

Report to Council



Date: April 4, 2016
File: 1850-58
To: City Manager
From: Darryl Astofooroff, Public Works Manager
Subject: Winter Sidewalk Clearing Strategy

Recommendation:

That Council receives, for information, the Report from the Public Works Manager dated April 4, 2016 with respect to sidewalk snow plowing;

AND THAT Council directs staff to bring back to a Regular PM Meeting Option No. 3 as outlined in the report of the Public Works Manager dated April 4, 2016 for further consideration.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an overview of challenges in keeping sidewalks clear of snow and ice, and present costs for increased service levels to improve mobility on sidewalks during winter months.

Background:

Under Traffic Bylaw #8120 owners or occupiers of property are required to clear sidewalks of snow and ice adjacent to their properties within 24 hours of any accumulation. The City clears sidewalks adjacent to City owned property and property that is exempt under the bylaw. Exempt properties are reviewed annually and the bylaw amended accordingly. The City also endeavors to provide an in-kind service following snow events of five centimetres or more, on 160 kilometers of sidewalks on arterial roads and bus routes (40 per cent of all sidewalks). However, priority remains with snow removal on roads as per current policy. This means that sidewalks not currently identified in the bylaw can only be cleared if resources are available.

On average Public Works spends \$150,000 annually to plow 70 kilometers of snow (45 kilometers of sidewalks that are bylaw exempt or adjacent to City owned property and 25 kilometers of multi-use pathways).

Over the past five years Bylaw Services has received an annual average of 101 service requests related to occupiers of property not clearing sidewalks of snow and ice. These service request counts range from 18 in 2011 to a high of 188 in 2015. These sidewalk complaints include the lack of sidewalk plowing by adjacent single family residential, multi-family residential including stratas and commercial properties. Fines may be issued but it does not solve the problem.

Staff have investigated the snow and ice policies of other mid and large-sized municipalities in BC and Alberta. Many are similar to that which Kelowna currently employs.

In an on-going effort to provide the best service and support Council's focus areas including providing a healthy, safe, active & inclusive community, a balanced transportation network, and vibrant urban centres, staff has investigated optional strategies for Council's consideration. If Council wishes to consider an enhanced service level for sidewalk snow plowing, Option 3 is preferred by staff.

Option 1: Taking full responsibility for plowing all sidewalks in the City. The estimated additional annual operating budget to clear all 420 kilometres of sidewalk would be at a minimum, \$750,000 annually. This is based on current costs for labour, equipment and materials, and includes \$150,000 to lease four additional sidewalk plows (if available), with associated labour resources. This option may also take on a significant amount of risk.

Option 2: Contract out sidewalk clearing services. Historically, contracting this service has had it challenges. Equipment used by contractors was either not available or was not sufficient or suitable to meet our standards. Although specific equipment requirements could be stipulated within a contract, it may be difficult to obtain bidders willing to invest in suitable equipment without a monetary guarantee regardless of the amount of snow received.

Option 3: Increase frequency of in-kind service on arterial roads and bus routes during extraordinary snow events. Clearing sidewalks would remain the responsibility of homeowners but the City would increase its level of service during extraordinary snow events, as resources are available (in-kind), without making the maintenance of these sidewalks a permanent City responsibility. During extraordinary snow events snow plows often have no choice but to bury the abutting sidewalks; this option allows for crews to go back and clear the sidewalks with additional equipment in a timely matter. Staff would submit as part of the 2017 budget, a one-time request for \$150,000 to lease additional sidewalk clearing equipment to fund the additional in-kind service. If the pilot is successful staff would recommend an ongoing increase to the operating budget in the following year. As the snow season has ended for the first part of 2016, any costs incurred for leasing equipment in the remaining part of 2016 would be covered by the existing budget or if needed, funding from the snow and ice control reserve. With this option, a one-year pilot program is recommended.

In addition to the above, some commercial properties and stratas do not appear to understand their responsibilities with respect to plowing sidewalks adjacent to their properties. Additional efforts will be made educating these property owners on their sidewalk responsibilities.

Internal Circulation:

Stephen Fleming - Divisional Director, Corporate & Protective Services

Fred Wollin - Supervisor, Traffic Operations
Jodie Foster - Communications Supervisor
Greg Wise - Bylaw Services Manager
George King - Financial Planning Manager

Legal/Statutory Authority:

City of Kelowna Traffic Bylaw 8120

Existing Policy: Council Policy 332 - Snow and Ice Control

Financial/Budgetary Considerations: Given that the 2015-2016 snow and ice season is more or less ended for the first part of 2016, any expenditures in the remainder of 2016 would be covered by the snow and ice control operating budget or the snow and ice control reserve.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Submitted by:

Darryl Astofooroff, Public Works Manager



Approved for inclusion: Joe Creron, Director, Civic Operations

cc: Corinne Boback, Legislative Coordinator