



Town of Newmarket
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Winter Maintenance of Regional Sidewalks Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2024-44

Department(s): Parks & Facility Services

Author(s): Kristi Carlen, Director, Parks & Facility Services

Meeting Date: June 17, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the report titled Winter Maintenance of Regional Sidewalks and Active Transportation Infrastructure dated June 17, 2024 be received; and,
2. That the Regional Municipality of York be advised that the Town of Newmarket will continue to maintain the active transportation infrastructure including sidewalks, separated cycle tracks and multi-use pathways on regional roads as per Town of Newmarket service level standards; and,
3. That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Executive Summary

- A report was presented to Regional Council on Winter Maintenance of Sidewalks Adjacent to Regional Roads on June 16, 2022.
- Winter maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to regional roads is currently the local Municipalities responsibility.
- Sidewalk service levels are dictated through the Ontario Regulation 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways (MMS).
- York Region winter road maintenance service levels consist of a bare pavement policy, this results in frequent snow clearing passes along regional roads that in turn impacts the Town sidewalk clearing operations.
- Maintaining sidewalks along regional roadways requires additional resources during and after snowfall.
- Sidewalks, cycle tracks and multi-use pathways, along regional roads make up 9.7% of the total network in Newmarket.

- Regional staff collaborate with local municipal staff to enhance coordination of winter maintenance efforts.
- If the Region were to assume winter sidewalk maintenance along regional roads from the Town this would result in an adjustment to the regional levy (shifting the cost of providing the service from the Town to the Region).

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the staff recommendation regarding the provision of winter maintenance services for sidewalks adjacent to regional roads; specifically addressing the question of should that service continue to be provided by the Town or should the service be delivered by the Region of York.

Background

On June 16, 2022, a report titled Winter Maintenance of Sidewalks Adjacent to regional roads was presented to Regional Council. Region of York staff prepared this report in response to a resolution to review Regional Winter Maintenance Roles brought forward by Regional Councillor Linda Jackson of the City of Vaughan. Following review of the June 16, 2022 report, Regional Council made the following decision on June 30, 2022:

1. Councils of local municipalities confirm their positions regarding the Region assuming winter maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to regional roads, given the regional tax levy implication.
2. Regional staff work with local municipal staff on opportunities to improve coordination of winter maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to regional roads for the 2022/2023 winter season.
3. The Region investigate ownership and maintenance of separated cycling lanes as part of the 2022 Transportation Master Plan Focus Area and report to Council in 2023.
4. The Regional Clerk forward a copy of this report to the local municipalities and request confirmation of their position by September 30, 2022.

At this time the Region is asking all lower tier municipalities to provide their positions regarding this matter. This report sets out the position recommended to Council by Town of Newmarket staff.

Winter maintenance of sidewalks adjacent to regional roads is currently the local Municipalities responsibility.

As outlined in the Municipal Act, construction and all maintenance of sidewalks is a local municipal responsibility unless a municipality agrees otherwise. The Municipality collects development charges to fund the construction of the sidewalks and uses local tax levy to pay for ongoing upkeep, which includes winter maintenance.

In the Town of Newmarket there is 31 km of sidewalks adjacent to regional roads and another 3.9 km of cycle tracks and multi-use pathways.

Sidewalk service levels are dictated through the Ontario Regulation 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways (MMS).

The Town of Newmarket is responsible for clearing all sidewalks in Newmarket as per O'Reg. 239/02: Municipal Maintenance Standards for Municipal highways (MMS 239/02). The Municipal Maintenance Standards (MMS) mandate that Municipalities conduct nightly winter patrols and inspections, documenting conditions across various Town locations. These observations assist in determining the necessity of winter maintenance. The Town's winter maintenance service levels dictate that all sidewalks must be plowed within 24 hours of the conclusion of a snowfall, provided accumulations reach 6 cm or more. This standard currently exceeds the requirements in the MMS.

Priority service is provided according to the road classification, beginning with sidewalks along arterial and primary roads, followed by secondary routes which consist of lower volume local sidewalks. Town staff ensure special attention is given to sidewalks near schools, bus stops and the hospital.

Town staff and Town managed contractors maintain 370 km of sidewalks, 3.9 km of separated cycle tracks (bike lanes), 1.7 km of multi-use pathway, 31 municipally owned parking lots and 14 km of paved recreational trails. During a snow event, the department deploys 19 sidewalk plows to clear the sidewalks which typically takes 9-12 hours, sometimes up to 24 hours or more, to complete depending on the snow event.

In 2022 separated cycling tracks were constructed on Yonge Street as part of the bus rapid transit project. The Town maintains the separated cycling lanes on behalf of the Region and the services are billed back to the Region at full cost recovery as set out through a memorandum of understanding.

In 2023 a portion of the Multi use path was constructed from Yonge Street to Bathurst which the Town owns and is therefore responsible for maintaining.

York Region winter maintenance service levels consist of a Bare Pavement Policy.

The Region of York deploys an average of 20 combination plow trucks to clear 1021.3 lane km of region roads within the central district. The operation takes on average 2 to 2.5 hours per round with multiple rounds occurring per winter event. The regional road service level(s), in addition to complying with the MMS requirements, is compliant with the Regional Council approved Bare Pavement Policy. Sidewalks adjacent to regional roadways in Newmarket include:

- Bathurst Street
- Bayview Avenue/Prospect Street
- Davis Drive
- Leslie Street

- Mulock Drive
- Yonge Street

At the completion of one cycle of Town winter sidewalk maintenance the regional roads could potentially have been plowed 5-6 times increasing the snow loading to areas with limited or no snow storage. This snow loading on regional curb facing sidewalks, regional road bridge decks and regional road intersections requires additional resources to load and haul the snow to a suitable storage area and/or to conduct snow blowing operations in the area during and after the event. During the coordination and implementation of these activities this part of the regional road network can be blocked impacting access to the sidewalk.

Discussion

Regional Sidewalks, cycle tracks and multi-use pathways, make up 9.7% of the total network in Newmarket.

Parks & Property Services maintains the following kilometers of sidewalks, multiuse pathways and cycle tracks with the following breakdown:

Town owned Sidewalks	Regional owned sidewalks	Multi Use Pathways	Separated Cycle Track	Total Town Maintained Sidewalks
339 km	31km or 8% of all Town Maintained sidewalks 8.7 km or 28% of Regional Sidewalks are curb facing/limited snow storage sidewalks	1.7km	3.9km	375.6km

Of the total regional sidewalks 8.7km (28%) have limited or no snow storage area referred to by the Region as curb facing sidewalks. While sidewalks with adequate snow storage can be cleared efficiently, sidewalks with no snow storage result in blockages and can remain obstructed for extended periods of time. These obstructions on primary priority sidewalks prevent residents from access to transit, schools and commerce.

Regional roads range from two (2) to four (4) lanes with additional turning lanes at major intersections producing large heavy snow piles or windrows directly on top of the sidewalk. This leaves sidewalk plows unable to move the snow without enlisting additional equipment such as snow blowers or loaders to assist, adding delays to the overall service.

Regional staff collaborate with local municipal staff to enhance coordination of winter maintenance efforts.

Effective winter maintenance in a two-tier system relies on strong coordination between the Region and local municipalities, which has historically had proven challenging due to differing service levels.

Since the 2022/2023 winter season, staff from the Region of York have collaborated with Town personnel to enhance the coordination of services aimed at addressing the challenges of maintaining sidewalks adjacent to regional roads. This increased coordination involves:

- Biweekly meetings between Town staff and key regional road operations personnel from November to April to discuss challenges, pressure points, and areas for improvement for subsequent storms.
- Annual winter workshops hosted with staff representing all municipalities in the Region.
- Implementation of group chats on WhatsApp during storm events, providing access to the Region's on-call Snow Center Supervisor and web maps identifying the deployment of regional trucks on regional roadways.
- Assisting in snow removal when necessary.

Given that Town and regional sidewalks are interconnected, serving as primary and secondary routes for pedestrian travel, any blockage on primary routes can negatively impact pedestrians.

The changes listed above have led to a significant improvement in the coordination efforts of sidewalk maintenance during, before, and after winter events, as observed by Town staff.

Maintaining sidewalks along regional roadways demands additional resources during and after snowfall.

For each snow event, a combination of 19 sidewalk plows are deployed, covering 19 sidewalk routes on weekdays and a minimum of 11 routes on weekends and holidays. Staff and contractors work continuously under normal conditions until all sidewalks have been serviced. Regional sidewalks often require additional passes throughout an event due to the continuous snow, ice, and slush accumulation from the regional plows, to ensure a safe clearance for users.

During larger snow events or consecutive occurrences, specialized equipment such as snow blowers, plow trucks, loaders, and dump trucks become essential to address the accumulated snow on regional roadways, especially where space for snow storage is limited. The Region has been able to support local areas with restricted snow storage,

including curb-facing sidewalks, when resources permit, utilizing either internal or contracted staff.

Region assuming winter sidewalk maintenance would result in an impact on the tax levy with no new services provided to residents.

The Region has identified that assuming responsibility for winter sidewalk maintenance could affect the regional tax levy without offering new services to residents. Directors overseeing winter maintenance from six York Regional municipalities, including the Town of Newmarket, convened on August 15, 2022, to address this matter. All participating municipalities, including Newmarket, have requested further financial and service level details from the Region, which has yet to be provided.

If the Region were to assume control of winter sidewalk maintenance along regional roads, they would be responsible for coordinating maintenance efforts during snow events and would prioritize all municipalities within the Region, not just Newmarket. This could potentially impact service levels on Newmarket's regional roads.

Staff recommend the Town continue to provide winter maintenance for sidewalks, cycle tracks and multi-use pathways, along regional roads.

Staff are recommending that the Town continue to provide this service for the following reasons:

1. The service level will continue to be set by the Town, ensuring alignment with community and Council expectations.
2. The delivery of the service will continue to be provided by Town staff and contractors ensuring direct accountability.
3. The Town has highly skilled staff and contractors that provide exceptional service that helps to mitigate liability and risk.
4. The Town can direct enhanced service levels for priority areas such as schools and the hospital.
5. The Town currently has all necessary equipment, resources and planning to provide this service.
6. Sidewalks, cycle tracks, multi-use pathways and trails are all part of an integrated network, it is advantageous that they are maintained holistically.
7. The Town is currently the owner of the sidewalk assets along regional roads and is responsible for the maintenance and repair.
8. The Region to date has not set out costing estimates or the service levels.
9. Town staff have a good working relationship with their regional road maintenance counterparts, resulting in no significant service issues.

Conclusion

Winter Maintenance on regional sidewalks has traditionally been performed by the Town. Continued maintenance of these sidewalks allows the Town to have control in maintaining consistent service levels over the Towns entire sidewalk network.

If the Region were to assume winter sidewalk maintenance from the Town, along regional roads, this would result in an adjustment to the regional levy (shifting the cost of providing the service from the Town to the Region).

Staff will continue to evaluate the impacts of regional snow clearing on the sidewalks adjacent to these roads and work the Region staff to mitigate and address issues. The current ongoing collaboration has proven to be beneficial and significant improvements on the regional network have been made.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This approach aligns with our fiscal strategy while demonstrating a well managed and balanced approach. This approach will ensure Newmarket is focused on the customer-first way of life.

Consultation

N/A.

Human Resource Considerations

There are not additional human resource considerations.

Budget Impact

Should council approve staff's recommendations as presented, the Towns status quo will prevail meaning its existing budget will remain in alignment with anticipated requirements.

Attachments

None.

Approval

Jeff Payne, Commissioner, Community Services

Contact

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