

Halifax Regional Council  
July 16, 2002

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** July 9, 2002

**SUBJECT:** New Area Rate District 15 Sidewalk Snow Plowing

**ORIGIN**

Interim Area Rate Guidelines were adopted by Council in January 2000 to create a process to assist communities to establish new area rates, ensure that all taxpayers have an opportunity to participate in setting a rate and ensure that rates are set only for valid municipal purposes and not for services already covered by the general rate. One of the purposes of this report is to determine if the Interim Area Rate Guidelines have been satisfied thus far with regard to a proposed new area rate to provide sidewalk snow plowing in District 15. The other purpose is to bring forward the recommendation for a new area rate in District 15.

Chebucto Community Council Meeting of June 10, 2002 (Recommendation attached as Appendix B)

**RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that:**

- A. Halifax Regional Council approve an area rate of \$0.0055 per \$100.00 of assessment to be applied against all residential and commercial properties in District 15 effective with the 2002/03 fiscal year for the purpose of sidewalk snow plowing for the 2002-2003 winter season.
- B. Any shortfall between the actual cost of providing sidewalk snow plowing in District 15 and the revenue generated from this area rate will be collected by adding any such deficit to the area rate budget for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. Should this occur and result in an increase

in the area rate for 2003-2004, property owners will be advised directly to allow them the opportunity to decide if they wish to continue the service.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Municipality currently provides snow removal for approximately 406 kilometers of sidewalks in Bedford, Dartmouth, and the former Halifax County. The removal of snow and ice from sidewalks in the former Halifax, including Districts 11, 12, 13 and 14 in the Peninsula area, and Districts 15, 16, 17 and part of District 18 in the Mainland area, is the responsibility of the abutting property owner. HRM's Streets By-law requires that snow and ice be removed within 12 hours of the end of any snowfall.

The approved 2002/2003 operating budget has not provided for the Halifax Regional Municipality to take over sidewalk snow and ice removal in the former City of Halifax area.

Staff of Public Works & Transportation have provided estimates previously of annual sidewalk snow removal costs ranging from \$6,136 to \$12,466 per kilometer, \$147,264 to \$299,184 in total for District 15. The Councillor for the District feels that costs could be considerably lower and has held public information sessions based on these lower estimates. The staff estimates would result in an area rate of approximately \$0.020. The proposed area rate of \$0.0055 which was discussed at the community meeting would raise approximately \$30,000.

Given the variance between these estimates it must be noted that any shortfall would be collected in 2003-2004 by area rates.

The deadline for area rate budgets was set as November 30, 2001. This is six (6) weeks more than available for Business Units. Area rate organizations, frequently composed of volunteers, had difficulty meeting this deadline. Clearly addressing the deadline needs to be communicated more broadly. Late submissions of area rated budgets leads to delays in finalizing the HRM budget and have been a source of difficulty in publishing the final budget book.

### **DISCUSSION**

The current status of this proposed new area rate 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.*

The Halifax Regional Municipality currently provides sidewalk snow and ice removal services in Dartmouth, Bedford, and the former Halifax County communities through an area rate.

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.*

The service is currently provided to Dartmouth, Bedford and the former Halifax County Communities through an area rate and would provide the same service to District 15.

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 catchment area for the proposed area rate falls entirely within District 15 and the matter was initiated entirely at the request of the area Councillor.

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.*

A public meeting was held on March 20, 2002 to discuss the proposed area rate and to gauge whether there was sufficient interest to proceed. The date, time, location and purpose of the meeting were advertised in The Chronicle-Herald and The Mail Star, Municipal Notices Section on Saturday, March 16, 2002 (Appendix "A")

Of the 3781 property owners in District 15, 28 attended the meeting; with ninety-six (96%) of those in attendance in favour of the \$0.0055 area rate. The details of the vote are as follows.

		Percentage of Total
Number of Property Owners	3781	
Number in Attendance at March 20 Meeting	31	0.8% *
Eligible to Vote	28	0.7% (3 individuals in attendance were not residents of District 15)
Votes in Favour	27	96% of attendees
Votes Against	1	4% of Attendees

In addition, in 2001 a survey of District 15 was conducted by the Councillor. The survey consisted of a mailer to all property owners of District 15 with 63% of the 400 surveys returned in favour of sidewalk snow plowing. (Item 4.1.7 Area Rate for Snow Removal from Sidewalks - District 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 - Chebucto Community Council, July 16, 2001 attached as Appendix C)

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 the June 10, 2002 meeting, the Chebucto Community Council approved forwarding to Halifax Regional Council the recommendation contained in this report.

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

The purpose of this report submitted by the Chief Administrative Officer is to provide Council with the necessary information required to consider the recommendation forwarded from the Chebucto Community Council for a new area rate. The results of the public meeting and vote were outlined previously in this report, and the implications to the Municipality are identified under the Budget Implications section which follows.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no net budget implications. Any costs incurred, should Council approve the recommendation, will be recovered by area rates.

### **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 decide not to approve this new area rate and the resulting service change for the 2002-2003 winter season; in which case the issue of sidewalk snow plowing in District 15 and the remainder of the former City of Halifax districts will be addressed for the 2003-2004 winter season through a separate Council report after the summer break.

**New Area Rate District 15 Sidewalk Snow Plowing  
Council Report**

- 5 -

**July 16, 2002**

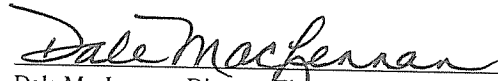
**ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A: Notice of Public Meeting advertised in Chronicle Herald & Mail Star of March 16, 2002  
Appendix B: Recommendation of Chebucto Community Council dated July 16, 2002  
Appendix C: Item 4.1.7 - Area Rate for Snow Removal from Sidewalks - Districts 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18 - Chebucto Community Council July 16, 2001

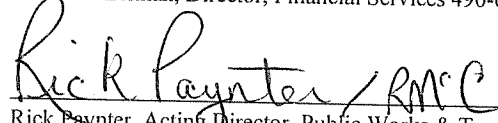
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Veronica Roche, Administrative Support Assistance, Financial Planning 490-6498

Report Approved by:



Dale MacLennan, Director, Financial Services 490-6308



Rick Paynter, Acting Director, Public Works & Transportation Services 490-4855

CH V. 54 N. 64 MAR 16, 2002 P. 17

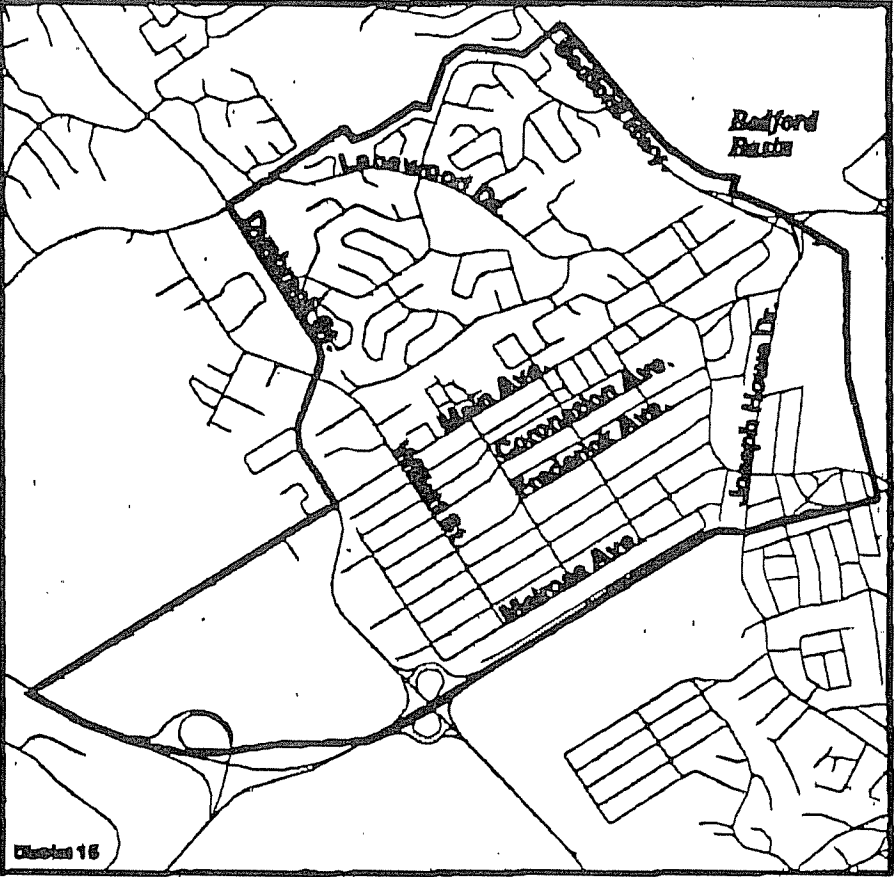
**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT**  
**HALIFAX**  
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

**NOTICES**

**HALIFAX**  
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Notices will generally appear each Saturday in this section of the newspaper. Readers are still encouraged to look throughout the paper for information which might appear in a different section or on another day.

**Area Rate for Sidewalk Snow Clearing**  
**Residents of Fairview-Clayton Park**



Residents of Fairview and Clayton Park (District 15) are invited to attend a public meeting on Wednesday, March 20, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at the Keshen-Goodman Public Library.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss a proposal to levy an area rate for sidewalk snow clearing in our District.

Russell Walker  
Councillor - District 15  
Fairview - Clayton Park  
497-7215

E200

**Attention Motorists**  
**Portland Street @ Regal Road/Portland Hills Drive**  
**New Traffic Signals**

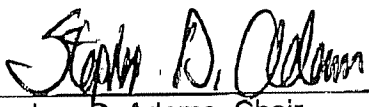
APPENDIX "B"



---

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL  
July 16, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

FROM:   
Stephen D. Adams, Chair  
Chebucto Community Council

DATE: June 11, 2002

SUBJECT: New Area Rate Proposed for District 15

---

**ORIGIN:**

Chebucto Community Council meeting held on June 10, 2002.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that:

Halifax Regional Council approve an area rate of .0055 per \$100,000 of assessment to be applied to commercial and residential properties in District 15 effective with the 2002/2003 fiscal year for the purpose of providing sidewalk snow and ice removal services.

**ATTACHMENT:**

Staff Report dated May 17, 2002.

#### 4.1.7 Area Rate for Snow Removal from Sidewalks - Districts 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18

A Staff Report dated June 25, 2001 had been before Regional Council at its meeting held on July 3, 2001. This report provided information regarding Chebucto Community Council's request as well.

Mr. Kulvinder Dhillon, Director of Public Works and Transportation provided an overview of the report which had been before Regional Council, copies of which had been provided to Community Council. During the course of his presentation, he provided clarification on the figures presented versus costs for Dartmouth and the County. He indicated the costs would reflect the service level provided.



Councillor Walker stated that his residents were looking for this service. He conducted a survey and 63% of the 400 surveys returned were in favour. He needed a rate to take to Regional Council this week for District 15 if no other Districts wanted to join in. He has been looking for a way to do this since January and it was necessary to go to Regional Council before Regional Council's summer break.

Ms. Dale MacLennan, Director, Financial Services explained the tax rate structure for general and area rates and guidelines regarding interim area rates. Interim area rates address all new rates being created and, therefore, would apply to snow removal rates. There was required, therefore, a public process which, in this case, would be lengthy enough to prohibit approval by Regional Council this week. The issue in this case is whether or not this service should be provided throughout the Municipality or accepted under area rates. She was suggesting it could be deferred until the fall for the budget process and addressed in its entirety for 2002/03.

Councillor Walker expressed concern that no one had told him of the need for a public process until just recently which did not allow time for him to hold a public meeting. At this point in time, he was willing to consider an area rate for one year only and look at it again in the fall. If it was not done tonight, he could not do it for 2001/02.

Ms. MacLennan said there were two issues. If it was done internally, the equipment would have to be bought and might have to be sold after a year and it would have to be based on costs, not on a rate. The area rate guidelines have been in place since January, 2000.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal asked if true activity costs would be considered in September. In response, Mr. Dhillon advised that a report will be coming forward to Regional Council in September.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal then asked if Councillor Walker should go forward with a motion and it goes to Regional Council, would there be enough staff available for Councillor Walker's District. In response, Mr. Dhillon advised that it would be necessary to obtain additional external resources.

Deputy Mayor Blumenthal then stated that he was not interested for his District since he had about 100 km. of sidewalk

Councillor Mosher referred to different costs in different areas and asked if exact costs would be determined in the future. In response, Mr. Dhillon said that a certain level of service would have to be provided which would have to be covered by an area rate. It was hard to provide numbers based on the uniqueness of different areas.

Councillor Mosher asked if it was possible to increase the rate in areas now being provided with the service so that the cost burden can be shared. In response, Mr. Dhillon advised

that if it was going to be a general/standard service, there would be a uniform rate across HRM which most likely would be out of the general rate.

Ms. MacLennan cautioned that there might be difficulties if the issue is brought to Regional Council in a hurried fashion. The ideal situation would be to bring it to Regional Council as a typical area rate problem coupled with service issues when the budget process gets underway. She pointed out that it seemed last winter that the unhappiest taxpayers were the ones with the service. If Regional Council decides that this is a standard service, then it should not be area rated.

Councillor Mosher asked if there would be a thorough public participation process held similar to the C & D process to make sure there is appropriate feedback. In response, Ms. MacLennan advised that individual Councillors could work through their Districts with Newsletters and talk with their constituents and staff could host individual sessions this fall. It would be necessary, however, to see how much of an undertaking it would be.

Councillor Uteck explained problems with sidewalks in her area and advised that she could not go forward with this service with no guarantee that it could be provided. She provided information on services from Youth Live. She felt that sidewalks should be repaired first before they can be considered for plowing.

Councillor Whalen said her concern was with inequities in the provision of service and subsidization of costs. She did not have a problem with a District wanting to add an interim area rate but she was not in a position to introduce one in District 16 at this time. Councillor Sloane stated she could not proceed with an area rate at this time because she could not hold a meeting.

**MOVED by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Mosher to recommend that Regional Council set an area rate of .0063 on both residential and commercial rates for one year (2001/02) to raise \$40,000 in District 15 of Halifax Regional Municipality to clear sidewalks. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**