


# HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Item No. 14.1.9**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 24, 2015**

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

Original signed by 

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 16, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Winter Sidewalk Service Improvements for Winter 2015/16

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## **ORIGIN**

August 4, 2015 (Regional Council) – Ratification of Motion of Committee of the Whole – Winter Operations 2014/2015 – Strategic Direction Recommendations:<sup>1</sup>

**MOVED** by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Whitman,

Working within existing approved contracts and resources, direct staff to return to Regional Council in November 2015 with options to improve sidewalk service outcomes, including service coordination, street intersections, and accessibility.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* 2008, c. 39, s. 79 (1) (f) confers legislative authority to expend money required by the Municipality for snow and ice removal.

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter* 2008, c. 39, s. 322 (3) confers legislative authority to expend funds for the purpose of clearing snow and ice from the streets, sidewalks and public places in all, or part, of the Municipality.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Halifax Regional Council recommend that staff continue with the initiated service improvements as described in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/c150804.pdf> (Item 14.2)

## **BACKGROUND**

On Aug. 4, 2015, staff presented the Winter Operations Strategic Direction Recommendations Report<sup>2</sup>, including the independent review of the Winter Operations program by consultant Grant Thornton, to Committee of the Whole. Councillors discussed and amended several of the staff recommendations, and Regional Council approved the following motions:

1. Endorse the following strategic directions to improve the delivery of the Winter Operations services as described in the discussion section of the report dated July 22, 2015, by:
  - a) Increasing 311 call centre capacity to respond to calls and e-mails during severe weather events;
  - b) Increasing capacity to monitor and measure performance and quality of contracted and in-house service delivery;
  - c) Taking necessary actions to improve compliance with snow-related parking prohibitions;
  - d) Improving operational readiness by securing additional equipment capability and strengthening winter operations planning; and
  - e) Stabilizing winter operations expenditures.
2. Improve sidewalk clearing by:
  - a) Working within existing approved contracts and resources, direct staff to return to Regional Council in November 2015 with options to improve sidewalk service outcomes including service coordination, street intersections, and accessibility; and
  - b) Extending the remaining nine sidewalk service contract routes through the 16/17 winter season and direct staff to return to Regional Council in November 2016 with recommendations on the sidewalk program commencing in the 17/18 winter season.
3. Request a staff report to consider the cost implications to revise the service standards with respect to: snow and ice for bus stops, sidewalks, intersections, the ramps at intersections, together with Priority 1 (P1) and Priority 2 (P2) streets to ensure public safety is met.
4. Direct staff to explore increased coordination between 311 and Winter Works staff to ensure there are no extended periods of cumulative time that service standards are not met.
5. Request a staff report regarding the possibility of HRM assuming the ice and snow control service for the upcoming 2015-16 winter season for the community of Mineville and the few remaining subdivision streets in the Lawrencetown area that are not currently under HRM Performance based contracts.

On September 24, 2015, a report dated September 15, 2015, submitted by the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was before the Transportation Standing Committee. The report detailed the observations and recommendations made by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and incorporated the following motion made by the Accessibility Advisory Committee on September 10, 2015 (see Attachment 1):

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/150804cow3.pdf>

**MOVED** by Gerry Post, seconded by Mikiko Terashima, that the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommend to the Transportation Standing Committee the following four areas for priority snow clearing for the 2015/16 winter season, in no particular order:

- sidewalks;
- curb cuts;
- bus stops, including access to the street; and
- signaled crosswalk activation buttons.

And that consideration be given to aligning snow clearing standards for sidewalks and bus stops to be the same standard as the street they serve.

Following a roundtable discussion, the Transportation Standing Committee made the following motion:

**MOVED** by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor McCluskey, that the Transportation Standing Committee refer the report regarding priority snow clearing for the 2015/16 winter season submitted by the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to staff and Regional Council.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report addresses the changes that staff will undertake to improve the winter sidewalk clearing service for the 2015/16 winter season within the constraints of the existing resources and contracts.

A further report will be presented in January 2016 addressing Halifax Regional Council's request for a staff report on the cost implications to revise the service standards with respect to: snow and ice for bus stops, sidewalks, intersections, the ramps at intersections, together with Priority 1 (P1) and Priority 2 (P2) streets to ensure public safety is met. The 2016 report will also address the matter of coordinating service standards for sidewalks, bus stops and streets in response to the needs identified by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

### **Increased Focus On Quality of Service Delivery**

Currently winter sidewalk service is delivered through a combination of in-house staff supplemented by hourly contractors, and by performance-based contractors. Attachment 2 contains the Performance Standard clause from Tenders 13-048 and 13-049 for P1 and P2 sidewalks. Attachment 3 contains the Performance Standard clause from Tender 14-086 for P3 sidewalks.

In meeting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and others, staff heard that an improved understanding of accessibility needs and attention to detail by our sidewalk contractors and in-house staff would result in much better sidewalk service outcomes. As noted in the July 22, 2015 Winter Operations Strategic Directions Recommendations Report, quality control inspection will be supplemented this year. Four Maintenance Planning Supervisors will provide additional inspection during significant snow clearing efforts following events. The consolidation of in-house resources (labour and equipment) within the urban core and the expansion of the performance-based contracts has allowed the redeployment of four shift supervisors to ensure greater oversight is provided to the sidewalk performance based contracts also.

In preparation for this winter season, the Superintendent of Winter Operations has met with all the contractors to review service level and performance expectations for the upcoming season, and our new supervisory structure identifying increased oversight of the contracts. It was emphasized that curb cuts, bus stops and access to crosswalk activation buttons must be cleared so that they do not become barriers to mobility.

The majority of the contractors commented that they have purchased additional equipment as well as attachments (narrower equipment, additional blowers, harder cutting edges etc.) as a result of their

experience from last season. Collectively, they recognized that a more proactive approach on their part would have assisted them in more efficiently meeting their contract obligations. Adjusted sidewalk clearing fleets (both in-house and contracted) will enhance sidewalk snow clearing capacity. Automatic vehicle location (AVL) installation will be completed in HRM sidewalk clearing equipment by December 1, 2015.

HRM has also updated a GIS map which identifies the location of bus stops, accessible bus stops, and problem area “hot” catchbasins. This will be of assistance to contractors and supervisors as they complete their inspections in the field. Where issues are identified, in-house or contracted resources will be mobilized.

### **Remove Barriers to Service Delivery**

It was noted that sidewalk clearing particularly in residential areas is often impeded by vehicles parked overhanging or fully blocking sidewalks. This results in sidewalks that aren't cleared properly and creates barriers to the mobility of those with accessibility needs. It also slows the progress of the sidewalk clearing crews as they are often forced to reverse and find a way around the parked vehicle. There will be increased efforts around communication and enforcement by ticketing and towing vehicles that interfere with snow clearing operations.

The Corporate Call Centre, Municipal Compliance, Halifax Regional Police, Corporate Communications and TPW have met to discuss priority parking enforcement and process improvements for ticketing and towing during snow events to improve plowing and snow removal service delivery. The Halifax Regional Police have recently issued a new towing contract which improves tow truck availability and provides options to utilize additional service providers if required. Priority areas are identified as those on bus routes and streets around hospitals and schools.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

On September 10, 2015 a special meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was called at staff's request.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Bruce Zvaniga, Director of Transportation and Public Works (TPW), and TPW staff attended the meeting, and requested that the Committee provide advice to staff and Regional Council (through the Transportation Standing Committee), identifying accessibility priority outcomes for the 2015/16 winter season.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate environmental implications to this recommendation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Council could direct staff to not proceed as described in this report, to research a specific improvement, or to give further direction on any specific item.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/access/documents/150910AACspminutes.pdf>

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 Report dated September 15, 2015, submitted by the Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to the Transportation Standing Committee.  
Attachment 2 Tender 13048 & 13049 Performance Standard  
Attachment 3 Tender 14-086 Performance Standard

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Bruce Zvaniga P.Eng – Director, Transportation & Public Works, 902.490.4855

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P.O. Box 1749  
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**Item No. 9.3.2**

**Transportation Standing Committee  
September 24, 2015**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Transportation Standing Committee

Original Signed

**SUBMITTED BY:**

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Ms. Patricia Gates, Chair, HRM Accessibility Advisory Committee

**DATE:** September 15, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Recommended Priority Areas for Snow Clearing - 2015/16 Winter Season

**ORIGIN**

Motion approved at the September 10, 2015 Accessibility Advisory Committee special meeting.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The main responsibility of the Accessibility Advisory Committee, as set out in its Terms of Reference, is to advise Halifax Regional Council, through the Transportation Standing Committee, on the impact of Municipal policies, programs and services on persons with disabilities.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Transportation Standing Committee recommend to Regional Council the following four areas for priority snow clearing for the 2015/16 winter season, in no particular order:

1. Sidewalks
2. Curb cuts
3. Bus stops, including access to the street
4. Signaled crosswalk activation buttons

And that consideration be given to aligning snow clearing standards for sidewalks and bus stops to be the same standard as the street they serve.

## **BACKGROUND**

On August 4, 2015, staff presented the Winter Operations 2014/2015 – Strategic Direction Recommendations to Committee of the Whole. An outcome from that meeting was a motion which included direction to staff to:

2. *Improve Sidewalk clearing by:*
  - a. *Working within existing approved contracts and resources, direct staff to return to Regional Council in **November** 2015 with options to improve sidewalk service outcomes, including service coordination, street intersections, and accessibility; and*

As a result of this motion, a special meeting of the Accessibility Advisory Committee was called on September 10, 2015 at the request of staff. Mr. Bruce Zvaniga, Director of Transportation and Public Works (TPW), and TPW staff attended the meeting, and requested that the Committee provide advice to staff, and to Regional Council, through the Transportation Standing Committee, identifying priority outcomes for the 2015/16 winter season.

The purpose of this report is to communicate to Regional Council, through the Transportation Standing Committee, the outcome of staffs' September 10, 2015, consultation with the Committee, and is intended as a companion document for Council in consideration of the November 2015 staff report, to inform Council's decision from the perspective of residents with disabilities.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Committee discussed issues encountered over the 2014/15 winter season, and made suggestions for improvements. The following is a summary of the issues and suggestions raised by the Committee:

- Articulating service standards so that they reflect what is needed and is enforceable.
- Having one contractor clearing bus stops, shelters, and the sidewalks around them would eliminate one service provider from plowing in the work of another.
- The clearing of sidewalks and bus stops should have the same standard as the street that they are adjacent to. For example, if a Priority 1 Road is to be cleared in 12 hours, the bus stops and sidewalks on that road should also be cleared in 12 hours.
- Snow clearance needs to be to the curb so that buses can provide their usual standard of service.
- Snow needs to be cleared around the signalized crosswalk activation push buttons at pedestrian crossings.
- Curb cuts need to be properly cleared, and should be designed with snow clearance in mind.
- Residents should have access to information about the locations of storm drains. A formal program be developed where individuals could adopt a drain, and an app be produced with the drain locations. The appropriate clearance of drains is very important to individuals in wheelchairs.
- An "E-311" app could be developed so that residents can take a picture of a problem, voice their concern and mark the location through Google Maps to ensure accurate reporting
- Improved training for snow removal staff, noting that it can be intimidating and difficult to navigate sidewalks being cleared by a bobcat for those with visual or other physical impairments.
- Reducing the height of snow banks is an important factor in increasing visibility and improving conditions for driver and pedestrian safety.
- Many individuals with disabilities view mobility in a complete start-to-finish trip fashion; any barriers encountered in their trip can make moving from place to place very difficult and potentially impossible.
- Challenges created when navigating pot holes.
- The significance of long term planning for winter operations, as opposed to short term measures, and the importance of communicating that plan to the public.
- Communication via all forms of media, including radio, for those without internet access.

- Difficulties encountered by individuals with guide dogs, as guide dogs are trained to go around obstacles, and many guide dogs considered snow and ice covered sidewalks last season to be obstacles, leading their owners into the road.

Several recurring themes were brought up throughout the meeting by members, those being the clearing of sidewalks, curb cuts, bus stops (including access to the street), and clearing of signalized crosswalk activation push buttons.

The Committee put forward the following recommendation by motion:

THAT the Accessibility Advisory Committee recommend to the Transportation Standing Committee the following four areas for priority snow clearing for the 2015/16 winter season, in no particular order:

1. Sidewalks
2. Curb cuts
3. Bus stops, including access to the street
4. Signalized crosswalk activation buttons

And that consideration be given to aligning snow clearing standards for sidewalks and bus stops to be the same standard as the street they serve.

Mr. Zvaniga advised that staff would take this recommendation into consideration in their November report to Regional Council.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications associated with the Committee's recommendations will be outlined in the November staff report to Council.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is comprised of eight volunteer citizen members and two members of Regional Council, plus staff liaison members from a number of HRM business units. Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. Minutes, agendas, reports and other information on the AAC are posted on the HRM website.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

None identified.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

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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: Jennifer Weagle, Legislative Assistant, 902-490-6517

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## **TENDER No. 13-048 & 13049**

### **PERFORMANCE STANDARD**

The Contractor shall meet or exceed the following performance standard (including but not limited to the **Performance Standard Matrix**) for winter snow and ice control on municipal sidewalks under the jurisdiction of HRM:

- A) Priority One Tasks: Plowing new snow from sidewalks, bus stops, and crosswalks.
- B) Priority Two Tasks: Salting/Sanding of sidewalks, bus stops, re-clearing of sidewalks from plow curls or areas that are subject to being refilled with snow from street operations.
- C) Bus stop to be cleared for the full length of the bus stop.

**C) Performance Standard Matrix**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Duration for Priority One tasks</b>	<b>Duration for priority two tasks</b>	<b>Description of end result</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Clearing of ice and snow from main arterial sidewalks	Sidewalks are cleared 12 hours from end of snowfall	18 hours	sidewalk down to full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to
Clearing of snow and ice from transit routes	Sidewalks to be cleared 18 hours from the end of the snowfall	24 hours	sidewalk down to full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to
Clearing of ice and snow from residential sidewalks	Sidewalks to be cleared 36 hours from end of snowfall	36 hours	sidewalk down to full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to
Clearing of bus stops abutting sidewalks	24 hours from end of snow fall	24 hours	bus stop has cleared pad for full length of bus	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to
Frozen rain		salting to commence within 2 hours of start of frozen rain/ice pellets  main arterial completion 6 hours  transit route completion 12 hours	full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to achieve
Freeze /thaw		8 hours	full width bare surface	Required Daily Inspections
Cleaning Remote Bus Stops		24 hrs from end of snowfall	Cleared full length to bare surface	

- 7.1 It is acknowledged that conditions may occur which may temporarily prevent achieving the prescribed level of service such as multiple snowfalls. In such cases, the Contractor shall attempt to keep the sidewalks open, passable and as safe as possible.

7.2 **Performance Standards Minimum Requirements General**

The following Performance Standards identifies the minimum requirements the Contractor shall provide and complete:

- a. All the Contractor's personnel engaged in winter snow and ice control activities shall be informed of their specific duties and shall be properly trained and knowledgeable of the prescribed Performance Standards.
- b. All the Contractor's operators shall become familiar with the arterial transit sidewalks on their as well as bus stops, cross walks and designated walkways;
- c. The Contractor shall inspect equipment to ensure proper working order. Any breakdowns shall be repaired immediately or replaced with equipment brought in.
- d. The Contractor shall report all vehicle accidents or property damage to HRM;
- e. The Contractor shall not engage in any confrontation with the general public. Refer such matters to HRM;
- f. All vehicles are to be operated in a safe manner, respecting legal speed limits and to be respectful and aware at all times of the users of the sidewalk;
- g. Plow curls at intersections, traffic islands, crosswalks, traffic signal activators, and from parked cars and other obstructions shall be checked and cleared after the storm;
- h. Contractors shall monitor and correct for freeze/thaw hazards as conditions warrant.

7.3 **Salt/Sanding Spreading:**

1. Salt should be applied after plowing operations are complete or when weather conditions dictate such as freezing rain events to provide a walking surface as bare as possible. Sand is to be used when daytime temperatures are below -10 degrees Celsius to provide a degree of traction.

#### 7.4 **Plowing**

1. Plowing shall begin no later than when accumulation of snow or slush on the road exceeds 15 cm. Once plowing operations are warranted, plowing shall be continuous from the beginning of the storm and continue for the duration of the storm for all levels of the performance standard. (As per the activity in **Performance Standard Matrix**)

#### 7.5 **Snow Clearing and (Salt/Sand) Spreading of Bus Stops:**

1. Snow clearing and salt/sand spreading of bus stops shall be undertaken after road plowing is substantially complete.
2. Bus stops shall be cleared of snow along their full length (15 meters) in order to allow passengers to exit both the front and rear doors of a bus. Traffic protection for snow clearing of bus stops shall be provided by the Contractor in accordance with Nova Scotia Work Place Control Manual (when clearing and piling snow, the snow shall not be piled against fences, trees, hydrants or shrubbery). In addition, snow shall not be piled as to obstruct the view of vehicular traffic, particularly at intersections. A salt or sand/salt mix shall also be applied after snow clearing.
3. Contractor shall clear remote bus stops not attached to sidewalks as listed in Appendix "B" under the quoted unit prices. Bus stops shall be cleared as per performance requirements for P2 sidewalks.

## TENDER No. 14-086

### **PERFORMANCE STANDARD**

The Contractor shall meet or exceed the following performance standard (including but not limited to the **Performance Standard Matrix**) for winter snow and ice control on municipal sidewalks under the jurisdiction of HRM:

- A) Priority One Tasks: Plowing new snow from sidewalks, bus stops, and crosswalks.
- B) Priority Two Tasks: Salting/Sanding of sidewalks, bus stops, re-clearing of sidewalks from plow curls or areas that are subject to being refilled with snow from street operations.
- C) Bus stop to be cleared for the full length of the bus stop.
- D) Performance Standard Matrix

Activity	Duration for Priority One tasks	Duration for priority two tasks	Description of end result	Comments
Clearing of ice and snow from residential P3 sidewalks and hand route locations	Sidewalks to be cleared 36 hours from end of snowfall	36 hours	sidewalk down to full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to achieve
Frozen rain for P3 sidewalks and hand route location		salting to commence within 2 hours of start of frozen rain/ice pellets  residential route completion 18 hours	full width bare surface	may require repeated scraping and salt/sand applications to achieve
Freeze /thaw		8 hours	full width bare surface	Required Daily Inspections

7.1 It is acknowledged that conditions may occur which may temporarily prevent achieving the prescribed level of service such as multiple snowfalls. In such cases, the Contractor shall attempt to keep the sidewalks open, passable and as safe as possible.

7.2 **Performance Standards Minimum Requirements General**

The following Performance Standards identifies the minimum requirements the Contractor shall provide and complete:

- a. All the Contractor's personnel engaged in winter snow and ice control activities shall be informed of their specific duties and shall be properly trained and knowledgeable of the prescribed Performance Standards.
- b. All the Contractor's operators shall become familiar with the arterial transit sidewalks on their as well as bus stops, cross walks and designated walkways;
- c. The Contractor shall inspect equipment to ensure proper working order. Any breakdowns shall be repaired immediately or replaced with equipment brought in.
- d. The Contractor shall report all vehicle accidents or property damage to HRM;
- e. The Contractor shall not engage in any confrontation with the general public. Refer such matters to HRM;
- f. All vehicles are to be operated in a safe manner, respecting legal speed limits and to be respectful and aware at all times of the users of the sidewalk;
- g. Plow curls at intersections, traffic islands, crosswalks, traffic signal activators, and from parked cars and other obstructions shall be checked and cleared after the storm;
- h. Contractors shall monitor and correct for freeze/thaw hazards as conditions warrant.

7.3 **Salt/Sanding Spreading:**

1. Salt should be applied after plowing operations are complete or when weather conditions dictate such as freezing rain events to provide a walking surface as bare as possible. Sand is to be used when daytime temperatures are below -10 degrees Celsius to provide a degree of traction.

#### 7.4 **Plowing**

1. Plowing shall begin no later than when accumulation of snow or slush on the road exceeds 15 cm. Once plowing operations are warranted, plowing shall be continuous from the beginning of the storm and continue for the duration of the storm for all levels of the performance standard. (As per the activity in **Performance Standard Matrix**)

#### 7.5 **Snow Clearing and Salt/Sand Spreading of Bus Stops:**

1. Snow clearing and salt/sand spreading of bus stops shall be undertaken after road plowing is substantially complete.
2. Bus stops shall be cleared of snow along their full length (15 meters) in order to allow passengers to exit both the front and rear doors of a bus. Traffic protection for snow clearing of bus stops shall be provided by the Contractor in accordance with Nova Scotia Work Place Control Manual (when clearing and piling snow, the snow shall not be piled against fences, trees, hydrants or shrubbery). In addition, snow shall not be piled as to obstruct the view of vehicular traffic, particularly at intersections. A salt or sand/salt mix shall also be applied after snow clearing.
3. Contractor shall clear remote bus stops not attached to sidewalks as listed in Appendix "B" under the quoted unit prices. Bus stops shall be cleared as per performance requirements for P2 sidewalks.