

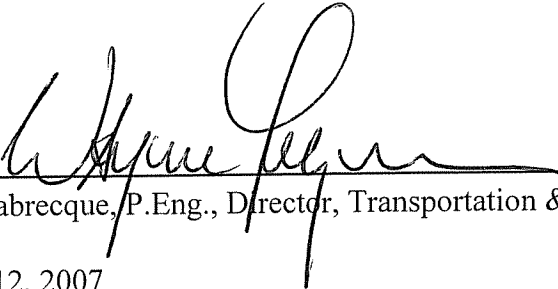


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Halifax Regional Council
March 20, 2007

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


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

DATE:

March 12, 2007

SUBJECT:

Mid-Season Winter Works Program Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Staff

BACKGROUND

The "Winter Works" operation season spans from November to April each fiscal year. This year's program will run from November 13, 2006 to April 8, 2007.

DISCUSSION

This is a mid-season report with information provided as at March 2, 2007. The formal Winter Works season ends on April 8, 2007. Staff will provide a full season report, including an accounting of all hours of work, in early spring. To date, all service standards, as approved by Council, have been met for the 2006/07 winter season, except for some minor issues during the first snow storm. The program has seen no reduction in service.

“Winter Works” is comprised of three (3) levels of priority tasks:

Priority 1

Priority 1 Winter Works tasking includes all activities involved with the direct handling and removal of snow and ice from HRM’s streets, sidewalks/crosswalks, parking lots, and bus stops. To date, over 64,000 labour hours have been spent on this level of activity with a total cost of \$7,069,088.

Priority 1 servicing has been expanded to include sidewalk clearing of all arterials and transit routes with the former City of Halifax and the introduction of the Seniors and Disabled Snow Removal Program. The total budgeted costs for these enhancements is \$1,900,000. With respect to the Seniors and Disabled Persons program, staff has been able to provide a 200% increase over last year, in the amount of servicing to HRM seniors and disabled persons, as a result of this expanded approach.

Priority 2

Priority 2 tasks are regular (i.e. non snow related) street, sidewalk, parks, and sportfield related maintenance activities that continue throughout the winter months. Generally speaking, Priority 2 tasks include spring repairs (i.e. snow damage), leaf pickup, asphalt patching & repairs, litter cleanup, fencing repairs, shouldering, graffiti removal, street cleaning, and park, playground & trail maintenance, and all other maintenance activities for which Municipal Operations is normally responsible.

Because of the light winter weather, nearly 71,000 staff hours have been assigned to tasks such as asphalt patching, tree/brush work, and playground equipment repairs, which often are relegated to the summer months. With the onset of the Winter Works program and the 2006 reorganization of the Transportation & Public Works business unit, Municipal Operations staff have been better able to support the maintenance of sportfields and playgrounds by utilizing staff and heavy equipment that had historically not been available, such as backhoes and dump trucks. This resulted in more playground equipment being replaced throughout the municipality, as well as other sportfield related infrastructure being developed.

As well, approximately 345 hours to date have been 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, is often unfulfilled during the winter months.

Snow Damage

During this reporting period, 174 Hansen Service Requests related to damage from snowplows and sidewalk equipment were initiated. All citizens requesting a call-back have been contacted. The overall spring repair program is scheduled to begin in April 2007, however some repairs may be completed sooner if weather permits.

The table below provides a more detailed breakdown of the work orders assigned:

| Work Order Breakdown - Priority 2 & 3 Tasking (Nov. 13, 2006 - Mar 2, 2007) | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Task | # of Work Orders | # of Hours |
| Asphalt Patching | 327 | 5134 |
| Graffiti | 263 | 521 |
| Litter / Garbage | 186 | 12,564 |
| Trees / Pruning | 132 | 1889 |
| Playground Equipment | 128 | 2218 |
| Bleachers/Benches | 60 | 651 |
| Fencing | 58 | 90 |
| Asphalt / Grading | 56 | 500 |
| Signage | 52 | 1371 |
| Sportfields / Diamonds | 32 | 1079 |
| Sport Courts / Skate Parks | 25 | 169 |
| Sidewalks / Concrete | 20 | 415 |
| Leaf Collection | 18 | 21,482 |
| Training, Vacation, Sick Leave etc. | N/A | 22,202 |
| Priority 3 (Facilities / Special Events) | 78 | 7645 |
| Total Priority 2 and 3 | 1435 | 77,930 |

Priority 3

Priority 3 activities are those performed by Municipal Operations staff on behalf of areas outside of their reporting structure, such as Traffic and Transportation, Recreation, and Special Events. This type of servicing continues to achieve good success in terms of resource management and goal achievement. Over 7,600 hours to date have been spent on this level of tasking. These requests are

predominantly comprised of facility maintenance activities and special events support, particularly in the Capital District.

Probably one of Municipal Operations' best service offerings is its ability to provide experienced and technically proficient labour options to other agencies and business units, during periods of minimal weather activity. Municipal Operations can often be called upon to provide labour support to clients for a wide variety of tasks, both day and night.

Cost Analysis

The Budget for the 2006/07 Winter Works program is \$12,730,000. The overall 2006/07 Winter Works expenditure to date is \$9,103,578.

| Year | Priority 1 - Snow and Ice Costs (Net of sidewalks) |
|----------------------------|---|
| 2006/07 (to March 2, 2007) | \$ 6,576,604 |
| 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 |

Because of the efficiencies drawn from the savings in Priority 1 activities, more effort has been re-directed to Priority 2 and 3 level tasks. The total cost for these activities during the November 13 - March 2nd time period was \$2,034,490.

A breakdown of each level of Priority costs is below:

| Priority | Labour Hours | Labour Costs | Total Costs |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Priority 1 | 64,040 | \$ 2,074,921 | \$ 7,069,088 |
| Priority 2 | 70,285 | \$ 2,002,138 | \$1,834,721 |
| Priority 3 | 7,645 | \$ 32,352 | \$199,769 |
| Total | 141,970 | \$ 4,109,411 | \$ 9,103,578 |

Efficiencies

These efficiencies can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, 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.

Secondly, weather data so far this winter has seen less snow fall and milder temperatures than is typical. Snowfall events tended to be followed by mild temperatures which often negated the need to remove snow in the Capital District. Fewer weather events also results in a reduction in the need for salt and sand usage.

| Weather Events | Budget for 2006/07 | Actual for 2006/07 to March 2, 2007 |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Major snowfalls (over 15 cms) | 4 | 1 |
| Average snowfalls (5 - 15 cms) | 8 | 3 |
| Minor snowfalls (1-5 cms) | 9 | 12 |
| Freezing rain events | 3 | 3 |
| Salting events (freeze/thaw, frost, runoffs, blowing snow) | 40 | 20 |

There has been a significant emphasis placed on Works Control for service monitoring and capturing costing data since November, that has focussed on “planned” or regularly occurring maintenance activities. Staff has expanded usage of Hansen and SAP modules to more effectively monitor and resolve customer service requests and properly capture costs for budgetary purposes.

As well, there has been a more proactive approach toward “demand” or preventative maintenance programs. Resources have been assigned to identify and expand opportunities for Priority 2 and 3 tasks, particularly during the winter months. During this reporting period, staff has proactively initiated over 1350 Work Orders that account for nearly 14,000 hours of Priority 2 and 3 Winter Works labour. These activities include identifying more opportunities to support to facilities such as the Forum Complex and Metro Transit garages while increasing day-to-day maintenance activities such as replacing and repairing park benches, bleachers, and picnic tables, and litter pickup, etc.

Finally, a reorganization of the Transportation and Public Works business unit in April 2006, included an amalgamation of all municipal operations activities, namely Streets & Roads, Sidewalks, Parks & Open Spaces, and Playgrounds & Sportfields. This new section includes 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 and has provided excellent opportunities for expanded service efficiencies.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None

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.

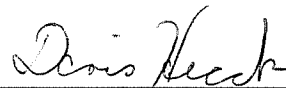
ALTERNATIVES

There are no recommended alternatives.

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

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