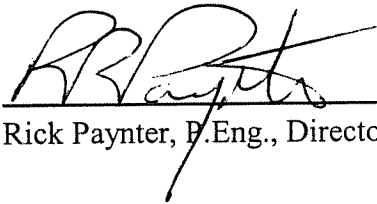




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Committee of the Whole
Halifax Regional Council
December 2, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Rick Paynter, P.Eng., Director, Public Works & Transportation

DATE: November 27, 2003

SUBJECT: Snow and Ice Review - Preliminary Findings

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Halifax Regional Council meeting of November 4, 2003 - Comprehensive Review of Snow & Ice Operations - Interim Report.

BACKGROUND

At a Committee of the Whole discussion with Regional Council held on February 18, 2003, staff advised that a comprehensive review of HRM's snow and ice removal operations would be undertaken as part of the 2003/04 Business Plan for Public Works & Transportation Services. An interim report on the makeup and status of that review was presented to Regional Council on November 4, 2003 wherein it was indicated that preliminary findings and recommendations would be presented to the Director of Public Works and Transportation and the Executive Management Team and subsequently to Regional Council.

DISCUSSION

Depending on winter weather conditions, snow & ice removal operations can be complex and taxing, extremely frustrating for residents, business owners and HRM administration and very expensive. The 2001/02 and 2002/03 winter seasons specifically were unusually extreme in that regard with total snowfall accumulations for each of those two years exceeding the averages of the past preceding five year period. This resulted in budgets being exceeded and a call for a comprehensive review of the program for the purposes of identifying the main cost drivers and areas where operational efficiencies and cost savings can be achieved.

<u>2001/02 Budget</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>2002/03 Budget</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
\$8,650,737	\$12,686,086	\$9,581,972	\$15,439,494

Following the approval of the 2003/04 PWT Business Plan and at request of the Director of Public Works & Transportation Services, the snow & ice review was implemented by a five member "In-house" staff team as follows:

Wayne Anstey, Director of Legal Services
Cathie Osborne, Team Leader, Business Systems and Control
Cathie O'Toole, Executive Assistant, CAO's Office
Kathy Smith, Financial Consultant
Margaret Soley, Coordinator, Deputy CAO's Office

PWT staff resource assistance was provided by Liz Kingston, Coordinator, Director's Office and Gordon Hayward, Snow & Ice Coordinator.

The review has been underway now for several months. The six main program cost drivers selected for review were:

Deicing materials - salt
Contracted services
Fleet costs
Sidewalk snow removal
Service standards
Administration

A brief overhead presentation on these cost drivers will be made in Committee on December 2, 2003 by the Director of Public Works & Transportation Services.

While there are several aspects of this comprehensive review not yet completed, the following two areas of the snow & ice removal program were identified by staff of PWT as candidates for immediate reassessment for the upcoming 2003/04 winter season and which have potential for realizing some meaningful cost savings for the municipality. These will be discussed in more detail during staff's overhead presentation.

Service standards
Salt usage

PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

While there continues to be some continual review work by the Review Committee, the following represents their preliminary findings as presented to the Director and EMT.

Findings:

- Over the past four years, overall program cost has doubled.
- Procedures for program component cost tracking and accounting need to be reviewed
- The total tonnage of deicing salt has increased by over 50%
- Fleet costs to the program are excessive due to extensive repairs required to aging equipment
- Comparisons to other Canadian municipal units suggests HRM is delivering a higher level of service than average.

Based on the foregoing preliminary findings, Public Works and Transportation is committed to the the following:

- Bring the snow & ice removal operation back in line with existing service standards and effectively communicate those standards so that Council, staff and the public have a full understanding of what they can expect
- Implement an effective monitoring system for complaint calls in order to formally gauge the impact by this recommended change in service standards
- Establish appropriate cost accounting systems for all components of the operation, specifically for fleet costing and salt inventory control
- Reduction in road salt initiative as proposed by the Public Works & Transportation Business Unit

In addition and within the context of these findings, it also needs to be stated that much in the way the snow & ice removal program is administered, it is governed by our existing Collective Agreement with CUPE Local 108. This Agreement expires October 31, 2004.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time. However, bringing our snow & ice removal operations in line with existing service standards and taking an aggressive approach to reducing salt usage is projected to make a meaningful reduction in program cost while maintaining a reasonable and responsible level of service to the public.

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

Council could choose not to accept staff's suggestions to reduce salt usage and to follow existing service standards. Staff does not recommend these courses of action.

ATTACHMENT

Level of Service Standard for Snow & Ice Removal dated September 15, 1998

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: Rick Paynter, P.Eng., Director, Public Works & Transportation at 490-4855 in conjunction with the Members of the Snow & Ice Review Committee



Works and Natural Service
Snow and Ice Control Program
SERVICE STANDARDS

September 15, 1998

INTRODUCTION

The Works and Natural Services Department is responsible for all aspects of the Snow and Ice Control Program. It is a seasonal operation that has significant impact on HRM during winter conditions.

It is the intent of this document to identify the Service Standards which will be maintained by HRM. At the same time it is not the intent to identify how the Snow & Ice Control Program will be managed.

The goal is to set an attainable standard which align the levels of service with the financial constraints of the HRM budget.

OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the Service Standards are:

- To reduce the hazards of ice and snow conditions to motorists and pedestrians
- To minimize economic losses to the community and industry.
- To facilitate the handling of emergencies by fire, hospitals and police officials.

CLASSIFICATION OF ROUTES

In order to set effective priorities for snow and ice activities within the region the routes must be classified as to their impact on the overall transportation system.

For the purpose of these standards the HRM has classified all of the routes and will service them (salt, sand and plow) in the following order of priority.

Class 1 - First Priority

Includes:

- Arterials
- Serve as connectors / collectors between areas and routes
- Serve as emergency routes to hospitals and fire equipment
- Serve as snow routes in major hilly terrain during weather situations
- Transit - for major bus routes

Class 2 - Second Priority

Includes:

- Medium to Low volume of traffic including residential and rural routes

Other Surface Types

- HRM will regulate the maintenance of the other surfaces, mirroring the priorities given to the adjacent routes unless specified differently for a particular activity.
- Items within this classification include:
 - Sidewalks (not including sidewalks covered under by-law 300)
 - Bus stops
 - Walkways and Overhead Crosswalks
 - Parking Lots
 - Handicap Parking
 - Private roads and lanes provided winter maintenance under agreement

STANDARDS

The Snow and Ice Control Program will endeavor to ensure the following levels of service.

Class 1 - Surfaces as bare as possible with frequency of coverage during a storm not to exceed 3 hours. With clean-up to be completed 12 hours after the end of the event.

- These roads are priority 1 and shall be salted / plowed to their full width.
- Parking shoulders where no sidewalks are provided shall be plowed when there is appreciable accumulation of snow after one or more light snow falls.
- Snow removal will be carried out based on operational requirements for snow storage and visibility concerns at intersections.

Class 2 - These routes are second priority and will be maintained on regular shifts. With clean-up to be completed 24 hours after the end of the event

- Primarily two lane residential streets
- Coverage will be on both sides of the centre line to allow two-way traffic.
- These routes will be completed after the priority 1 routes.
- Snow removal will be carried out based on operational requirements for snow storage and visibility concerns at intersections.
- Under circumstances where multiple events occur these routes may not be fully completed when work must start again on the priority 1 routes.

Other Surface Types - These surfaces will be completed during regular shifts.

- The snow and ice control program will endeavor to complete these areas not later than three days after any weather event.
- Under circumstances where multiple events occur these routes may not be fully completed when work must start again on the priority 1 routes.
- Cleaning of sidewalks will follow the standards set in by-law 300.

