

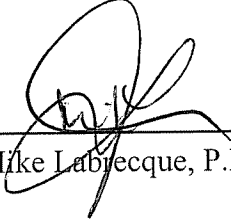


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Halifax Regional Council
June 13, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Mike Labrecque, P.Eng., Director Transportation & Public Works

DATE: May 30, 2006

SUBJECT: Review of 2005/06 Winter Works Program

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Staff

BACKGROUND

The "Winter Works" operation season spans from November to April each fiscal year. This past year's program ran from November 20, 2005 to April 9, 2006. This year was the first winter season that operated under the new Collective Agreement negotiated with the Halifax Civic Workers' Union CUPE Local 108.

DISCUSSION

Winter Works comes into effect on the second Friday in November each year, and is comprised of three (3) levels of priority tasks. Priority 1 entails all Snow and Ice removal and control activities for streets and sidewalks; Priority 2 activities include regular (non-snow related) streets, roads, and sidewalk maintenance and; Priority 3 activities are those performed by Public Works Operations staff on behalf of areas outside of their reporting structure, namely Traffic and Transportation, Recreation, and sections in the former RPAM business unit.

All service standards, as approved by Council, were met for the 2005/06 winter season, with no reduction in service. This past winter there was a more deliberate focus on 'servicing the service standard' and not over-servicing the standard. In the eyes of the public this may have been interpreted as a reduction of the service but in fact the service standard was met. However, there are areas within the program where the quality of service can be improved.

Cost Analysis

The overall 2005/06 Winter Works expenditures (net of sidewalks) was \$10,100,232₍₁₎, against a budget of \$10, 215,169.

The past year has seen a significant savings in Priority 1 - Snow and Ice Control activities (which includes the enhanced sidewalk servicing in peninsular Halifax), as compared to the last five years:

Year	Priority 1 - Snow and Ice Costs (Net of sidewalks)
2005/06	\$ 7,103,486
2004/05	\$13,237,258 *
2003/04	\$13,203,694 *
2002/03	\$13,626,403 *
2001/02	\$11,251,157 *

* In previous years all snow and ice tasks were charged to the snow budget, therefore the above comparison of costs over previous years is accurate. For comparison purposes, tasks identified as Priority 2 and 3 tasks under the new Winter Works Program would have been charged to other works and parks accounts.

The total costs for Priority 2 and 3 tasks during the November 20 - April 9 time period was \$2,996,745. A breakdown of each level of Priority costs follows:

(1) This figure includes a year end transfer of \$260,773 from the Snow & Ice Reserve

Priority	Labour Hours	Labour Costs	Total Costs
Priority 1	79,616	\$ 2,015,824	\$ 7,103,486
Priority 2	76,127	\$ 1,922,065	\$ 2,084,368
Priority 3	28,257	\$ 750,074	\$ 912,377

Generally speaking, Priority 2 and 3 tasks included spring repairs (i.e., snow damage), leaf pickup, asphalt patching & repairs, litter cleanup, fencing repairs, shouldering, graffiti removal, ice thickness testing, street cleaning, and park, playground & trail maintenance.

Priority 2 tasks are regular (i.e., non snow related) street and sidewalk related maintenance activities that continue throughout the winter months. Because of the light winter weather, nearly 80,000 staff hours were able to be re-directed to tasks such as asphalt patching, shoulder washouts, and street cleaning, which often are relegated to the summer months.

Priority 3 tasks were those that achieved the most success in terms of resource management and goal achievement. Over 28,000 hours were spent on this level of tasking. In total, 162 additional work orders (with over 80% completed) were forwarded to streets and sidewalks staff during the winter season. These requests were predominantly graffiti and litter related. However, larger community projects were also completed more quickly and efficiently. With the onset of the Winter Works program, Streets and Sidewalks were able to support the maintenance of sports fields and playgrounds by providing staff and heavy equipment that would normally not be available, such as backhoes and dump trucks. This resulted in more playground equipment being replaced throughout the municipality, as well as other sports field related infrastructure being development - the outdoor skating rink at the George Dixon Centre being a prime example.

A summary of the work orders complete for Priority 2 and 3 tasks follows:

TPW Work Orders - Priority 2 and 3 Tasking	November 20, 2005 - April 9, 2006
Litter/Garbage	50
Graffiti	22
Benches/Equipment Repair/Replace	20
Trees/Tree Stumps	19
Signage (Vandalism/Replace)	7
Other (General Maintenance)	44
TOTAL	162

Perhaps one of the most recognizable indicators of success was the cleanliness of the Capital District in preparation for the 35th Annual Canadian Juno Music Awards, which was held at the World Trade and Convention Centre in early April 2006. Because of the flexibility the new Winter Works approach provides, staff is now better able to respond to special event needs, particularly those that take place on the world stage.

From a Parks perspective, the Public Gardens was able to open May 1st, which is the earliest opening of the park in several years. Again, this is a result of being able to utilize resources all winter long, rather than only in the springtime. Generally speaking, parks and fields, such as the Wanderer's Grounds, have been reported to be in much better condition than in previous years.

As well with respect to Priority 2 and 3 tasking, approximately 5000 hours were spent on upgrade training for staff, in areas such as equipment operation, Class 3 licensing, and communications. This type of training, though crucial for staff development and succession planning, has historically been unable to take place during the winter months.

Efficiencies

These efficiencies can be attributed to two main factors. First, the latest Collective Agreement (with CUPE Local 108) outlines a dual 12 hour shift structure for Winter Works Operations. During the winter season, two teams are each assigned a specific shift. The regular hours for one group (Team "A") are Monday-Friday, 7:00 AM - 3:00 PM; The second group (Team "B") works Sunday-Thursday from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM. This shift structure provides a span of coverage (at regular pay) of 16 hours as opposed to the eight (8) hour period in previous contracts. The result is better management of service outputs and a reduction in overtime costs.

Second, weather data from the winter of 2005/06 saw significantly less snow fall and milder temperatures than in previous years. Any major snowfalls were followed by mild temperatures which negated the need to remove snow in the Capital District. The lack of weather events also allowed for a reduction in salt and sand usage, particularly during the latter part of the winter.

Weather Events	Budget for 2005/06	Actual for 2005/06
Major snowfalls (over 15 cms)	4	3
Average snowfalls (5 - 15 cms)	8	4
Minor snowfalls (1-5 cms)	9	12
Freezing rain events	3	1
Salting events (freeze/thaw, frost, runoffs, blowing snow)	40	33

Areas for Improvement

1. Establishment of a Five (5) Year Strategy - This is designed to enable staff to become more accountable for costing, and better able to measure performance.
2. Works Control for Planned Maintenance Activities - There will be a significant emphasis placed on service monitoring and capturing costing data in the upcoming year(s), that will focus on “planned” or regularly occurring maintenance activities. Staff intends to expand usage of Hansen and SAP modules to more effectively monitor and resolve customer service requests and properly capture costs for budgetary purposes. Establishing a more robust service level agreement practice, will also enhance cost savings and service performance.
3. Identification of Opportunities for Demand Maintenance Activities - As well, there needs to be a more proactive approach toward “demand” or preventative maintenance programs. Resources will be assigned to identify and expand opportunities for Priority 2 and 3 tasks, particularly during the winter months. These activities include more support to facilities such as the Forum Complex and Metro Transit infrastructure while increasing day-to-day maintenance activities such as replacing and repairing park benches, bleachers, and picnic tables, litter pickup, etc.
4. Reorganization of Transportation and Public Works business unit - This includes an amalgamation of all municipal operations activities, namely Streets & Roads, Sidewalks, Parks & Open Spaces, and Playgrounds & Sports fields. This new management unit contains approximately 240 employees who are now able to provide more flexibility in the level of service outputs (e.g. a “Streets” employee can provide support to a “Parks” need and vice versa). This type of flexibility in work assignment was not delineated in former collective agreements.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Achievements in the “Areas of Improvement” noted above should result in continual cost savings in subsequent years as well as enhancements to service in many areas.

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

There are no recommended alternatives.

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Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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