

Date: October 18, 2024

To: **Mayor and Council.**

Name and title: Blake McIntosh, Director Civic Operations

Subject: Snow & Ice Control Policy Review

Attachment(s): SRTC - Snow and Ice Control Policy
Official - Snow and Ice Control Policy 2019-09-09

Recommendation(s):

That Council RECEIVES for information the report titled “Snow & Ice Control Policy Review” dated October 18, 2024 from the Director of Civic Operations.

Purpose:

At the January 23, 2024 budget meeting, Administration was directed by Council to return the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy for discussion. On June 12, 2024, Council received the attached report titled “Snow and Ice Control Policy” for information. Subsequent to receiving the report, Council requested Administration to outline budget impacts for the following items:

- a) Ceasing to clear residential driveways as defined in the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy
- b) Increase snow clearing service levels minimum metrics by 2.5 cm
- c) Reduction of snow clearing service on statutory holidays

Background:

The 2019 Council approved Snow and Ice Control Policy currently defines snow clearing service levels through a priority system in which specific roadway classifications and facilities receive time-based services when a specified amount of snow has accumulated within a 24 hour period. These criteria trigger mobilization of City forces and contracted resources to clear roadways within specified timelines. The timelines do not pause for weekends or statutory holidays. Predicting the number of snow events in a calendar year is difficult. Historically, there have been 4 to 5 snow events on average per year. Estimated costs that could be eliminated are based on the annual average number of snow events.

Discussion:

For 2024, Council approved a budget of \$10.3 million dollars for snow and ice control. For the annual 2024 Budget Survey snow and ice control related responses indicated main route satisfaction was 77% great or good and 19% not good or needs work. For residential routes, respondents conveyed satisfaction was 54% great or good and 40% not good or needs work.

Council has requested administration provide budgetary impacts for the reduction of the following service levels:

a) Ceasing to clear residential driveways as defined in the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy

In the early 1990's, Mayor and Council transitioned to approving clearing of residential driveway entrances as part of snow and ice control services. Originally, a typical snow clearing crew or "grader set" in curb and gutter areas was comprised of two graders and one loader. The single loader was in place to clear roadway intersections of windrowed snow. Initially, drop gates on graders were trialed to clear driveway entrances with limited success. Operations then transitioned to performing driveway entrance clearing with loaders. The standard grader set now includes two loaders to perform driveway and intersection clearing. In essence, additional costs to clear driveway entrances is the cost of an additional loader on the 7 grader sets employed during a fully resourced snow event operation.

Eliminating residential driveway windrow opening during a defined snow event would remove the costs associated with employing 7 contracted loaders specific to the driveway opening function. Based on an average of 5 snow events per year, the elimination of residential driveway opening could achieve an annual savings of \$225,000 in 2024 dollars.

b) Increase snow clearing service levels minimum metrics by 2.5 cm

The current classification priority-based system and associated completion timelines are based on accumulated snow received in a 24 hour period. Current metrics for priority one and two routes outline a minimum snow accumulation of 7.5 centimeters. Priority three routes outline a minimum snow accumulation of 12.0 centimeters. An increase of 2.5 centimeters would change Priority 1 & 2 thresholds to 10 centimeters and Priority 3 routes to 14.5 centimeters subsequently changing the trigger points for full deployment of internal and contracted resources. For ease of rounding, it would be suggested 15.0 centimeters be the accumulation amount for Priority 3 routes should Council choose to amend the existing policy.

As prediction of the number of snow events in a season is challenging, data has been derived from the years 2022-2024. For this timeframe, on average, there have been four (4) Priority 1,2 & 3 snow events. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1.

Year	# of Snow events Current thresholds*	# of Snow events Meeting Increased thresholds**	Estimated savings***
2022	4	4	\$0.00
2023	5	3	\$240,507.00
2024	4	2	\$371,495.00
Overall threshold increase savings total for 2022-2024			\$612,002.00

*number of snow events for calendar year in which accumulations meet current policy thresholds

**number of snow events for calendar year in which accumulations would meet proposed threshold increases

***estimated savings that would have occurred if proposed accumulation threshold increase were in place in calendar year resulting in less full resource deployment.

Of the 13 snow events for the years 2022-2024, 9 would not have met the current snow accumulation thresholds should the policy have reflected the proposed increases.

c) Reduction of snow clearing service on statutory holidays

To achieve the objectives of the Snow and Ice Control Policy, when minimum snow accumulations are met for a full deployment of City forces and contracted resources, timelines established in the policy require continuous 24 hour operations. As a result, crews continue work through weekends and statutory holidays to achieve the service level.

Should a defined snow event include statutory holidays, clearing activities still occur as part of the current policy. For each day snow and ice control services are paused during a defined snow event that encompasses 3 shifts for internal labour and equipment and contracted services on a statutory holiday, cost savings reflect a total of \$211,501. Should a snow event include all applicable winter statutory holidays (4 in total), savings would amount to \$846,004. Both figures are reflected in 2024 dollars.

Strategic Priorities:

The City of Prince George Snow and Ice Control policy supports the myPG goal of Organizational Excellence.

Financial Considerations:

Estimated potential savings for Snow & Ice Control Policy changes as requested by Council are as follows:

Service Level – Declared Snow Event	Estimated Annual Savings
Ceasing to clear residential driveways	\$225,000.00
Increase Snow Event thresholds (3 year average)	\$204,000.00
Reduction of services on statutory holidays (4 days)	Up to \$846,004.00
Total	\$1,275,004.00

Summary and conclusion:

The Snow and Ice Control Policy defines the intent of the City of Prince George winter maintenance operations through the establishment of service levels. The main objective of snow and ice control is to allow the City to continue to function under typical winter conditions through a reduction of hazards and provision of reasonable mobility on municipal roadways, laneways, sidewalks, trails, Civic and Park facilities. In times of winter conditions outside of the norm, the policy provides guidance and timeframes in which the public can reasonably expect City infrastructure to return to passable winter conditions. The review of residential driveway clearing, increase in snow event thresholds and no roadway clearing on statutory holidays is a reduction of current service levels. Potential savings of the proposed service level changes have been outlined in this report. It is important to recognize that the outlined savings are variable due to unpredictable weather and are only applicable to snow event situations. Winter staffing models and associated costs to support the Snow and Ice Control policy are static. To perform normal winter maintenance activities and administer the Snow and Ice Control policy, it is necessary to have staff at the ready. Should Council choose to change the current Snow and Ice Control Policy, Administration would look to implement any changes beginning in 2025.

Respectfully submitted:

Blake McIntosh, Director of Civic Operations
Prepared by B. McIntosh

Approved:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

Meeting date: 2024/11/04