



PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

## Item No. 3

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 9, 2009**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque".

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

**DATE:** December 2, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Snow Service Standards & Earlier Retainers

### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

Request from Councillor Younger:

1. Cost implications of securing earlier retainers beginning November 1st versus December 1st; and,
2. Cost of changing snow service standards to include requirements to have a cut thru during the storm or immediately after the storm.

Note: This request was originally intended to come via a motion of Council for a staff report. The motion wasn't brought forward as staff committed to bring the report forward anyway.

## **BACKGROUND**

According to Environment Canada, the average total snowfall for November in Halifax is 6.9 cms. Since 2000 there have been three occasions (2002, 2005 & 2008) where early winter storms necessitated the requirement to bring in heavy equipment (loaders, graders) for cleanup.

Currently HRM's performance based sidewalk contractors are required to be available by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Contractors, on retainer for streets, are to be ready and available from November 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. There are currently 58 truck plows on retainer. Internal staff begin Winter Works Operations the second Friday in November. Fifty eight loaders/graders are also on retainer beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>. During the storm of November 21<sup>st</sup>, 153 of 176 pieces of equipment including internal equipment and loaders, were available for street snow removal. Internal equipment began operations at 10:00 pm with pre-salting, and contracted equipment was deployed between 2:00 am at 6:00 am.

On Friday, November 21, 2008, the weather forecast called for a major winter storm starting at 11:00 pm Friday night with up to 30 cms of snow by 11:00 am on Saturday November 22, 2008. While the amount of snowfall was accurate, the snowfall came between 11:00 pm and 8:00 am Saturday morning.

HRM staff and contractors began snow removal operations at 10:00 pm Friday evening, and completed over 95% of the total streets and roads within standards (see Attachment A).

Under the current approved service standards it notes that "In snowfalls greater than 30 cms, or in blizzard conditions, service standards may not be achieved".

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Cost implications of requiring earlier retainers for loaders/graders beginning November 1**

The cost of retaining loaders/graders beginning November 1 would be an additional \$75,000. As the construction industry is still active in November, there may be some contractors who would not be able to meet the requirements of the retainer and would opt not to contract with the HRM.

### **2. Cost of changing snow service standards to include requirements to have a cut through during or immediately after the storm for Priority 2 streets**

Service standards presently call for a cut through on Priority 2 (residential) streets starting after 10 cms of snow. In most instances cut throughs are completed within a ten hour period but the standards allow up to 24 hours to complete

In order to change the standard, HRM would need an additional 75 pieces of equipment. If this work were to be done with contracted equipment, this would require an additional \$390,000 to retainer fees and approximately \$90,000 per event. On average

the region has four to seven events per year where this amount of equipment would be needed

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resulting in an additional \$700,000 to \$1,000,000 in costs per year. The current service level for P1 streets (see attached) is for 3-hour turnaround times and to be cleared after 12 hours from the end of the snowfall. To achieve this, HRM has 20 tandem plows and 15 single axle truck plows in its own fleet. In addition, there are 30 contracted tandem plows and 28 contracted single axle truck plows.

During storms of 20+ cms the ability of some of these trucks becomes limited and the duration to clean up the P1 streets is lengthened. As a result, the amount of equipment dedicated to starting cut-throughs on the P2 streets is limited to the heavy equipment (loaders/graders). As more P1 streets are finished, the equipment is directed to the P2 streets. It should be noted that over the last two seasons service standards have been met or have been exceeded nearly 99% of the time.

The priority on the P1 streets are the main arterial and bus routes, followed by the major collector roads (over 12,000 average day traffic counts), and then the streets with over 10% grade.

On P2 streets the minor collector roads are done first, followed by the crescents, cul de sacs, gravel roads and private lanes.

In the event of emergencies during a heavy snowfall, the 911 Call Center contacts the dispatch center for Municipal Operations and the closest available plow is immediately dispatched to the particular street to assist the emergency vehicle.

Staff is currently investigating service standards in other cities throughout eastern Canada and preliminary information indicates that HRM has a higher service standard than most other cities. Once this research is complete this information will be distributed to Council.

Following the meetings with Councillors on snow and ice operations, staff committed to improve communications before and during an event. Municipal Operations staff is working with Web Services to make the standards more visible on the HRM home page and to provide regular updates during events through the use of the HRM website. As well, staff has already taken out two ads in the local paper which will run all of December, twice per week.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

No budget implications for the 2008-2009 year. If changes are made in service levels and dates when retainers will begin, costs will be included in the 2009/2010 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.

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment A: Snow Event Service Standard Report (Event # 2)

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.

Report Prepared by

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Denis Huck, Manager Municipal Operations, TPW 490-4673

## Attachment A

### Snow Event Service Standard Report      Event #2

**Start Date of Event:** Friday Nov 21, 2008, 11:00 pm

**General Notes:** Contractor trucks were brought in between midnight and 2:00 am and loaders/graders brought in 6:00 -7:00 am. Note that the contractor loader and graders are not required to be ready and available until Dec 1st.

**End of Snow fall:** 10:00 am Saturday Nov 22, 2008

#### Streets

	Standard	West	Central	East
Priority 1	3 hour turnaround	achieved	achieved	achieved
	streets cleared 12 hours from end of snowfall	achieved see note 1.	achieved	achieved
Priority 2	cleared 24 hours from end of snow fall	92% achieved see note 2	95% achieved see note 3	95% achieved see note 4

## Sidewalks

	Standard	West	Central	East
Arterial	plowed 12 hours from end of snow fall	30% achieved see note 5&6	25% achieved see note 5&7	25% achieved see note 5&8
	salted 18 hours from end of snow fall	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going
Transit	plowed 18 hours from end of snow fall	35% achieved see note 5 &6	70% achieved see note 6	40% achieved see note 7
	salted 24 hours from end of snow fall	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going
Residential	plowed 36 hours from end of snow fall	60% achieved see note 5&6	75% achieved see note 5&7	40% achieved see note 5&8
	salted 48 hours from end of snowfall	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going	not achieved on-going
Bus Stops	cleared 72 hours from end of snow fall	on-going	on-going	on-going
Sidewalk Intersections	cleared 72 hours from end of snow fall	on-going	N/A	N/A

## Notes

1. By 5pm Sat afternoon the P1 streets were cleared. There were some intersections and lane widening snow removal that took place Sat and Sunday nights. Metro Transit were able to put all 69 routes out at 8:30 am under their snow plan and by 2 pm all but 2 (#58 & #62) and were able to operate under their normal routing.
2. There were some issues with 12 loaders not being available for the west area which caused slow down in the clean up. In addition, parked cars added to the difficulty of plows being able to plow at speed to get the snow to the curb and in many cases to get down the street at all which result in snow pack. Some streets were missed (Harvey, streets off Larry Utech). By Sunday at 10 am 92% of the P2 streets were cleared, albeit some required additional push back over night.
3. Central region had 98% of the equipment available. Streets that received 1<sup>st</sup> cut throughs early Sat morning had them blown back in again. (95% were cleared within the 24 hours period) with some exceptions in Haliburton Hills which were done by noon on Sunday.
4. East had 98% of available equipment in operation with 95% of the P2 streets complete by 10 am and 100% by early Sunday afternoon. Because of snow packed some streets were re-done Sunday night using loaders.
5. The large volume of snow made for very difficult sidewalk operations particularly on the multi lane streets. Not only did you have the 30cm of snow but also the snow pushed over from 2 lanes of traffic. In addition there were large piles left from commercial and apartment unit parking lots dumped on the sidewalk as well as high banks at corners. Most P1 sidewalks were not started until late Sat afternoon after the streets were pushed back. As a general note, sidewalks that were done with a snow blower will require an additional scraping with a bucket.
6. By now most P1 sidewalks have been done with the exception of a stretch on Dutch Village Rd between Bayers and Scott. Work is still progressing on remaining P2 and P3 sidewalks and walkways and will be complete by tomorrow morning.
7. As of noon today 90% of the sidewalk work is complete with the rest being done by this evening.
8. There were issues of performance with one of the new Performance Based contractors. As a result sidewalks in the Eastern Passage area were not started until Sunday noon and additional equipment brought in Sunday afternoon to assist in the Woodlawn/Portland Hills area. There were also equipment breakdown with in-house equipment resulting in approx 40 lost equipment hours. There are still some sidewalks in the Dunbarton/Gourek area to do as well as some walkways in the Cole Harbor/Colby area.