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March 21, 2014

## **DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES REPORT – PWS 2014-21**

TO: Committee of the Whole  
SUBJECT: Sidewalk Snow Clearing Review  
ORIGIN: Director of Public Works Services

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT Development & Infrastructure Services Report – PWS 2014-21, dated March 21, 2014 regarding Sidewalk Snow Clearing Review be received and the following recommendations be adopted:**

- 1. THAT Council provides direction for staff, with a preferred option, to proceed with a comprehensive analysis for sidewalk, walkways and trail snow clearing guidelines**
- 2. AND THAT staff report back to Council with a detailed plan for sidewalk, walkway and trail clearing as part of the 2015 budget process.**
- 3. AND THAT the staff obtain comments from the Accessibility Advisory Committee on the sidewalk, walkway and trail clearing process.**

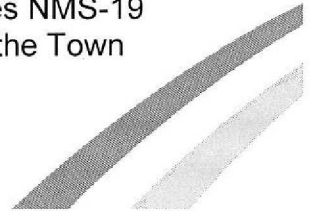
### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to outline our current snow clearing guidelines and service level and review alternative strategies for delivering sidewalk snow clearing services.

### **BACKGROUND**

**Newmarket currently clears approximately 65% of sidewalks, walkways and trails within 24 hours of a snowfall as per the Town guideline NMS-19. The remaining 35% are cleared by the adjacent property owner as outlined in bylaw number 1996-38.**

Municipal sidewalks, trails and walkways that are outlined in the Town of Newmarket 2013-2014 Sidewalk Snow Clearing map (see attached) are carried out in accordance with the current Town of Newmarket Winter Sidewalk & Walkway Maintenance guidelines NMS-19 (see attached). Of the approximately 340 km of sidewalk, walkways and trails, the Town currently clears approximately 220km of them.



The current sidewalk clearing guidelines (NMS-19) were originally issued in November of 2003 and most recently revised in December of 2009. The purpose and intent of this guideline is to ensure the Town can deliver the best winter sidewalk maintenance efforts given the resources available and average weather conditions. The guideline also states that snow removal operations will commence when the maximum new fallen or windblown snow accumulated on the sidewalk surface is 5.0cm (2 inches).

Arterial Roads, Primary and Minor Collectors as well as Local roads are to be cleared of snow within 24 hours after any snowfall. According to the guidelines, walkways and the Tom Taylor Trail are intended to be cleared after those priorities are in satisfactory condition. Over the years the processes have evolved and modified. Often due to implemented efficiencies, service levels have often exceeded the stipulations of the guideline. Trails and walkways have regularly been cleared within 24 hours. One of the primary reasons for this is the importance of walkways connecting to schools and the increased dependency on trails to be part of our active transportation system. In addition, there has been greater focus on the environmental and societal value of Pedestrian movement and alternative transportation systems that requires us to ensure our snow clearing services are in line with the needs of the community.

In 2010 the Town undertook a community survey. Sidewalk snowplowing was ranked second lowest in satisfaction among Town services, at 21.5%. Below is a breakdown of the number of calls related to sidewalk clearing since 2010.

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| • Nov 2010 - Apr 2011 | Total Calls: <b>84</b>  |
| • Nov 2011 - Apr 2012 | Total Calls: <b>28</b>  |
| • Nov 2012 - Apr 2013 | Total Calls: <b>111</b> |
| • Nov 2013 - Mar 2014 | Total Calls: <b>323</b> |

The 2013-2014 winter season and ice storm was among the most difficult winters on record and challenged our current process for clearing of sidewalks, walkways and trails. While this storm was difficult for the Town, this excessive stress on our practices, resources and processes helped illustrate the strengths and weakness of our current system. This provided staff with an opportunity to identify gaps for improvement or enhancement and better provide optimal snow clearing for sidewalks, walkways and trails.

The majority of complaints received during the storm were centered on the sidewalks adjacent to schools and Regional roads. The concerns raised often focused on the ability for these areas to be cleared in a reasonable amount of time. These areas primarily included schools, Regional roads and locations with regular senior pedestrians. Additional inquiries also focused on selection processes for which roads were done and which were not (Ex. Why is my sidewalk not being done?), as well as the quality of snow plowing and ice buildup.

There are approximately 30 schools located throughout the Town, but not all are located on primary roads. While our current guidelines indicate that sidewalks around schools are completed, those guidelines do not give priority to their sequence of clearing. The result is some local roads or curb faced sidewalks being done prior to a school or transit location. This also creates situations where a sidewalk fronting a school may be done after school

has concluded for the day, as it may be at the end of a sidewalk clearing route. Current practices for snow clearing focus on efficiency of routes (shortest route from beginning to end) and do not identify areas that may warrant higher levels of service and increased use.

## **ANALYSIS and PROPOSALS**

It is proposed that the following options be reviewed and given consideration for how the Town philosophically should be conducting clearing of sidewalks, walkways and trails. There are three options which include; 1) maintaining current service levels, 2) improved priority service to specific areas, and finally 3) clearing of all sidewalks owned by the Town. It is intended that once an option is selected, staff will conduct detailed costing. The results of the detailed analysis will be brought forward during the 2015 budget process, if approved, any changes would then be reflected in the Winter Sidewalk and Walkway Maintenance Guidelines (NMS-19).

### **OPTION 1: Maintain Current Service Levels**

#### **No change in current level of sidewalk snow clearing standards as per the guidelines NMS-19.**

This option would see current service levels for snow clearing remain the same. Currently there are 9 clearing routes that service sidewalks, walkways and trails. Sidewalk snow removal is completed on approximately 65% of Town sidewalks and the remaining 35% are cleared by property owners as per bylaw 1996-38.

Under this option, routes are defined by areas and the actual course of the route is designed for maximum efficiency given the resources available. The result is a route that moves equipment and staff through the sidewalks, clearing the most amount of sidewalk, as quickly as possible (ex. Local road may be done before the front of a school or higher traffic locations.). This approach results in the clearing being done as efficiently as possible and minimized the cost of labour and materials.

The financial impact of Option 1 would be only growth related. It is expected that additional resources will be required to maintain current levels, due to additional growth over the past 4 years. The additional route will be required due to an increase of 20.2 km of sidewalks, trails and walkways that have been added between the years of 2010 and 2013. This will be brought forward in the 2015 budget considerations.

### **OPTION 2: Improved Priority Service to Specific Areas**

#### **A specific priority approach would provide a higher level of service to schools, Main Street, regional roads and primary transit locations.**

This option would see current levels for areas such as schools, Main Street, Regional roads and primary transit locations serviced ahead of other roads. These areas often accommodate higher levels of pedestrian traffic (Ex. schools would service several hundred

students during a day, multiple times). Once these areas were completed and considered in suitable condition, secondary routes would be cleared. No additional sidewalks would be cleared in this option as it focuses on priorities and timing only.

The layout of the actual route traveled under this tiered approach, would sacrifice some overall efficiency in exchange focused and improved service to the critical priorities being completed first. During multiple day storms, the specific priorities would be cleared continuously until the sidewalk condition was satisfactory, however areas such as curb faced sidewalks may see service later in the clearing process.

This option will require additional resources (above any required to accommodate ongoing growth) in an attempt to maintain our current service level and timelines for clearing sidewalks, walkways and trails within 24 hours after an event. It is estimated that costs could be up to \$150,000, however a detailed cost estimate would be completed once the specific priorities, timelines and routes are more accurately defined.

### **OPTION 3: (Clearing of all Town Sidewalks, walkways and primary trails)**

**All sidewalks, walkways and paved trails would be cleared by the Town, and priority would be given to specific areas such as schools, Main Street, Regional roads and primary transit locations.**

This option would see all sidewalks, walkways and paved trails cleared by the Town and priority given to specific areas in Town. The intent with this approach would provide a highly visible and critical service to all residents and property owners in Town. Currently there is difficulty with residents understanding why certain sidewalks are eligible and others are not.

It has also been noted that any liabilities associated with a sidewalk, trails or walkway directly impact the Town, regardless of any bylaws outlining clearing requirements for property owners. The ability to clear all sidewalks ensures the Town can maintain and control a standard level of service. Often sidewalks are cleared by property owners, but the quality and timing of the service is inconsistent. AODA regulations are also requiring a standard of service that allows for free movement of those with disabilities, thereby increasing responsibilities for compliance.

This option will require additional resources (above any required to accommodate ongoing growth) in an attempt to maintain our current service level for clearing sidewalks, walkways and trails within 24 hours after a snowfall event. It is estimated that costs could be up to \$250,000-\$300,000, however a detailed cost estimate would be completed once the specific priorities, timelines and routes are more accurately defined.

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Currently our Sidewalk Clearing bylaw (1996-38) provides residents with a notice to comply. Staff will be reviewing this bylaw in the fall of 2014 in an effort to generate greater compliance and strengthen our ability to enforce non-compliance. In addition to the current notice to comply, the Town is reviewing their ability to charge costs associated with clearing non-compliant sidewalks to property owners. Furthermore, there is also consideration for having property owners responsible to aid the Town in clearing sidewalks, even if the Town is clearing them.

All sidewalks that are Town owned are the responsibility of the Corporation. Their condition is generally considered the Town's responsibility. How and when they are cleared can provide the Town with a stronger defense if we substantiate and ensure our guidelines are met. Through enhancement of the bylaw and/or sidewalk clearing process, the Town can better manage the condition of the sidewalks and increase the safety and service levels for users.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Staff will also work with Corporate Communications and Customer Service to implement a detailed communication strategy for sidewalk, walkway and trail clearing, once the 2015 budget has been finalized with a selected option. The primary intention of the program would be to ensure residents and property owners are educated on the Town's responsibilities as well as property owner obligations pertaining to snow clearing.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

All options will require additional resources as a result of ongoing growth, to maintain current levels for 2015. This will be included as part of the 2015 budget process as the Town has added 20.2 km of sidewalks, walkways and paved trails between the years of 2010 and 2014.

### **Option 1: Maintain Current Service Levels**

No financial impact above growth related, as current service levels would be maintained.

### **Option 2: Improved Priority Service to Specific Areas**

It is estimated there would be an additional annual operating impact of approximately \$125,000-150,000. These numbers would need to be further developed with a more detailed understanding of the specified priority areas, response times and the number of them.



### **Option 3: Clearing of all Town sidewalks, Walkways and Primary Trails**

This option would see all sidewalks, walkways and primary trails have snow removal. This would also include improved priority service to specific areas. It is estimated that there would be an additional annual operating impact of approximately \$250,000-\$300,000 to accommodate this option.

### **BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES**

*Living Well: Deliver efficient, effective and environmentally sound maintenance services to an appropriate level that achieves Council and/or Provincially mandated services levels, which meet public health and safety requirements and enhances quality of life while ensuring that system capital assets retain their value and are managed and funded according to sustainable, lifecycle based principles and practices.*

### **BUDGET IMPACT**

The funding requirements will be brought forward as part of the 2015 budget process, once a detailed analysis of the preferred option is completed.


### **CONTACT**

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