

COMMUNICATION 130182

Received From: Dave Young, Director of Public Works
Addressed To: Committee of the Whole
Date: October 8, 2019
Topic: 2018/2019 Winter Maintenance Review

SUMMARY

This is a further report to Communication 130123 presented at the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 11, 2019.

The 2018/2019 winter season presented a number of challenges in terms of winter maintenance operations for the Carleton Place Public Works Department, along with other municipal departments.

In our area, this was a record setting season in terms of snowfall amounts (approximately 300cms) and number of days (150+) that snow of at least 1cm was present on the ground. Along with the snowfall, there were significant fluctuations in temperatures (freeze /thaw cycles) which led to ice buildup, road salt supply shortages, increased vehicular and pedestrian networks for Carleton Place Public Works to maintain, and loss of snow storage areas due to volume of snow.

In spite of all these challenges, targets were consistently met in terms of response times and timeframe for completion of clearing operations. This past season saw the most hours spent on snow removal operations of any season in memory and in fact, along with regular daytime snow removal activity there 24 nights of snow removal operations undertaken by Public Works Staff over the course of the past season.

The events of this past season raised a number of issues that staff feels should be reviewed such as confirmation of desired levels of service, in particular in relation to sidewalk maintenance. Staff feels that timing for this review is critical as the sidewalk network in Town is about to expand significantly with ongoing housing developments that could increase the network by 25 to 30%.

BACKGROUND

The current Overnight Winter Parking Policy was changed in 2011 to a system that permits overnight parking in the winter other than when the ban is imposed due to the forecast or if streets are posted for removal operations. Although this system provides the benefit of access to overnight on-street parking for residents, it also presents a number of ongoing challenges for both the Public Works Department and the By-Law Enforcement staff such:

- as changing or incorrect weather forecasts that led to having to undertake operations without having a ban in place;
- towing vehicles to a municipal facility; and
- the Town absorbing towing costs and having to dedicate all By-Law Staff to winter parking enforcement.

In addition, the Province has amended the Maintenance Standards that provide guidelines to Municipalities in terms of inspection frequency, timeframes to repair deficiencies and winter maintenance relating to roads, sidewalks, bridges, signs, and roadway lighting. Winter maintenance of sidewalks is now a component of this regulation which had not been included previously. Although the amendments to the regulation came into effect in 2018, Carleton Place, along with many municipalities are still working through the implementation of these changes.

At the June 11, 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting, Staff presented an initial report on the matter and identified that they wanted to develop to proceed with a comprehensive review of winter maintenance activities with a focus on sidewalk winter maintenance, winter on-street parking, and implementation of new Provincial regulations. The following motion was passed:

**Moved by Deputy Mayor Redmond
Seconded by Councillor Tennant**

THAT staff undertake a comprehensive review of winter maintenance operations with a focus on sidewalk winter maintenance, Overnight Winter Parking Policy, and implementation of new Provincial Regulations and present a report to Committee.

CARRIED - CONSENT

COMMENT

This report provides further information for Council to consider regarding winter maintenance activities.

Sidewalk Winter Maintenance

The existing policy relating to Sidewalk Winter Maintenance states that the Town will winter maintain sidewalks on arterial and collector streets and sidewalks leading to Public Institutions.

In recent years the Public Works Department, at Council's direction, has expanded sidewalk winter maintenance coverage to include newly developed areas that have sidewalks adjacent to the road and as long as there are no obstructions to impede this service. This increase was as a direct response to residents' desire to have a safe travelling network for active transportation all year long.

Areas that are not winter maintained by the Town are in older neighbourhoods where there are homes with little to no setback from the street and where there are utility poles located on the roadway portion of the sidewalk. This layout results in there being no available snow storage and in fact the sidewalk has been utilized as a snow storage area for the roadway. In the past, there had been efforts to attempt to winter maintain these areas, but it quickly became evident that the only way to keep these sidewalks open would be to conduct snow removal operations after every snowfall event. It was

then deemed that this level of service could not continue due to the financial impact involved.

The Town's current sidewalk winter maintenance policy is similar to other nearby municipalities.

Staff has in place the resources required to maintain the existing level of service for the 2019/2020 winter season. However, in the next couple of years, there are a number of new developments where if the existing policy remains, the Town will become responsible for maintenance of many new kilometres of sidewalk; as noted above, an increase of 25-30%. This will require a significant increase in funding level related to new equipment and staff to accommodate. Should Council wish to review the level of service for sidewalk winter maintenance, it should be undertaken in advance of new developments with sidewalk networks coming online.

The Government of Ontario has passed amendment 366/18 for Ontario Regulation 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways. Contained within these amendments is a requirement for a municipality to close a municipal sidewalk that is not winter maintained by by-law and indicate within the by-law the timeframe that the closure is in effect.

Winter Parking Restrictions

Prior to the current system of imposing on-street parking bans when weather forecasts call for more than 7 cm of snow, the Town's previous By-law No. 46-2003 stipulated that overnight on-street parking was restricted from November 15th of any given year to April 1st of the following year between the hours of 12 o'clock midnight and 7:00 a.m.

Although the current winter parking by-law has been in place for seven (7) years, the issues that arise from the current system continue to create issues for Staff and residents during the winter season.

From a Public Works perspective, issues to the current system relate to:

- staff resources to post signage for snow removal operations and then collect signs after removal operations. Although this may not seem like a significant task, it has to occur when there is minimal staff available as the Town has legislative requirements to meet regarding operator rest periods. Snow removal operations occur overnight after staff have already been out plowing the night before.
- forecasts which are inaccurate and/or don't meet the threshold to impose parking restrictions, yet plowing operations are required because of the amount of snow which actually falls. For example, in the 2017/2018 winter season, there were three (3) nights that the ban was imposed, but there were 13 nights that plowing operations were required.
- Staff either has to return when possible to deal with windrows left on the travelled portion of the road (these windrows are created by vehicles parked on the road due to no ban being put in place, so plows plow around them and when the vehicles

leave in the morning, we have to clear away the snow left behind) when plowing operations are required but the ban wasn't imposed or they remain in place and can create a potential hazard.

From a By-law Enforcement perspective, the issues with the current system include:

- challenges in unplanned staffing requirements as By-law Enforcement staff is dependent on weather forecasts. Having a consistent winter parking restriction allows for planned enforcement efforts.
- organizing towing operations has continued to become more of a challenge with limited private sector towing resources being available and the fact that the timeframe when they are required by the Town is when there is a demand for their services through CAA and other clients.
- when this system was adopted in 2011, the Town agreed to cover towing costs on a trial basis. This issue has not been revisited since it was originally implemented. During the 2018/2019 season, the Town's towing costs were in excess of \$5,000.
- Although considerable staff efforts continue with respect to notification when the ban is imposed, By-law staff continually deal with complaints when tickets are issued as individuals indicate they were not aware of the ban.

Upon review of other Eastern Ontario communities' strategies relating to winter parking restrictions, Staff was only able to find the City of Ottawa which operates in a similar fashion to the Town of Carleton Place. This outreach included all types (urban and rural) and sizes of communities.

Discussions with City of Ottawa staff revealed that when plowing operations are required but the ban was not imposed that they have multiple crews available and will revisit routes in order to cleanup areas where there were numerous vehicles impeding plowing operations. Plowing operations in Carleton Place are undertaken by a combination of Town staff and contract resources but there is only a single shift and available resources are not available for around the clock coverage.

The same issue is relevant for the By-Law Enforcement Department, in that there are finite resources available and the current Winter Parking By-law can strain available staff resources.

Options available for Council to consider in this regard include:

Option 1 – Change Overnight Winter Parking to Pre 2011 System

Under this Option, Council would revert to the system in place similar to other Eastern Ontario Municipalities which would require that there would be no on street parking between certain dates and times. In the Town's By-law 46-2003 these timeframes were established as being between 12 o'clock midnight to 7:00 a.m. from November 15 of any given year to April 1st the following year. If Council agreed to proceed with Staff's recommendation, Staff would commit to an intensive communications strategy leading up to the November 15 implementation date of:

- Use of the waste management app to provide details of the changes

- Extensive use of social media i.e. Facebook, Instagram, etc.
- Weekly CP Scoop releases
- Information on Town's website
- Messaging on electronic sign boards and tv screens in facilities

In addition to the above, By-law Enforcement Staff would commit to issuing warnings to people parked overnight between November 1 and the implementation deadline of November 15 to warn of the changes to the Town's winter maintenance system.

Option 2 – Retain the Current Winter Parking Ban System

Under this Option, Council would retain the current system of warning of overnight parking bans when weather forecasts predict 7 cm or greater. This system would not address Staff's current concerns with the system.

Option 3 – Hybrid Option

Under this Option, Council would retain the current system of warning of overnight parking bans when weather forecasts predict 7 cm or greater for the upcoming 2019-2020 winter season. The system would then be changed to the pre-2011 system for the 2020-2021 and ongoing winter seasons. This option would allow for significant time to communicate with the public about the proposed changes.

Given the number of issues identified by Staff and the public, it is recommended that Council revert to the previous winter maintenance provisions of By-law No. 46-2003 for the 2019-20 and ongoing winter seasons.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An additional \$50,000 was included in the 2019 budget to accommodate the expanded sidewalk network bringing the budget for this area to \$90,717. Should staff continue to provide winter maintenance on all sidewalks in new residential subdivisions as they come online, operational budgets will continue to require increasing adjustments in future years.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT the Public Works Department continue to provide sidewalk winter maintenance as follows:
 - on sidewalks and/or trails adjacent to Arterial and Collector Streets, including the Ottawa Valley Recreation Trail (OVRT);
 - on sidewalks leading to public institutions;
 - on sidewalks in residential areas where there is adequate storage areas and no permanent obstructions in the roadway; and

THAT the level of service on winter-maintained sidewalks be consistent with Ontario Regulation 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways; and

THAT a by-law be passed identifying municipal sidewalks that are to be closed from November 15th of any given year to April 1st of the following year.

2. THAT Council support Option 1 - Change Overnight Winter Parking to Pre 2011 System; and

THAT By-law 50-2011 pertaining to winter parking restrictions be rescinded which would result in the winter parking restrictions of By-Law 46-2003 Section 9. 2) being reinstated as follows:

No person shall park a vehicle or permit a vehicle to remain parked on any highway between 12:00 a.m. midnight to 7:00 a.m. from November 15 to April 1 of any year.