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**Item No. 08**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**June 21, 2016**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director

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Bruce Zvaniga, Director Transportation and Public Works

**DATE:** June 6, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Winter Operations End of Season Report

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

On January 26, 2016, Halifax Regional Council directed staff to submit an end of season information report to Regional Council for June 2016 evaluating:

- a) the service delivered in 2015/16 under the provisions of the Street Snow & Ice Control contracts awarded on August 4, 2015;
- b) the impacts of operational changes implemented in 2015/16 following the November 24, 2015 Sidewalk Service Improvements report;
- c) Reassessing Priority 2 streets with a slope greater than 10%, low lying natural streams or other circumstances which create public safety concerns, and that these streets be considered as Priority 1; and,
- d) Retaining current standards with revised wording to provide clarity on Priority 2 streets, (initial cut-through within 6 hours, after 10cm has fallen) with increased enforcement to ensure standards are being met. Plowing is to be repeated within 8 hours after initial pass and, that improved focus on delivery to current service standards to be included when contracts are retendered after 2016/17.

#### **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. 320 (1), s. 320 (2) and s. 320 (3) confers legislative authority to make by-laws relating to 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.

The *Motor Vehicle Act* 1989 R.S.N.S. c.293, s.202 confers on the Local Traffic Authority the ability to declare an overnight parking ban during winter months.

## **BACKGROUND**

Winter maintenance operations play an important role in assuring the safety, mobility and productivity of Halifax's multi-modal transportation network. Winter maintenance activities offer direct benefits to the public including fewer accidents, improved mobility and reduced travel times and costs. They also offer indirect benefits such as sustained economic productivity, reduction in accident claims, emergency services, and improved commuter experience. The municipality continues to face increased demands and resident expectations during inclement weather, while balancing resource constraints and a growing awareness of environmental challenges inherent in the use of chemicals and abrasives for snow and ice control. As noted in the January 26, 2016 staff report to Regional Council on winter service standards, Halifax's service delivery standards are on par with, or exceed, most major cities in Canada. During the winter of 2015/16, staff focused on improving service delivery to meet the standards. Greater attention to detail (particularly with respect to pedestrian mobility) and improved communication were the two overarching themes driving the performance of both in-house and contracted service delivery.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report will focus on evaluating the service delivered in 2015/16 and provides other general information related to responding to resident inquiries, addressing accessibility and road reclassification as outlined in the motion.

### **Winter 2015/16 snow events:**

The winter of 2015/16 was categorized as an average winter with average precipitation and temperatures. In total the municipality mobilized for 14 snow events. Major events are defined as 15cm+, average events are defined as 5-15cm and minor events are defined as 0-5cm

<b>Events</b>	<b>Accumulation</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Dec-14	5cm	Minor Event
Dec-28	5cm	Minor Event
Dec-30	25cm	Major Event
Jan-13	20cm	Major Event
Jan-16	25cm	Major Event
Jan-19	5cm	Minor Event
Jan-29	17cm	Major Event
Feb-05	5cm	Minor Event
Feb-08	30cm	Major Event
Mar-05	25cm	Major Event
Mar-11	5cm + freezing rain	Minor Event
Mar-21	2cm + freezing rain	Minor Event
Apr-10	15cm	Average Event
Apr-15	10cm	Average Event

Implementation of the Winter Operations 2014/15 Strategic Direction Recommendations (August 4, 2015), the Sidewalk Service Improvement Report (November 24, 2015), and a winter season typical of the ten year average resulted in improved service delivery under the provisions of the Street Snow & Ice Control contracts awarded.

**Performance Based Contracts:**

Four new Winter Street Snow and Ice Control contracts began providing service to areas outside the central core area in 2015/16. The contractors were responsive in making continuous improvement adjustments to their service delivery to react to challenging areas. Communication and issue escalation protocol improvements were cooperatively developed between management staff and the contractors resulting in positive feedback from the community.

The consolidation of in-house snow clearing service delivery also provided more efficient and effective deployment of staff resources in the core area

**311 Call Centre:**

As approved at the August 4, 2015 Regional Council Meeting, a designated 311 Call Centre agent was assigned to triage and dispatch snow and ice-related calls on a continuous 24hr coverage during snow events. This past winter season, the Call Centre received an increase in residents providing positive feedback related to snow operations.

During winter 2015/16, the 311 Call Centre received 7,550 tier 2 calls (calls requiring action by municipal staff) related to snow operations as follows:

Description	Number of Calls
Street Clearing	4,203
Sidewalk Clearing	1,591
Damage from Snow Clearing	1,191
City Watch Parking Ban Registration	418
Snow Clearing of Transit Stops	147
<b>Total Service Requests Snow Season 2015/16</b>	<b>7,550</b>

**Road Reclassification:**

Currently Halifax has Priority 1 and 2 streets in recognition of the higher service demand of the Priority 1 streets. Priority 1 streets include main arterials, emergency routes to hospitals and fire equipment, major bus routes and extremely hilly areas. For winter 2015/16, staff sent a request to Councillors asking for input on streets in their districts which might require priority reclassification. We received feedback, and have included the identified streets in Appendix A. Staff have performed a review and determined that all roads brought forward were already Priority 1; however, issues and opportunities for have been identified that staff will address in advance of the coming winter season. These include greater attention to catch basin clearing and drainage, and some re-routing that will address short sections of Priority 2 streets immediately adjacent to specific trouble spots on Priority 1 streets.

**Corporate Communication Improvements:**

This winter, the municipality committed to improving our communication to residents regarding winter operations. This was accomplished by the following:

- Frequent and clear notifications on Twitter, the municipality's website and other media outreach
- "Snow Stop" time on corporate website, in order to help manage expectations related to service standards
- Improved and frequent use of supporting imagery representing different snow clearing conditions
- Changes to front-line messaging for 311 agents to be more informative and reduce potential to be misunderstood
- Revamped "Think before you park campaign" – encouraged compliance
- Improved communications around the parking ban, and when it was being enforced

**Tickets Tows & Parking Ban:**

This winter, the municipality towed 112 vehicles found in violation of the parking ban, which is an increase over last year's 87 tows. The municipality also issued 4,759 parking tickets to vehicles found parked on the street during a parking ban this winter season. The increase in vehicles towed this winter season can be attributed to stricter enforcement than in previous years. The parking ban was enforced during each of the 14 snow events in the 2015/16 winter season compared to 47 enforced parking bans throughout the previous winter season. The municipality received positive feedback from the public this year regarding the clarity and methods used to communicate when the ban would be in effect.

**Accessibility Improvements:**

Municipal staff initiated improvements by having staff recognize and address accessibility issues in the downtown sidewalk areas. Staff is continuing to develop, in collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and other stakeholders, an educational program on accessibility awareness that will be delivered to all winter operations staff and contractors prior to the 2016/17 winter season. Staff recently met with Dr Kirby at the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Center and has scheduled a seminar/workshop in their mobility lab as part of the training program in preparation for next winter season.

**Conclusion**

By implementing recommended changes in service delivery and leveraging performance based street and sidewalk contracts in combination with the milder weather, the municipality delivered an improved street and sidewalk snow and ice clearing service during the 2015/16 season.

Further recommendations for improvements will be included in the 2016/2017 budget and business plan presentation to council.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A – Winter Priority Classification Concerns

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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.

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## Appendix A

Identified Winter Priority Classification Concerns			
Street Name or Location	Reason for Reclassification	District	Potential Cost Implication
Intersection of Sinclair St & Joffre St	Grade on both streets becomes winter hazard when not properly maintained	District 5	None
Intersection of Lorne Ave & Sinclair St	Grade on both streets becomes winter hazard when not properly maintained	District 5	None
Wyse Rd	Water Pooling in certain locations	District 5	None
Oxford St	Going south on Oxford towards water, road has a grade which frequently is impassable in winter.	District 7	None
Beaufort Ave	Going south east on Beaufort Ave, grade may become slippery and even impassible in winter	District 7	None
Francklyn	Grade on street may become dangerous or impassible in winter.	District 7	None