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Item No. 4

**Halifax Regional Council
February 9, 2010**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ken Reashor", written over a horizontal line.

Ken Reashor, P.Eng., Traffic Authority

DATE: January 20, 2010

SUBJECT: Petition to Rescind the Winter Parking Ban - Councillor Sloane

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Item 10.2.1 raised at the January 12, 2010 meeting of Halifax Regional Council.

BACKGROUND

A petition containing 366 signatures from Mr. John Wesley Chisholm was submitted requesting that HRM Council find a better way to solve the problem of clearing snow from city streets than using a winter parking ban to fine citizens even when there is no snow.

DISCUSSION

The Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act provides the Local Traffic Authority with the ability to declare an overnight parking ban during the winter months to ensure that public safety is maintained through the effective clearing of snow and ice from the streets. While the Overnight Winter Parking Ban in HRM is not always popular, after three years without one (from 1999 to 2002), it was determined to be the most effective option for the HRM Core Service Area. Although the HRM Traffic Authority declares the ban, the decision involves a collaboration of representatives from Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Municipal Operations, Parking Enforcement, Community Development, Corporate Communications, Call Centre, Regional Transportation, and Deputy CAO's office.

The Overnight Winter Parking Ban is intended to reduce significant problems experienced by plow & salt truck operators in providing effective and efficient snow and ice operations on HRM-owned streets. The parking ban provides a short window of opportunity for an operational shift to be completed in the early hours of the morning unimpeded by parked vehicles. It permits snow to be pushed back to the curb, resulting in a wider travel way, better street drainage, and snow plowing costs reduced by 20-30% per storm. A temporary parking ban also facilitates the movement of emergency vehicles during storms; reduces property damage; and allows for increased plowing efficiencies, thereby reducing the length of time it takes to clear all streets.

Municipal Operations has also introduced an incremental program of snow removal from congested areas. The scope of this removal strategy is governed by limited resources. This operation is conducted at night in designated areas. This approach improves snow clearing efficiencies for future storm events, reduces flooding during rain events, relieves congestion in high density areas such as in the downtown of Halifax/Dartmouth, and allows for maximum available parking during the day when it is most required resulting in a positive effect on business.

Comments in the petition generally reflected commonly expressed themes: ticket/tow only during snowstorms; issue warnings instead of tickets when there's no snow; investigate how it's done in other cities, eg. alternate side parking.

The biggest problem with enforcing only during actual snowfall is that, without the ban (from 1999 to 2002), residents without off-street parking often made no effort to secure any, so that when storm conditions did occur, they had no other option but to park on the street and hope not to get towed. Given that a snow event can occur at any time, it's important that vehicles are off the streets for everyone's safety and to help meet service delivery standards for snow clearing. If a vehicle is parked on a street when a snowplow arrives, service delivery is already negatively affected. Also, during a snowstorm, there's an increase in the number of traffic accidents and it becomes challenging for Police to be available for parking enforcement given the need for assistance from residents involved in accidents. As well, the availability of tow trucks for removal of parked vehicles is reduced during storms because they are needed to respond to collisions and requests for removal of stalled vehicles and their response time is compromised by road conditions.

Given the substantial publicity surrounding the Overnight Winter Parking Ban, the winter safety operations team considered it unnecessary for Police and Parking Enforcement to provide warnings instead of tickets. Enforcement, whether it was snowing or not, would ensure that residents made the necessary off-street parking arrangements in advance.

Judging from the reduced ticket counts (40% decrease), this year's winter parking ban is seemingly having a positive impact on reducing the number of cars on the street during the period that the winter ban is enforced.

Winter parking controls must be chosen to suit climatic conditions. Practices across the country are generally developed to respond to the unique weather conditions of the area and so what works in Toronto or Ottawa or Winnipeg or Montreal may not be applicable or practical for Halifax. The frequency of rainfall or melting snow in the Maritimes requires that, as much as possible, streets be clear of parked vehicles to enable push-back to curbs and catch-basins to prevent flooding conditions.

The following table illustrates the variety of means that areas across Canada set winter parking controls based on the expectation of rainfall or rapid melting following a snowfall. When rainfall occurs during near-freezing temperatures, it is essential that the rain be able to drain off the crown of the roadway into the gutters and catchbasins. Snow that is not cleared to the curb can prevent the proper drainage of this water resulting in the water being trapped on the roadway surface leading to the potential of black ice.

Winter Maintenance & Parking Controls	Winter Conditions Which Drive the Controls	Regions Where Used
All streets quickly cleared of snow to the curb line. Reliance on an overnight parking ban.	Quick melting of snowfall or follow-up rainfall and freezing is a frequent occurrence.	Atlantic Canada
All streets eventually cleared of snow to the curb line. May use alternating side of the street parking ban.	Quick melting of snowfall or follow-up of rainfall is unusual, but a possibility.	Central Canada
Plowing of designated "snow routes". All other streets receive little or no winter maintenance. Parking restrictions applied only to snow routes.	Any occurrence of rainfall or mid-winter melting is rare.	Western Canada

PARKING BANS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS				
Jurisdiction	Overnight Ban			Comments
	Full	Partial	None	
Truro, NS	●			
New Glasgow, NS	●			
Cape Breton R.M.	●			
Amherst, NS	●			
Charlottetown, PE	●			
Moncton, NB	●			
Saint John, NB		●		for designated downtown streets, full ban on remainder
Fredericton, NB	●			year-round ban
St. John's, NF		●		for designated downtown streets, full ban on remainder
Corner Brook, NF	●			year-round ban, normally only enforced in winter

For small to moderate snow/ice events, a single overnight shift with prohibited parking usually provides adequate response. With an alternate side of the street policy in place, a double shift would be required regardless of the size of the snow event. For many events, this would automatically affect the current service standards and double the cost of the response. If snow melts then freezes hard on one side of the street while waiting to be cleared on the second or subsequent nights, plow blades will ride up over the hard ice or will plow up large blocks of ice which then fill driveway openings.

While it is acknowledged that residents without driveways, or with more vehicles than they have off-street parking spaces for are significantly inconvenienced by the requirement to make suitable arrangements for off-street parking during the winter, the fact remains that streets are primarily intended to provide safe, orderly flow for traffic and not to provide permanent residential parking.

While any regulation of on-street parking must balance convenience and public safety, the safety aspects are often not clearly evident and are sometimes undervalued. Maintaining adequate public safety must be the primary consideration.

In conclusion, the Traffic Authority remains of the opinion that an overnight winter parking ban is necessary to maintain adequate level of safety on municipal streets during the winter period and will not be rescinding the ban.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications.

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.

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