

### Stakeholder Feedback - Assisted Snow Removal

Administration met with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on January 9, 2024 and the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council (ESCC) on January 10, 2024. These meetings were not meant to be an exhaustive approach to gathering feedback but rather an opportunity for people with disabilities and seniors to share their insights on why an assisted snow removal program is needed in Edmonton and what they would like to see in the program, including eligibility, signup process and program scope.

Stakeholders who provided feedback expressed overwhelming support for an assisted snow removal program and explained that people with disabilities and seniors are often physically unable to remove snow and cannot afford or arrange for snow removal on their own.

#### Stakeholder Defined Needs:

- The City requires Edmontonians to clear snow on their front walkway and any sidewalk next to their property. Failure to maintain sidewalks can result in a fine of \$100 plus the cost of snow removal. The policy assumes that Edmontonians can physically clear snow on their property, but that is not always the case:
  - People with disabilities and mobility issues are often physically unable to remove snow and unable to afford to hire a snow removal service due in part to additional expenses associated with having a disability.
  - Seniors are often physically unable to remove snow and seniors on a low income cannot afford to hire a snow removal service. As with people in the disabled community, seniors may not have anyone to help them with snow removal.
- Seniors and people with disabilities are often unable to leave home or have friends or family visit if their sidewalks and driveways are snow-covered, leaving them isolated. Cleared sidewalks also help prevent falls.
- Accessibility for all Edmontonians improves when sidewalks are cleared of snow.
- Support for snow removal is available through the Government of Alberta's Provincial Special Needs Assistance for Seniors benefit program. However, funds available to low-income seniors are insufficient as the program also covers services other than snow removal.
- No snow removal assistance programs exist specifically for people with disabilities or mobility challenges in Edmonton.

### Suggested Eligibility:

- Make the program available to people in Edmonton with a physical disability or mobility challenge and seniors on a low income.
- Stakeholders are open to an income threshold, but noted that people eligible for an assisted snow program often face financial challenges and/or expenses not incurred by other Edmontonians.

### Proposed Signup Process/Program Scope:

- Make the signup process as simple as possible. Stakeholders spoke about it being onerous to apply for subsidized programs through the City of Edmonton and other organizations, including complying with requests for doctor's notes.
- Consider including an assisted snow clearing program with other City of Edmonton programs such as Assisted Waste Collection Service or the Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS). Centralizing signups for these programs would reduce barriers for individuals in accessing these programs. Hire dedicated staff to manage the signup, vendor selection, management of invoicing, and administrative aspects of this process.
- Include snow removal and mowing in any program. Both are required under City bylaws and can result in a fine ticket.
- Stakeholders pointed to the City of Calgary's Fair Entry program, which allows eligible residents to apply for multiple programs and services with one application. Stakeholders suggested that the City of Edmonton set up a similar program so that Edmontonians can apply for subsidized programs and services with a single application.

### Area to be Cleared of Snow:

- Ask program participants about their specific needs for snow removal. Some people use a side entrance instead of the front door. Others need the driveway cleared to access their vehicle or for when friends or family visit. Asking people what area they want to be cleared would ensure an assisted snow removal program meets people's needs.

### Enforcement:

- Stakeholders told Administration that it is not uncommon for people with disabilities and seniors unable to clear snow to get fined, which concerns them. They would like to see Administration develop a process to address the issue.
- Stakeholders stressed the importance of maintaining individuals' privacy in an assisted snow program. They recommended that bylaw officers be

provided addresses only, no names. They do not want properties in an assisted snow program to be publicly identified or marked.

### **Program Implementation:**

- If Council directs Administration to pilot one of the assisted snow clearing program options listed in the report, stakeholders expressed interest in working with Administration to develop the program. They would like to see the program offered permanently and did feel the options presented would support their communities well in reducing the impacts and risks for snow and mobility.