

Administration Response - Snow and Ice Control Program Audit

Recommendation

That the February 11, 2021, City Operations report CO00180, be received for information.

Executive Summary

On February 13, 2020, City Council received an anonymous letter which included a number of allegations of mismanagement of the City's Snow and Ice Control Program. In response to the concerns raised in this letter, the Office of the City Auditor conducted a value-for-money audit of the City's Snow and Ice Control Program.

The objectives of this audit were to determine if the Parks and Roads Services Branch:

1. Has an effective governance structure in place to deliver the Snow and Ice Control program.
2. Measures and monitors the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the Snow and Ice Control program.
3. Is planning, allocating, managing and monitoring program resources to ensure effective, efficient and economical delivery of the Snow and Ice Control program.
4. Has effective and efficient program processes and operations in place to meet the Snow and Ice Control program objectives and service levels.
5. Has effective processes in place to manage public expectations on program quality.

The City Auditor identified areas for improvement across all five objectives and provided Administration with 12 recommendations to strengthen the governance structure, improve program delivery, and manage public expectations for the Snow and Ice Control program. Administration accepts all the recommendations and work is underway to address the items identified.

Eight of the 12 actions will be implemented by Q4 2021, and the remaining actions will conclude by Q4 2022. The following is a summary of Administration's current and planned activities.

Report

In 2020, the Office of the City Auditor carried out an audit of the Snow and Ice Control program (SNIC), focused on value-for-money and improving program effectiveness and efficiency. Recommendations were provided to improve the program; these recommendations complement and align with areas of improvement previously identified by Administration and include elements of work currently underway.

Response From Administration

Administration is addressing each recommendation as outlined below.

Recommendation 1: Review and update the guiding documents relating to the Snow and Ice Control Program to improve their clarity, accuracy, and consistency.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Administration has policy discussions with Council - and by extension, the public - on a regular basis, with modifications implemented frequently. To further support these conversations, work is underway to refresh the Snow and Ice Control Policy (C409J) and is anticipated to be presented to City Council in late spring 2021. The refreshed policy will be aligned to City outcomes and will follow best practices for policy development. The policy will be supported by a comprehensive Administrative Directive, which will include service levels, improved clarity for roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and performance measures that will support Council and the public in measuring Policy outcomes. This refresh will be supported by a comprehensive engagement process, which will include employees of the Snow and Ice Control program.

Assuming Council approves the proposed policy refresh, this work will be completed for the start of the 2021/2022 winter season. Internal and external materials will be reviewed for accuracy and to align with the updated policy. This work will be completed by Q4 2021.

Recommendation 2: Improve decision-making processes related to SNIC by:

- ***Increasing opportunities to actively engage employees in operational decision-making processes, and***
- ***Assessing the effectiveness of communication tools to ensure that internal information is received and flows openly.***

Administration accepts this recommendation.

This recommendation is closely linked to the development of the Administrative Directive identified in Recommendation 1. Once this Directive has been developed, staff will have a clearer picture of service levels, processes, roles, responsibilities and

accountabilities. Staff will also have the flexibility to undertake work with the goal of achieving the outcome as defined in the policy, rather than being limited to specific policy requirements. Through delegation, staff will be empowered to make select operational decisions in the field that will best serve residents and address the unique challenges that can arise from non-standard infrastructure. The types of decisions that can be delegated and a process to support these decisions will be developed as part of addressing this Recommendation.

As Recommendations 2 and 3 are closely aligned, the focus of the Snow and Ice Control program team will be to integrate and align this work as needed.

Work underway to begin these improvements for the 2020/2021 winter season includes:

- Assessment of the current state of internal communication; and
- Continued development of an integrated internal communication and change management plan.

Administration is actively undertaking work across the corporation to improve employee empowerment and ensure a consistent feedback loop is maintained between frontline staff, management and leadership. This work is not specific to the Snow and Ice Control program, and will be integrated into the program where applicable.

Administration recognizes that both effective communications and change management are ongoing processes that require continuous focus and improvement, and can have a longer timeline to achieve meaningful success. This work will be completed by Q4 2021.

Recommendation 3: Parks and Road Services (PARS) should strengthen and improve current change management practices to include people focused processes when implementing changes to SNIC organizational structure and program.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Administration recognizes the importance of people-focused change management, and acknowledges that improvement opportunities exist.

Change management has been a growing focus throughout the organization, with recent initiatives including Reimagine and the Online Idea Generation process to solicit staff ideas for cost savings and improvements. The importance of effective people-focused change management will continue to be a focus of organizational change efforts moving forward.

As Recommendations 2 and 3 are closely aligned, the focus of the Snow and Ice Control program team will be to integrate and align this work as needed.

Work is underway for the 2020/2021 winter season to begin these improvements.

Work includes:

- Assessment of the current state of change readiness, to identify gaps;
- Continued development of an integrated internal communication and change management plan; and
- Formalization of existing processes and development of new processes to support people-focused change management.

Administration recognizes that both effective communications and change management are ongoing processes that require continuous focus and improvement, and can have a longer timeline to achieve meaningful success. This work will be completed by Q3 2022.

Recommendation 4: PARS should develop and implement relevant, sufficient, reliable, comparable, and consistent performance measures to support management decision-making and demonstrate achievement of Corporate, Branch and SNIC goals.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

In conjunction with the work undertaken for Recommendation 1, a comprehensive performance measurement framework and reporting structure are currently being developed which builds on existing metrics and measures. This framework will integrate the results reporting from the existing Snow and Ice Control Monitoring Program.

The framework will align the policy and service levels with the work already underway with Corporate Enterprise Performance Management. The framework is anticipated to be in place for the 2021/2022 winter season. Baseline data collection for new measures will occur over the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 winter seasons, as data collection and analysis supports are developed and implemented. This work will be completed by Q4 2021.

Recommendation 5: PARS should improve and formalize an ongoing benchmarking process to ensure PARS assesses and compares SNIC program's performance with other cities. This process should be aligned with the ongoing work of the Corporation and industry best practices.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

In conjunction with the work undertaken for Recommendation 4, work is underway to identify potential benchmarking measures and complete a readiness assessment for each identified measure. The Snow and Ice Control program continues to build and formalize processes and data infrastructure to support repeatable data collection for these measures as needed. This work is an extension and formalization of activities already underway.

Work is underway as part of Corporate Enterprise Performance Management to determine which benchmarking organizations the City will join. If necessary, the Snow

and Ice Control program will identify other municipalities the City will benchmark against if there is no appropriate existing benchmarking program. The Snow and Ice Control program will be prepared to contribute once Corporate memberships have been confirmed. This work will be completed by Q4 2021.

Recommendation 6: PARS should perform regular assessments of the cost of in-house services (with owned or leased equipment) versus the cost of contracted resources for key SNIC activities and adjust the allocation of work based on the findings.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Work is underway for the 2020/2021 winter season to develop processes and gather data to support this analysis on an ongoing basis. The Snow and Ice Control program will be integrating the cost analysis with the service levels developed in Recommendation 1. This model will support analysis on the cost and delivery model for each service, allowing the program to identify which services should be performed, when they should be performed, and how that service should be delivered to achieve the policy outcomes. This work will support benchmarking efforts, both within the program and to other municipalities; as such, it connects and aligns with Recommendations 4 and 5.

Full analysis will be complete prior to the 2021/2022 winter season, with data-informed in-house versus contracted decisions made as required to support the 2021/2022 season. This process will be designed to support reviews on an ongoing basis. Implementation of changes may be impacted by existing contracts or other procurement limitations. This work will be completed by Q4 2021.

Recommendation 7: PARS and Facility and Fleet Services Branch should work together to clearly document service level commitments and operational arrangements with PARS to clarify roles and responsibilities, facilitate communication, set expectations, and define procedures.

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Parks and Roads Services looks forward to deepening the partnership with Fleet and Facility Services and co-creating a Partnership Framework and other operational arrangements to best support the unique operational requirements of the Snow and Ice Control program. The Partnership Framework will provide a clear line-of-sight between the service levels for Fleet equipment and the public-facing service levels of the Snow and Ice Control program.

Work began in Q4 2020; completion is targeted by the end of the 2021/2022 winter season. To support continuous improvement, agreements and arrangements will be modified and adjusted as necessary on an ongoing annual basis between winter seasons.

A number of processes between Fleet and PARS were established in 2020. These are

key components in building an integrated, systems-focused approach, one that enables the Fleet Services Branch to better support the SNIC program in achieving the outcome of a safe and livable winter mobility network. In 2021, these processes will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to ensure the services provided to operational teams are streamlined and effective. Any new processes or adjusted processes will be communicated to all operational teams. This work will be completed by Q2 2022.

Recommendation 8: PARS should, as part of the Reimagine initiative underway, reevaluate and analyse the following cost-reduction and/or revenue opportunities:

- ***Community Sandbox program***
- ***Tipping fees at snow storage sites***
- ***Permanent versus temporary staff analysis***

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Work has begun on a strategic review of the Community Sandbox program, which will include a jurisdictional scan, a program evaluation, and the public engagement required to determine the program's future state. Direction on the future state of this program will be sought from Council via the policy refresh (Recommendation 1).

A pilot for tipping fees for snow storage sites is currently underway and will be evaluated at the completion of the 2020/2021 winter season. Lessons learned will be integrated into the program evaluation and recommendations identified below. Work will be undertaken throughout 2021 to conduct a jurisdictional scan, program evaluation, and public engagement required to determine the viability of continuing public access to the snow storage sites and the implementation of tipping fees.

The Parks and Roads Services branch will work with internal teams and staff in Employee Services to conduct a cost analysis of the current staffing structure and implement identified improvements. This work will be connected with the work undertaken for Recommendation 6 to ensure cost and service delivery analysis occurs together.

This work will be completed by Q4 2022 and will be integrated with Reimagine efforts as required.

Recommendation 9: PARS should expand SOPs to include all key SNIC activities including but not limited to:

- ***Grader wing plow procedures***
- ***Sanding locations operations***
- ***Snowblowing operations***
- ***Brushing operations***
- ***Pavement temperature measurement***
- ***Snowpack measurement***
- ***Calibration of equipment***

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Throughout 2020, PARS has centralized and enhanced the SOP process, including identifying new SOP requirements, creating, reviewing and approving SOPs and strengthening document controls for the SOP catalogue. Currently, existing SOPs are required to be reviewed every three years, and new SOPs are identified and created on an annual basis.

The Snow and Ice Control program will review and, where required, enhance the process to communicate SOP changes to impacted staff, and ensure the staff acknowledgement is documented fully.

Work on this recommendation is underway, with the following areas of focus:

- The creation of new SOPs as identified by this audit;
- A comprehensive gap analysis to identify and develop any missing SOPs for all areas of the Snow and Ice Control program.

This work will be completed by Q3 2021.

Recommendation 10: PARS should improve staff oversight by developing and implementing a formalized process to monitor staff productivity and to determine whether staff are following documented procedures

Administration accepts this recommendation.

This Recommendation will be addressed in conjunction with the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities work undertaken for Recommendation 1, and improvements to complaint handling processes undertaken for Recommendation 12. Results of this Recommendation will integrate with accountability-based measures developed and implemented in Recommendations 4, 5, 6 and Enterprise Performance Management.

It is anticipated that by enhancing the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of staff, in conjunction with a reduction in complaints to be handled, supervisor and management staff will be more generally available to support frontline staff in service delivery activities. It is also anticipated that empowering staff to make required operational decisions within their scope of authority - and the support to deliver on the program outcome - will be reflected in improvements to the operational metrics used in Enterprise Performance Management.

The Parks and Roads Services branch will work in partnership with staff in the Employee Services Department to ensure people leaders are able to provide effective staff oversight and monitoring and to ensure this work is conducted in a fair, transparent and repeatable process.

Work already underway to support this Recommendation includes:

- The establishment of strategic measures for the Snow and Ice Control program, as well as the identification of benchmark measures, as supported by Enterprise Performance Management;

- The creation of operational dashboards to provide Snow and Ice Control management and field supervisors with insights into day-to-day performance; and
- Ongoing enhancements of existing technology and implementation of new technology to support staff productivity measurement.

This work will be completed by Q3 2022.

Recommendation 11: To improve public communication, PARS, in collaboration with the Communication and Engagement Department, should ensure that:

- ***The Communication Plan is clear and complete;***
- ***The information provided on the SNIC website is consistent, clear, and concise; and***
- ***The interactive maps provided on the website are accurate and timely.***

Administration accepts this recommendation.

Administration recognizes the importance of effective communication to the success of the Snow and Ice Control program. The communications focus going forward is to build partnerships with residents and continue building trust in the Snow and Ice Control program.

This work is done on an annual basis and has been largely completed in preparation for the 2020/2021 winter season. Work completed includes:

- Annual refresh of the Communication Plan, including additional tactics and methods that are new for this winter season;
- The annual refresh of the public website (edmonton.ca/SafeTravels) has been completed, including a full content and design refresh. This was done with the intent of presenting key information in an easy to understand manner;
- The interactive map has been redesigned and is now always available. A single map now exists; and
- The Snow and Ice Control program provides active and ongoing support to members of Council as they interact with their constituents and the public, including an annually reviewed and refreshed information package, weekly program and operational updates and ongoing support to answer and direct questions or feedback received by their offices.

Work actively underway for the 2020/2021 season includes:

- Enhancements to the online map - including improved timeliness and accuracy of information - are being put in place and will be tested for the 2020/2021 winter season. Adjustments will be made as necessary;
- Ensuring communication strategies and tactics are appropriately measured and reported; and
- Integrating Communications activities with Engagement activities where appropriate.

This work will be completed by Q3 2021.

Recommendation 12: PARS should strengthen complaint handling processes by:

- **Ensuring 311 scripts are consistent, complete and accurate.**
- **Centralizing receiving, recording and handling of Councillor inquiries.**
- **Analyzing 311 and Councillor inquiries for common themes and developing strategies to address common themes.**
- **Tracking and managing time spent dealing with 311 and Councillor inquiries.**
- **Deactivating the PARS email account or developing a process to enter these emails into the 311 stream.**

Administration accepts this recommendation.

This work is done on an annual basis and has been largely completed in preparation for the 2020/2021 winter season. Work completed includes:

- 311 scripts have been completely rewritten to contain relevant content and best support agents in answering resident questions and concerns; and
- A process has been developed to ensure service requests sent to the PARS email address are being forwarded to 311 in a timely manner.

Work actively underway for the 2020/2021 season includes:

- Identification and implementation of process improvements to the Councillor inquiry process. This work includes developing solutions to the ongoing challenge of reconciling duplicate resident requests received from both 311 and via a Councillor inquiry;
- Developing processes to receive, review and analyze inbound feedback (311, Councillor inquiries and website feedback) for common themes and adjust communication and messaging as needed. This analysis will support adjustments to service as needed throughout the winter season; and
- Developing processes to track time spent managing and responding to both 311 and Councillor inquiries and implementing changes and supports as necessary to reduce the resources required to manage and resolve the inquiries effectively.

This work will be completed by Q3 2021.

Next Steps

Administration will continue to implement the action plans indicated in the responses to the City Auditor's recommendations and ensure they are completed within the specified timeframe.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

| Corporate Outcome(s): Goods and services move efficiently | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Outcome(s) | Measure(s) | Result(s) | Target(s) |
| A safe and livable winter mobility network | % of service level achieved | N/A | TBD |

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor