

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL - PROGRAMMED APPROACH FOR THE 2022-2023 WINTER SEASON

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 27, 2022, City Operations report CO01277, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Committee is being informed of options to enhance the Snow and Ice Control program and being given the opportunity to provide community perspectives and confirm service levels. If Committee decides to move forward with enhanced Snow and Ice Control programs, a Council decision is required.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the May 9, 2022, City Council meeting, the following motion passed:

That Administration provide a report to Committee outlining budget considerations to support the following options as outlined in Attachment 6 of the April 25, 2022, City Operations report CO00778 including:

- A. Options to Enhance Current Service Delivery:
 - i. Roads Option R1 and Road Option R0.5;
 - ii. Active Pathways AP1; and
 - iii. Modify Active Pathways AP1 to AP3 which is 12 hours for P1, 24 hours for P2, and 120 hours for P3.
- B. Options for New Service Enhancements:
 - i. Increase parking ban and sidewalk enforcement;
 - ii. Optimize the efficiency of sandboxes, including options to increase/decrease frequency and volume, and streamline locations;
 - iii. Introduce a tow during parking bans;
 - iv. Clear public squares and internal paved pathways in parks and playgrounds;
 - v. Expand the windrow free zones in front of schools to include both sides of the road; and

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- vi. Clear residential windrows blocking driveways and curb cuts.
- C. Assisted Snow Programs.

Executive Summary

- The Snow and Ice Control (SNIC) program enables Edmontonians to experience a safe and liveable winter city, where residents can safely connect to and access spaces, services, facilities and transportation networks no matter how they travel.
- The Snow and Ice Control Policy - C409K, and its corresponding Administrative Procedure build on the strategic goals outlined within ConnectEdmonton and the Safe Mobility Strategy with the outcome of ensuring a safe and livable mobility network in winter.
- The proposed programmed approach referred to as “Roads Option 1/Active Pathways Option 1” (R1/AP1) enables operations to be more effective in responding to different types of weather events, providing an increased level of service consistency to residents and visitors to Edmonton. R1/AP1 would result in a noticeable improvement to overall Snow and Ice Control service delivery for Edmontonians, within the first year of implementation.
- The proposed programmed approach R1/AP1 includes an implementation plan that phases in the enhanced service over three years to account for financial considerations and operational requirements. Service levels would be adjusted annually in the Administrative Procedure to reflect a standard that can be consistently achieved for an average winter season.

REPORT

Administration has developed an integrated, programmed approach to SNIC for the options determined by Council (Attachment 1). Each approach includes:

- Council’s feedback and insights from report CO00778 Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards, presented on April 25, 2022
- Financial integration with other business areas (eg. Enforcement, parking ban signage, equipment maintenance, communications)
- An implementation plan that phases in the enhanced SNIC program and associated budget and service levels over several years
- Monitoring and evaluating performance results

Snow and Ice Control Programmed Approach

Administration’s proposed programmed approach R1/AP1 (Attachment 2) will enable operations to be more effective in responding to different types of weather events, providing an increased level of service consistency to residents. Administration would implement the enhanced program over three winter seasons to take into account financial considerations and operational requirements needed to support new resources and equipment. With this approach, Edmontonians would experience a noticeable improvement to overall service delivery in the first

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year of implementation and continuous improvement during the following years. Below are expected outcomes from the R1/AP1 approach:

- Faster response to weather events will keep City roads and active pathways in better condition than in previous winter seasons. For example, if sidewalks, staircases and paths are cleared sooner, there will be less packed snow/ice to address — this will improve the overall safety, connectivity and accessibility of Edmonton’s mobility network.
- Once the program is fully implemented, Edmontonians will experience a 45.2 per cent service improvement on the completion of blading residential roads to a 5 cm snowpack (from 10.4 days to 5.7 days).
- Once the program is fully implemented, Edmontonians will experience a 46.8 per cent service improvement on manually cleared areas, such as around bus stop benches and on staircases (from 20.3 days to 10.8 days).
- Cleared public squares and internal paved pathways in parks and playgrounds in the active pathway inventory would result in a continuous network of pedestrian mobility. Residents would be able to more easily access parkland and playgrounds year-round.
- Cleared residential driveway openings and curb cuts (ramps built into the curb of a sidewalk) when streets are bladed would improve accessibility and pedestrian mobility at intersections and in residential areas. It should be noted that clearing residential driveway openings and curb cuts would begin January 1, 2023 if Council chooses to implement the SNIC programmed approach in the upcoming winter season.
- Prioritization of windrow pick up near schools would improve accessibility and safety for caregivers and students. Windrows near schools would receive two scheduled removals, during the winter and spring breaks, in addition to ongoing maintenance during windrow pick up on arterial and collector roads.
- Edmontonians would experience a faster response to crews addressing service requests, such as accessibility concerns.

Service levels within the Administrative Procedure would be adjusted annually to align with resources and reflect a standard that can be consistently achieved for an average winter season.

Enforcement and Towing

With additional resources, Administration would dedicate new enforcement officers to the SNIC program, shifting the City’s current response-based approach to proactive enforcement of the parking ban and “snow on sidewalk” investigations.

Officers would issue warnings in advance of residential street blading to address low compliance rates, and then follow up to ticket and tow just prior to SNIC operators visiting a neighbourhood. Vehicles in violation of the parking ban would be removed and placed at the nearest available street location, allowing operators to blade curb-to-curb in a safe and efficient manner.

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Administration would inform vehicle owners of the towing program and what to do if their vehicle is removed from its original parking spot.

If Council chooses to implement this service enhancement, Administration would bring forward a bylaw report to Council to increase the current parking ban fine. The increased fine amount would be in alignment with most bylaw infractions, would help to offset the costs of the tow contract, and would work as an additional deterrent to non-compliance. It should be noted that if Council chooses to implement the SNIC programmed approach in the upcoming winter season, dedicated towing services would begin January 1, 2023, due to timelines for establishing a service contract.

When a parking ban is not in effect, enforcement officers would prioritize “snow on sidewalk” investigations in areas with high pedestrian traffic, reported low mobility, and locations with public safety concerns, such as major bus routes, DATS pick up zones, hospitals, seniors centers, school zones, recreation areas, commercial and business areas. This additional, proactive enforcement is anticipated to increase compliance and improve mobility for pedestrians, especially those with low mobility.

Assisted Snow Program

Administration’s programmed approach includes formalizing the City’s Snow to Go program which was successfully piloted for the past three winter seasons. The program provides grant funding for Community Leagues to facilitate snow and ice clearing services to seniors, persons with limited mobility, and newcomers to Canada. The grant funds are used by Community Leagues for:

- Purchasing of snow and ice removal tools and materials for newcomers to Canada
- Honoraria for community volunteer groups (eg, Boys and Girls Club, Girl Guides)
- Hiring part-time helpers, students and others to provide shoveling services

In the 2021-22 winter season, nearly 1,000 residents were assisted through the Snow to Go program, and Community Leagues reported a high level of interest and satisfaction. Formalizing the program would allocate resources to effectively coordinate and communicate the program, as well as increase the number of Community Leagues the City would be able to support.

Community Sandbox Program

In response to a recommendation in report OCA00338 Snow and Ice Control Audit, presented to Audit Committee on February 11, 2021, Administration is performing a full review of the Community Sandbox program in 2022, including options that address frequency, volume and location. This audit recommendation is due to be completed by December 31, 2022.

Administration will return to Council with options and recommendations for the Community Sandbox program once the program review is complete.

While this program review is underway, Administration is testing alternative pieces of equipment in order to optimize refilling sandboxes and trial large sandboxes in centralized locations.

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Edmontonians would also experience a service improvement to the Community Sandbox program as a result of increased resources within the R1/AP1 proposed approach.

Communications Enhancements

Administration's SNIC communication strategy includes advertising, social media, digital tools and ongoing media engagement during weather events and throughout the winter season. Research will also continue to inform the City's communications approach for continuous improvement. Through effective education and communication, Administration will continue to build trust with the public in the work that the City does to help ensure a safe and livable winter mobility network. The 2022-23 SNIC communications plan will include:

- Informing Edmontonians about snow and ice service levels, and ensuring people know where to look for information regarding winter maintenance
- Education about parking bans, enforcement and the role Edmontonians play when residential road clearing occurs
- Targeted messaging to meet the needs of specific demographic groups, such as residents who speak English as a second language and persons with disabilities
- Development of new digital tool(s) that focus on real-time, localized information for residents
- Updates to the service reporting back-end process that will provide more information on the status of 311 inquiries for residents
- Expanded community activation to promote positive and non-traditional interactions, such as promotional contests and attendance at community events
- Resources for Council, including regular updates throughout the winter season and a SNIC resource binder before the season begins

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Administration has a robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework to measure the SNIC program's performance, and will present an evaluation of the program to Council at the end of each winter season. In addition to ongoing program monitoring (eg. environmental and infrastructure impacts, safety results, etc), the evaluation framework will include:

- Performance results of each of the service levels outlined in the Administrative Procedure
- Council, community, staff and stakeholder feedback
- Results of the Snow to Go assisted snow program
- Bylaw compliance and support for SNIC from enforcement officers
- Measurement of the City's communications strategy

Administration proposes implementing a SNIC program for a full winter season in order to properly evaluate its effectiveness. Performance measures and feedback from Council and the public would inform improvements for the following season. Using these feedback mechanisms

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and inputs, through flexible and adaptable service delivery, Administration will make adjustments within policy and budget to ensure that SNIC services best meet the needs of Edmontonians.

Budget/Financial Implications

Increases to SNIC services will require an adjustment to the program budget.

If Council chooses to implement the SNIC programmed approach in the upcoming winter season, funding would need to be secured immediately. Administration would require \$8.8 million to fund the SNIC program for the 2022 portion of the upcoming winter season. As the tax rate has already been established for 2022, the funding would need to come from the Financial Stabilization Reserve (FSR) on a one-time basis, or other one-time funding sources identified by Council. The current balance of the FSR is \$126.7 million. If one-time funding is approved for this purpose, the updated balance of the FSR would be \$117.8 million. The required FSR minimum balance is \$112.9 million; if this option is selected by Council, \$4.9 million of funds would remain in the FSR before falling below the minimum balance.

Administration would also require ongoing funding to implement enhancements to the SNIC program. If Council chooses to implement the SNIC programmed approach R1/AP1 in the upcoming winter season, incremental tax-levy support within the 2023-2026 operating budget cycle is outlined below. The costs and tax implications in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 are estimates, and are based on the winter season (October to March), rather than the calendar budget year. The following figures align with the calendar budget year (tax increases are estimates):

- 2023: \$89.9 million total budget (\$32.8 million budget increase, 1.87 per cent tax increase)
- 2024: \$104.7 million total budget (\$14.8 million budget increase, 0.85 per cent tax increase)
- 2025: \$111.5 million total budget (\$6.8 million budget increase, 0.39 per cent tax increase)

This would be a pre-commitment of a 2023-2026 tax increase outside of the normal 2023-2026 budget process, for a total estimated tax increase of 3.1 per cent from 2023 to 2026. If Council chooses to implement the SNIC programmed approach, Administration will return with a funded service package to formally incorporate the ongoing operating needs into the 2023-2026 budget. The proposed 2023-2026 capital budget would also include new funded capital profiles totalling approximately \$10.6 million to support these service improvements, likely funded through pay-as-you-go capital. This would also be a pre-commitment of pay-as-you-go funding from 2023-2026 available capital funds.

Alternatively, Council has the option to implement the SNIC programmed approach in 2023 in order to consider the enhanced service and related operating and capital financial needs with all other corporate priorities, as a part of the 2023-2026 budget deliberations. This would result in resources and overall service delivery for this upcoming winter season remaining similar to the previous year, and delayed implementation of the SNIC programmed approach overall.

Administration is committed to continued analysis, refinement and improvement of the SNIC program within an approved budget. Administration will present an evaluation of the program to

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Council at the end of each winter season. Performance measures and feedback from Council and the public would inform improvements or changes for the following season.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration conducted engagement with stakeholders and the general public to inform the proposed options for service enhancement in report CO00778 Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards. Administration also conducted an online SNIC survey, available to the Edmonton Insight Community and the public via open link from May 19-29, 2022, which received a total of 4,109 responses. The key findings informed Administration's programmed approach for the 2022-23 winter season (Attachment 3):

- 60 per cent of respondents are in support of some level of service increase and the associated tax increase for roads.
- 74 per cent of respondents are in support of clearing residential windrows blocking driveways and curb cuts.
- Respondents are split between support for maintaining the same service as the 2021-22 winter season (47 per cent) or increasing service levels through one of the two proposed options (48 per cent).
- Of those in support of increased service for active pathways, there is twice as much support for AP1 over AP3. GBA+ subsegment analysis indicates strong support for AP1 within groups who live in condos, townhouses, or duplexes, who take public transit or walk for winter transportation, who identify as LGBTQ2S+, who have a disability, mobility challenges, a medical condition, or support a person with a disability.
- The largest proportion (60 per cent) of respondents think it is important that community sandboxes continue to be a free service. Other factors that respondents considered important are: consistent timelines (service levels), availability of sand, and limits on how much sand can be taken by a user at one time. Administration will gather further input from users of the program as a part of the overall Community Sandbox program review.
- Among respondents who may be interested in an assisted snow program for people with disabilities or mobility challenges, 48 per cent are most interested in services offered through their community league or a non-profit organization.

Administration also conducted additional engagement with frontline staff who expressed the need for proper evaluation of the program as well as sufficient equipment, staff, resources, and in-scope leadership to ensure frontline staff have adequate support.

GBA+

A key principle of the Snow and Ice Control Policy - C409K, is equity, stating that "prioritization of winter maintenance activities based on equity is required to provide a mobility network that is accessible to people of all abilities and needs, and for all modes of transportation."

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As part of report CO00778, Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards, Administration applied GBA+ to identify inequities and develop a SNIC program that promotes a safe and livable winter mobility network for all (Attachment 4). The programmed approach proposed by Administration takes into consideration residents' lived experience, protects vulnerable mobility network users, addresses unintentional systemic service delivery inequity, and contributes to Vision Zero.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Program Options R1, RO.5 Operating Budget
2. Programmed Approach R1/AP1 Operating Budget
3. Snow and Ice Control Program Survey Summary Report - May 2022
4. GBA+ Reporting