

Item 13.1.1



AUDITOR GENERAL

Halifax Regional Municipality

Management of Winter Operations Audit

June 18, 2025

Overall Conclusion

- Not effectively managing winter operations
- No assessment against Council's service standards
- Contracted operations not appropriately monitored
- Improvements needed to in-house operations



Service Standards & Responsibility

- Regional Council approved winter operations service standards in 2020
- Public Works responsible to monitor in-house and contractors



No Formal Assessment Against Standards

- No requirement to assess performance vs standards
- Required Post Event Reports are not adequate
 - 22/30 in-house and 29/30 contractor reports completed
 - No formal or consistent operations assessment
 - Not enough information to determine if standards were met

No Performance Measures Developed

- Did not implement recommendation to implement KPIs
 - From 2020 external consultant
- No winter operations cost assessment
 - In-house costs not known, managed in multiple business areas
- No service request data analysis



Contracted Operations – Adequate Terms & Conditions

- Nine snow and ice clearing contracts (seven vendors)
- All contracts had adequate terms and conditions
 - Outline responsibilities
 - Appropriate penalties and clauses



Contracted Operations – Minimal Monitoring

- No policies and procedures to define monitoring expectations
- Post-event weather report only required documentation
- Vendor evaluations completed
 - Management said no damages applied since 2019
 - Insufficient information to support conclusions

Contracted Operations – Issues & Deficiencies

- No central tracking of contractor performance
- Poor documentation to support weather event monitoring and nothing documented for non weather event days
- Not monitoring to ensure complaints resolved
 - No documentation showing these are addressed



Contracted Operations – Damages

- No documented snow damage repairs process or guidance
 - Contractors responsible for addressing damage
- Little to no documentation in service requests testing
 - 17 or 20 closed with limited, or no details provided
 - 1 still open
 - 2 no repairs required
- No assessment to confirm contractors completed work
 - 10% of invoices held back, supposed to be released on completion of repairs

Contracted Operations – Contract Requirements

- Contracts outline reporting and other requirements
 - Requirements frequently not obtained by Public Works
- All nine contracts had at least one required report missing
 - Gaps in other requirements noted as well
- Failure to meet requirements – \$500-2000 per occurrence



In-House Operations – Planning

- Gaps noted in pre-season planning processes
 - Mock snow day completed – no information on results
 - Hazard assessments – only 4 of 12 tested were complete
 - Route maps prepared but service standards missing
- No post-season meetings
- Not clear if management is addressing gaps and concerns

In-House Operations – Monitoring

- Management regularly monitor weather conditions
- No guidance on expectations for monitoring operations
- Poor documentation of event clearing monitoring
- No documentation of work done on non-event days



In-House Operations – Complaints & Damages

- Urgent and non-urgent service requests closed once assigned, no monitoring
- Process exists to address damages to HRM property
- Tested 10 in-house snow damage requests
 - 9 required repairs – 8 addressed within timelines, one still outstanding
 - 1 was inspected and no repairs were required – reasonable
- Management has repair timelines but do not monitor

In-House Operations – Operations Training

- Required training to operate equipment not documented
- No central tracking of training and licenses
- 33 of 40 tested staff had required training
 - 4 had some training
 - 3 had no training
- All 40 staff had required licenses
- Management said driver abstracts are obtained twice a year
 - Abstracts obtained for 39 operations staff, one was missing

Data & Documentation Concerns

- Gaps in service request data
 - Lack of guidance to ensure appropriate documentation is retained
 - Does not support appropriate monitoring
- Some gaps in information throughout audit
 - Management and staff said due to two-year email retention policy



Wrap Up

13 Recommendations

All accepted by management

Public Works to implement
recommendations

Follow up in 24 months



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Questions?