 for all other Districts receiving the service. A comparison of the total proposed area rates for 2005-06 to the previous year total rates is provided below:

<b>Serviced Area</b>	<b>2004/05 Area Rates</b>	<b>2005/06 Area Rates</b>	<b>Change</b>
Mapped Areas in Appendix "A"	N/A	\$0.014	<b>+ \$0.014</b>
All other Districts receiving Service	\$0.016	\$0.016	<b>n/c</b>

If there are no further changes to the service area boundaries, there will be only one area rate for sidewalk snowplowing commencing in 2006-07.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

For 2005-06, the added cost to the general operating budget of including all intersections in the current serviced area and extending the service to all intersections in the former City of Halifax will be managed within the overall snow and ice clearing program. To the extent there is an impact on Transportation and Public Works operations, consideration will be given to using the Variable

Operating Stabilization Reserve to off-set any expenditures in excess of the budget. Therefore, there would be no impact on the overall 2005-06 Operating Budget.

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### ALTERNATIVES

Council may wish to implement all, some, or none of the recommendations contained in this report. Further options for sidewalk snow removal will be presented to Council for consideration in August 2005 for the 2006-07 year.

### ATTACHMENTS

**Appendix A:** Mapped areas of District 15 and 17 not currently included in the Serviced Area for Sidewalk Snowplowing (3 maps)

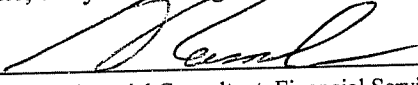
**Appendix B:** Letter sent to property owners in District 15 who did not currently have Sidewalk Snowplowing

**Appendix C:** Letter sent to property owners in District 17 who did not currently have Sidewalk Snowplowing

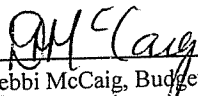
**Appendix D:** Ballot provided to property owners at the public meeting on May 2, 2005 so that they could vote in secret either for or against paying an area rate of \$0.016 for Sidewalk Snowplowing service.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by:

  
Gordon Roussel, Financial Consultant, Financial Services 490-6468

Financial Review:

  
Debbi McCaig, Budget Coordinator, Financial Services 490-4280

Report Approved by:

  
Dale McLennan, Director, Financial Services 490-6308

Properties in District 15 to be covered under Proposed Sidewalk Snowplowing

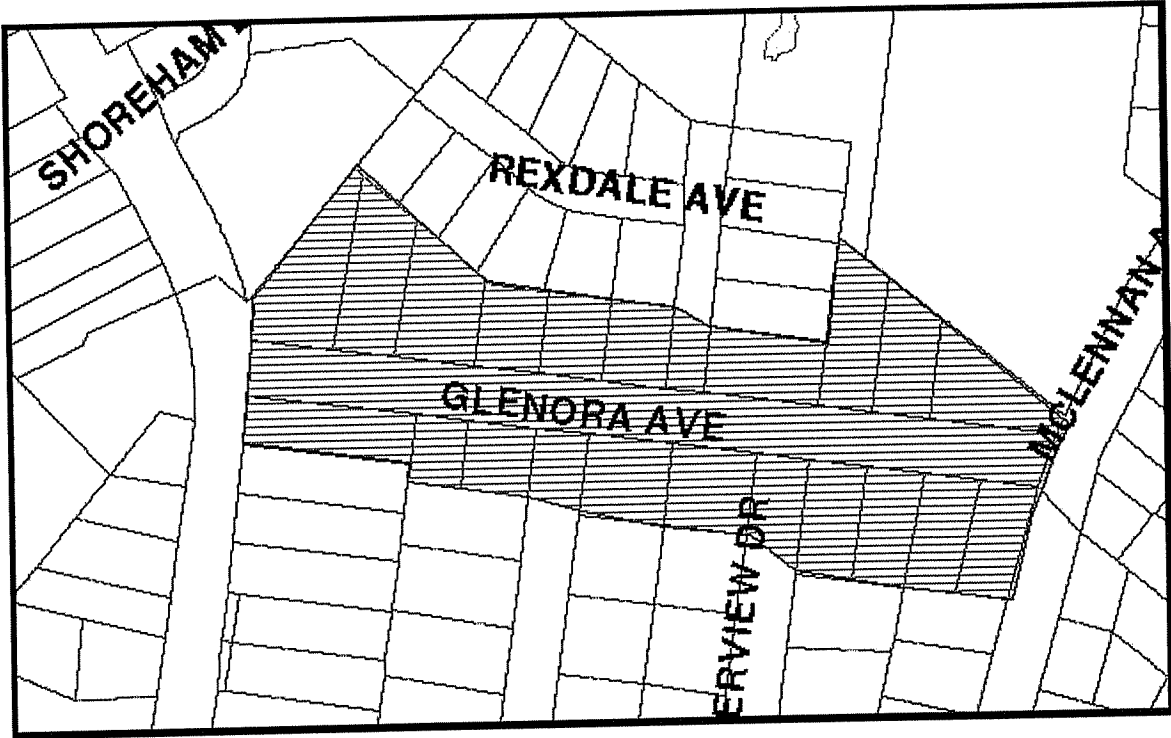


Properties in **District 17** to be covered under Proposed Sidewalk Snowplowing  
Glen Eagle Way (all) and Joseph Howe Drive from the Armdale Rotary to the Bicentennial Highway,  
Arlington Ave- Civic 2, 4, 6, 8  
Springvale Ave civic #2 to civic #22 on the south side and from civic #3 to civic #13 on the north side





Properties in District 17 to be covered under Proposed Sidewalk Snowplowing  
Glenora Ave - All



## Appendix "B"

April 18, 2005

Dear Residents:

A large part of District 15 currently has sidewalk snowplowing paid for by an area rate of \$0.016 to the residential, resource and commercial assessment, including business occupancy. This means that on a property assessed at \$100,000, the rate will be \$16.00.

Due to the District Boundary Change in November 2004, you are now a part of District 15 and can be included in this service.

You are invited to attend a public meeting on **Monday, May 2, 2005 at 6:00 pm at the Thomas Raddall Room, Keshen Goodman Library, 330 Lacewood Drive.**

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a proposal to levy an area rate for sidewalk snowplowing in the remainder of District 15. **A vote will be taken at this meeting.**

If you have questions, please contact Lucille Walsh at 490-4090.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Walker  
Councillor, District 15  
Fairview-Clayton Park

## Appendix "C"

April , 2005

Dear Resident

### **RE: Sidewalk Snow Clearing**

As you know, at amalgamation HRM took over the services provided by the former municipalities, including sidewalk snow clearing where it was carried out prior to 1996. To offset costs, the residents who receive this service pay a small area rate. Over the past number of years, some additional areas have been added to that service - including a trial in the Fairview Clayton Park area.

Since that trial seems to have been successful, I have been able to get Senior Management to agree to extend the service to a small area of District 17. This would mean that HRM would totally take over responsibility for clearing snow and ice from the sidewalk abutting your property. In order to have this service added, there would be a small fee, in the form of an area rate which would show up on your next tax bill. With area rates, it is necessary that homeowners on both sides of the street be levied the charge. However, the rate would be only 16 to 18 cents per \$100 which translates to a maximum of \$18.00 per \$100,000. of assessment.

I'm looking for your thoughts on this to determine whether you would support having this service next winter. There is going to be an information session on this on Monday, May 2, 2005 at 6 pm at the Keshen Goodman Library on Lacewood Drive. If you would prefer, you can send comments to Ruth McCulloch, Council Assistant, at [mccullr@halifax.ca](mailto:mccullr@halifax.ca), or by fax to 490-4122, or through Canada Post - mailing label enclosed. Ruth can be contacted directly at 490-7184.

Councillor Russell Walker has volunteered to talk to any residents who have questions about the service and how it has worked in District 15 over the past couple of winters. If you want to take him up on that offer you could call him at 443-8010 or 497-7215.

Sincerely



Linda Mosher

## Appendix "D"



### **District 15 Sidewalk Snowplowing Service - BALLOT** **Monday, May 2, 2005**

Please fill out the ballot and place in the appropriate ballot box.

Please place an "X" for your choice:

- YES**, I am in favour of paying an area rate in the amount of \$0.016 per \$100.00 of assessed value for sidewalk snowplowing service for District 15.
- NO**, I am not in favour of paying an area rate in the amount of \$0.016 per \$100.00 of assessed value for sidewalk snowplowing service for District 15.

An area rate of \$0.016 cents per \$100.00 of assessed value will have an impact of \$16.00 per year on a property with an assessed value of \$100,000.00.



### **District 17 Sidewalk Snowplowing Service - BALLOT** **Monday, May 2, 2005**

Please fill out the ballot and place in the appropriate ballot box.

Please place an "X" for your choice:

- YES**, I am in favour of paying an area rate in the amount of \$0.016 per \$100.00 of assessed value for sidewalk snowplowing service for District 17.
- NO**, I am not in favour of paying an area rate in the amount of \$0.016 per \$100.00 of assessed value for sidewalk snowplowing service for District 17.

An area rate of \$0.016 cents per \$100.00 of assessed value will have an impact of \$16.00 per year on a property with an assessed value of \$100,000.00.