



Town of Newmarket
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Winter Maintenance Readiness Update Information Report

Report Number: INFO-2023-32

Department(s): Public Works Services (PWS), Parks & Facilities Services (PFS)

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update regarding the Town's winter maintenance readiness for the 2023/24 winter season. This report also provides key information regarding supporting services such as Customer Service, Communications, By-Law Enforcement and Parking.

Background

The Town is responsible to provide regulated winter maintenance as well as other Town approved winter services to the public. For core services such as roads and sidewalks, winter maintenance is regulated by the Minimum Maintenance Standards, Reg. 239 (MMS) set by the Province. The MMS dictates the minimum requirements when it comes to municipal winter operations, including specifics regarding: weather monitoring, patrolling, road classification, minimum times to complete winter operations, activations dealing with freezing rain and ice formation and declaring a Significant Weather Event, when required. PWS & PFS utilize this regulation to assist in setting service levels within winter operations.

Discussion

Winter Snow Clearing and Maintenance

The Town is fully prepared for this season's winter maintenance and is ready to actively respond to any winter maintenance events, as per the minimum maintenance standards.

Town staff begin preparations for winter maintenance in mid-August with all major equipment being ready by Oct 15th. All minor equipment is ready for response by November 15th, as per industry standard. Major equipment includes larger pieces of equipment such as 7-ton combination salt/plow units, used primarily for salting and plowing operations. This process then continues to include sidewalk machines, smaller salt/plow trucks, tractors, loaders, and backhoes. Fleet Services completes maintenance and checks on roughly 80% of equipment utilized for winter by October 15th, with the remaining 20% completed and ready for use by November 15th. In total, Fleet Services prepares and makes ready approximately 40 key pieces of equipment for winter operations.

The Town's winter maintenance operations will provide service to primary routes first and then secondary routes thereafter. Once all streets and sidewalks are in satisfactory condition, then crews begin storm event clean up procedures, which include cul-de-sacs, wide elbows and push backs on sidewalks.

Staff and contractors maintain 312kms of roadway, which equates to over 624kms of individual lane kilometers plowed. Over the 2022/23 winter season, staff dealt with 41 events in total. Twenty-seven of those were salting operations and fourteen involved plowing. Each event utilizes seven Town-owned trucks and five contracted trucks totaling 12 routes. They respond to all primary streets first, and once completed the units move into secondary streets. Operators deal with over 250 cul-de-sacs and upwards of 125 wide elbows that present unique issues when clearing snow. These areas usually take more time to clear, and some require removal of snow depending on storage availability. Approximately 60% of roadways are maintained by Town staff, with the remainder being contracted out.

Regional roads, including: Yonge Street, Davis Drive, Mulock Drive, Bayview Avenue and Leslie Street are maintained by the Region of York. Sidewalks on Regional roads are maintained by the Town.

Parks & Property Services staff maintain 370kms of sidewalks, 3.9 kms of bike lanes (Yonge Street), 31 municipally owned parking lots, and 14km of paved recreational trails. Each event utilizes 11 Town-owned sidewalk plows and 8 contracted sidewalk plows totalling 19 sidewalk routes. Contractors also assist with performing maintenance on 9 municipal parking lots. Weekend and holiday sidewalk snow clearing service is

reduced to 11 routes per day with primary routes being cleared the first day and secondary routes cleared on the second day given available resources.

The Town uses treated salt to help improve roadway conditions and uses a mix of sand and salt for improved traction on sidewalks. Application rates are based on safety needs, but staff strive to minimize applications rates in an effort to reduce impacts on the environment.

Materials used for winter operations in Town consist of Thawrox (treated salt), used on the entire road network and bulk highway salt, used on parking lots. Treated salt is more effective for de-icing surfaces at cold temperatures and can be used more sparingly resulting in greater efficiency. Salt is also mixed with sand for use on the sidewalk network. These materials are ordered in September to ensure proper stock is on hand well before the start of winter. On average, staff order 4,000 tonnes of Thawrox, 800 tonnes of straight salt and 100 tonnes of sand each year in preparation for the winter months. Through annual staff training, material use is controlled and continually monitored in an effort to limit the effects on the environment. Through this exercise, staff have reduced salt application rates down to 100kg/km resulting in recognition of a “Healthy Water Award” that was presented to the Town by LSRCA in 2019.

Significant Weather Events (SWE) are declared when extreme inclement weather is forecasted. The declaration of a SWE provides the municipality with a recognized greater length of response time required by the regulated Minimum Maintenance Standards.

Significant Weather Events are declared when extreme inclement weather is anticipated. Once the decision to declare a Significant Weather Event is made by Public Works Service and Parks & Facility Services, notifications will be made internally within the corporation and externally to the public.

During a Significant Weather Event, it is important to note that Newmarket's winter operations do not change; however, residents can expect winter clearing activities to take longer to complete due a continued focus on primary routes, emergency needs and staff safety. This means that it can take longer than the regular timelines to clear all roads, sidewalks, parking lots and trails in Newmarket.

Once a significant weather event has ended, PWS staff will declare the SWE over and notify internal and external parties of such. Once a significant weather declaration has ended, regular snow clearing procedures will resume for future events.

Customer Service and Communications

The Town continues to have a strong focus on customer service with a comprehensive and proactive communication strategy and the availability of real time data from apps such as Locate My Plow.

The impact of a storm event affects almost every resident within the Town. As a result, robust communication plans and a strong customer service strategy are critical. PWS and PFS work collaboratively with Communications, Customer Service and By-Law Enforcement, in advance of the winter season, to review current practices and identify opportunities for enhancements.

PWS, PFS, Customer Service, and Corporate Communications regularly work together to ensure internal and external parties are notified during inclement weather events. Prior to an anticipated inclement weather event, Corporate Communications will notify members of the public through various communication channels such as the website and social media to remind residents of the Town's snow clearing process and procedures, tips on how they can assist (i.e., refrain from parking on the street) and helpful links to the website for more details.

During a snow event, regular snow clearing updates are provided twice a day by Public Works Services and/or designate. Generally, this consists of one update in the morning and another mid-afternoon. This process remains the same during Significant Weather Events.

Corporate Communications will use this information across appropriate communication channels to provide updates to residents. Corporate Communications also monitors all social media channels and answers inquiries from residents around snow clearing by directing them through the appropriate channels and resources.

Through a strong online presence, the Town's website is updated with key information and FAQs to provide residents with pertinent winter maintenance details. These can be found at <https://www.newmarket.ca/snowfaq>. This season, the Town will debut a new graphic to help residents better understand the Town's snow clearing process. **See Appendix A.** Another helpful tool provided to residents is Locate My Plow, which can be found at <https://maps.newmarket.ca/LocateMyPlow/>. This application allows the public to view real-time road plowing operations during snow events with 6cms of snow accumulation or greater.

During a winter storm event, residents are reminded to wait 16 hours to submit a service request. This allows Town staff to complete the service prior to investigating any requests.

Snow crews make every effort to ensure streets and sidewalks are not missed. In the event a service request related to inclement weather is required, residents will be reminded to wait 16 hours after a snow/freezing rain event to submit a request. Providing at least 16 hours gives crews time to complete their clearing routes. When a

significant weather event is declared, this period may be extended in accordance with snow removal timelines. This also prevents staff from investigating requests that are likely in process and are scheduled to be completed already. Furthermore, it ensures all resources are focused on completing winter maintenance services efficiently. It should be noted that staff do respond to emergency situations and support any critical customer service or emergency related requests during a storm.

Once 16 hours has past, residents can submit service requests by:

- Electronic Form newmarket.ca/snowremoval ***New this season**
- Emailing info@newmarket.ca
- Calling 905-895-5193, Monday – Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Parking

Winter parking restrictions continue to take affect between November 1st and April 15th. To support residents, the Town continues to provide the Off-Street Overnight Parking Program.

Winter Parking Restrictions begin on November 1st and run until April 15th of the following year. During this time, no vehicle(s) are to be parked on any roadway between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. so as not to interfere with the clearing of snow, regardless of whether there is snow on the ground. Winter parking restrictions are in effect alongside other parking restrictions, such as: “No parking on the street for more than three consecutive hours”. Details of the parking regulations can be found at newmarket.ca/parkingenforcement.

In an effort to provide options to residents requiring additional parking for personal vehicles during storm events, overnight off-street parking is available at four parking lots across Newmarket. The goal of this program is to provide options for residents to keep vehicles off the street overnight. This free permit can be obtained online at parking.newmarket.ca. With this permit, the permit holder can park in designated spaces overnight from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. in the designated lots at the Municipal Offices, Magna Centre, Ray Twinney Recreation Complex and Downtown Newmarket – P3 Parking Lot.

Conclusion

Winter maintenance activities build and maintain a resilient transportation network so that people can safely and quickly connect with the places, activities, and communities they value. Creating a versatile winter maintenance program that includes a well prepared and efficient operations response, a comprehensive communications strategy, and a responsive communications plan, is critical to the community and those who travel

through it. Staff continue to ensure that the Town is not only ready for any winter event, but also strive to identify ways to enhance this core service delivery.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

In line with the Town's vision of Living well by ensuring community safety and security; and being Well-equipped and Managed by providing service excellence and providing municipal services that meet existing and future needs of residents.

Consultation

Consultation has been provided by PWS, PFS, Communications, Customer Service and By-Laws.

Human Resource Considerations

None

Budget Impact

All winter maintenance activities are performed within the approved operating budgets and the Winter Maintenance Reserve, if necessary.

Attachments

Appendix A – 2023 Winter Graphic

Approval

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