



PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

## Item No. 4

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 7, 2009**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Labrecque", written over a horizontal line.

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Labrecque, Director Transportation and Public Works

**DATE:** June 18, 2009

**SUBJECT:** **Safety Concerns Sidewalk Snow Clearing**  
**- Responsibility and Deadlines**

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

Item 8.4 raised at the meeting of Halifax Regional Council of February 10, 2009. “Moved by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Blumenthal that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on costing and the possibility of matching HRM’s overall sidewalk clearing standards with the standards they expect of residents, and the possibility of punitive measures for contractors who do not meet these standards.

Councillor Johns requested that any differences in snow clearing standards for contractors from previous years to this year be clarified in the staff report.

Councillor Harvey requested that the staff report recognize that in districts such as his, walkways become sidewalks when they connect such amenities as schools and bus stops, and that they be considered for the implementation of such standards as well.”

## **BACKGROUND**

Service standards for sidewalk snow and ice control were debated during the Halifax Regional Municipality Committee of the Whole meeting of February 21, 2006. This debate was as a result of a staff Supplementary Report dated February 8, 2006. The report in part outlined the proposed service standards for sidewalk snow and ice control as written below:

- ▶ Business Districts (P1) ----- cleared 12 hours from end of snowfall
- ▶ Main Arterials (P1)----- cleared 12 hours from end of snowfall
- ▶ Transit Routes (P2)-----cleared 18 hours from end of snowfall
- ▶ Residential (P3)-----cleared 36 hours from end of snowfall

The following motion was passed and approved:

1. All arterials and transit routes within the Municipality be funded through the Urban General Tax rate;
2. An enhanced Seniors and Disabled Individuals' sidewalk snow removal program funded through the Urban General rate;
3. Continue the service in the areas which receive residential sidewalk snow removal and fund through a single area rate; and
4. That sidewalk snow removal program be set for a period of not less than five years allowing staff to make the necessary operational and service level improvements to ensure program effectiveness.

## **DISCUSSION**

HRM Municipal Operations is currently providing sidewalk snow removal service to 650 kms of sidewalks and walkways. HRM unionized in-house workforce (utilizing HRM equipment), service 111 kms. Performance based sidewalk contracts service the remaining 539 kms. Both programs use the service standards (noted above) as their operating mandate for deploying resources. Standards have remained unchanged since 2006. It should be clarified that walkways leading directly to schools, bus stops and bus routes are serviced at the P2 standard.

Current funding, available resources, and liability must be considered when reviewing the cost to service all sidewalks to the 12 hour (or P1) standard. The major cost involved would be the increase in required equipment and human resources to enable Municipal Operations to meet the challenges of the (P1) 12 hour time frame. Further consideration would be the additional cost related to repeated or secondary scraping resulting from snow squall activity that generally accompanies snow events, including the additional salt or sand required. To achieve the P1 service standard on sidewalks and walkways currently receiving service, the equipment capacity would need to increase by approximately 30 machines and operators.

The following table illustrates the breakdown in potential increased costs:

Sidewalk Class	Kms	per km Increase to P1 Service Standard	Budget Increase
P1	195	N/A	N/A
P2	195	\$2,600	\$507,000
P3	260	\$4,500	\$1,170,000
Total	650		\$1,677,000

Performance sidewalk contracts are based on the three (3) tier service standards. These contracts would require re-negotiating. HRM delivers the majority (25 routes) of sidewalk snow and ice control through Performance Based Contracts. Currently seven (7) sidewalk routes are entering their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year of a four (4) year contract, and 18 are entering into the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) year of a four (4) year contract.

There would be a higher degree of risk exposure for liability and risk management issues associated with an increase to current service standards. These costs would also be reflected in a re-negotiated contract.

During the winter of 2008/2009 several major storms, with snow and rain, were immediately followed by extreme freezing temperatures. This resulted in heavy ice conditions on the sidewalks. Under these conditions it was virtually impossible to achieve bare surface on the sidewalks, including some sidewalks serviced to the P1 standard.

While the Performance Based Sidewalk Contracts have several clauses that speak to penalties for non-performance, staff applied a degree of discretion in working with contractors to put best efforts forward until these extreme conditions improved. However, there were some punitive measures taken with contractors who did not meet the service standards.

There are two standards of service. Those under By-Law S-300 which applies to the abutters of the sidewalk, and the service standard applied to the 650 km of municipally cleared sidewalks. The approach utilized by both By-Law Services and Municipal Operations involves utilizing a measured response based upon the environmental conditions, working with the citizens/contractors to achieve a safe sidewalk, and the use of punitive measures when required.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There would be no budget implications to maintain the status quo.

**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.

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 :                      Gordon Hayward , Winter Works Superintendent Municipal Operations , 490-4956  
   Jeff Rodgers, Regional Coordinator By-Law Enforcement, 490-3588



Report Approved by:                      Peter Verge, Manager Municipal Operations, 490- 4673