

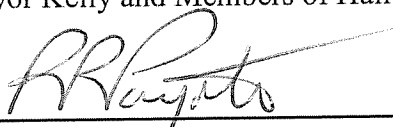


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Halifax Regional Council  
November 4, 2003

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
Rick Paynter, P.Eng. Director - Public Works & Transportation

**DATE:** October 27, 2003

**SUBJECT:** **Comprehensive Review of Snow & Ice Operations - Interim Report**

## INFORMATION REPORT

### ORIGIN

At Committee of the Whole, February 18, 2003, staff was requested to return to Regional Council with a comprehensive report on all snow and ice operations. A comprehensive review was also brought forward as part of the 2003/04 Business Plan (Public Works & Transportation).

### BACKGROUND

The extent of expenditures incurred regarding the winter snow and ice program over the past two years has triggered the need to undertake a comprehensive review of that operation. The review process is focussing on the following elements:

- a review of the effectiveness and efficiencies of the current service delivery model for snow and ice removal with a view toward benchmarking them against other models and/or municipalities;
- the need for management of road salt in light of Environment Canada's declaration of salt as Canadian Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA) toxic. This will include the development and implementation of a salt management plan for HRM;
- issues relating to winter parking that impact on snow and ice removal operations;
- challenges surrounding sidewalk snow removal;
- overtime costs and;
- fleet costs.

## DISCUSSION

Early this summer, the Director of Public Works and Transportation requested that a group of HRM staff be engaged to review the current Snow and Ice Program and report back on findings and recommendations for improved service delivery. To ensure a fair and objective review process, this team consists of HRM staff members who are at arms length from the management body of Public Works & Transportation that is involved in the decision making and delivery of the Snow & Ice operations. Representatives from Financial Services, Legal Services, and the Chief Administrative and Deputy Chief Administrative Offices comprise the members of the review team. Where necessary, the team has been acquiring external resources where time constraints and/or technical knowledge would be appropriate. A full Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix A.

The review team had commenced a study and analysis of all operational and financial components of HRM's snow and ice removal operations, including an independent audit of the major cost areas in the snow and ice program, namely: salary/benefits (i.e. overtime usage); hired equipment; fleet costs; material costs and; street and sidewalk winter program functionality. As part of the review process, the review team has also asked for input from key staff (both in Public Works and Transportation as well as other business unit stakeholders) about how to make the snow and ice program more cost-effective and efficient.

Part of the project involves a review of options for budget resource allocation including existing service standards relating to snow and ice operations to ensure that these are compatible. This includes a review of sidewalk snow removal operations within peninsular Halifax. The team has determined that a financial analysis for the past four (4) years would provide a substantive overview of trends in the snow and ice program. The four year period was selected for two reasons:

1. The SAP program was implemented in 1999, and thus allows for a consistent review of financial information over the last four years.
2. The current CUPE 108 Collective Agreement was signed in November, 2000 i.e. three years ago. Referring to the previous Collective Agreement, which ended in 1999, will highlight any changes that may have had an impact on the management and cost implications of the Snow & Ice operations.

The review team is currently in the process of completing its analysis of all the information that has been gathered since early this summer. It is intended that the preliminary findings and recommendations will be presented to the Director of Public Works and Transportation shortly, and to the Executive Management Team immediately following acceptance by the Director. It is anticipated that staff will be in a position to present a summary of the report findings to Regional council shortly thereafter.

## BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

**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.

**ATTACHMENT**

Terms of Reference - Operational Review of Snow and Ice Program, Public Works and Transportation

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.  
Report Prepared by: Liz Kingston, Coordinator - Director's Office, Public Works & Transportation 490-4862



## Terms of Reference Operational Review of Snow and Ice Program Public Works and Transportation

The Director of Public Works and Transportation has requested that a group of HRM staff be engaged to review the current Snow and Ice Program and report back on findings and recommendations for improved service delivery. To ensure a fair and objective review process, this team consists of HRM staff members who are at arms length from the management body of Public Works & Transportation that is involved in the decision making and delivery of the Snow & Ice operations. Where necessary, the team will acquire external resources where time constraints and/or technical knowledge would be appropriate.

### **The Review Team** will consist of:

1. Cathie Osborne, Team Lead, Business Systems and Control, Financial Services - Chair
2. Margaret Soley, Coordinator, Deputy Chief Administrator's Office
3. Cathie O'Toole, Executive Assistant, Chief Administrator's Office
4. Kathy Smith, Financial Consultant, Financial Services
5. Wayne Anstey, Director, Legal Services

The Review Team will be responsible for the analysis, findings and recommendations of the project.

### **Support Team:**

1. Liz Kingston, Coordinator, Public Works and Transportation - Coordinator for project.
2. Gordon Hayward, Snow and Ice Coordinator, Public Works and Transportation

Other staff will be called upon to provide assistance in gathering information and documentation used for verification and analyses.

### **Scope of Project:**

1. Review of Current Process
  - a) Determine the level of understanding of the program from those who currently are responsible for the delivery of the service, including but not limited to:
    - i) What is a snow and ice event?
    - ii) When, how and by whom is it called?
    - iii) Who is engaged and when?
    - iv) Is there a process in place to review the program and/or snow events? If so, does it work effectively?
    - v) What works well, what doesn't?
    - vi) Evaluation of the major cost drivers for snow and ice. Validate and update previous studies i.e. Covenco
  - b) Determine the level of understanding of service delivery commitments.
    - i) What is the established level of service delivery for HRM and/or each area?
    - ii) What major factors affect the ability to meet service delivery standards? (Assuming they exist)

2. Determine the level of compliance with stated standards and contractual agreements internally and externally.
3. Identify and compare current snow operations to similar municipal units and/or snow operation models i.e. DOT

**Methodology:**

The Review Team will employ a number of tools to complete the project. These will include but not be limited to the gathering of pertinent documentation, financial analysis and one-on-one interviews with supervisors, employees and union representatives. A standard questionnaire will be developed and used in the interview process for consistency and comparability. All interview responses will be confidential as to source with supporting evidence acquired for substantiation.

Given the limited time constraints for the project (mid-September for preliminary findings report) it is recommended that the following documentation be acquired and circulated to the Review Team immediately. Circulation will be determined based on team assignments which will be confirmed prior to the finalization of the Terms of Reference.

1. Service Standards for Snow and Ice control. Reports to Council on subject.
2. Collective Agreement(s), Memorandum of Agreements, Arbitration results and/or settlement decisions resulting from grievances.
3. Shift structure by area.
4. RFP and subsequent contracts with equipment and material providers.
5. Budget to actual for last three years, capital and operating (by area, if possible)
6. Annual report on snow and ice events for past three years. Information should include the number, duration, type (i.e. ice, snow volumes) of event.
7. Listing of equipment by area.
8. Personnel information - age, classification, date of hire.
9. Other related reports compiled over the past three years.

**Expected Outcome of Review:**

1. The Review Team will prepare a preliminary findings report for the Director as soon as reasonably possible in September which will identify the work completed to date and any preliminary findings adversely affecting the management of the snow and ice program.
2. The Review Team will prepare a draft final report for the Director with findings and recommendations on achieving best or alternative practices within the HRM Snow Operation.

**Communications:**

Communication of the purpose of the review is key to engaging stakeholders and acquiring reliable information and a positive outcome for the HRM. It is recommended that the following occur prior to the formal commencement of the Review.

1. Director of PWT sends out communication to Managers, Supervisors and Employee Representative(s) about the pending review. A copy of the terms of reference could be included.
2. A contact person be identified on the Review Team to respond to any questions and/or concerns prior to the commencement of the review.
3. If necessary, offer to conduct group meetings with various stakeholders to reiterate the positive focus of the review and solicit involvement.