Winter Operations

TOPIC

Overview of the Winter Operations managed through City Operations.

KEY CONTACTS

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ATTACHMENTS

- Snow and Ice Control Policy C409K
- Snow and Ice Control Administrative Procedure
- Bylaw 19438 - To Amend Bylaw 5590 Traffic Bylaw to enable a City-Wide Seasonal Parking Ban (Attachment 1 - Bylaw 19438)
- CO00180 Administration Response - Snow and Ice Control Program Audit
- Corporate Tree Management Policy

CURRENT STATUS

Winter Operations includes the Snow and Ice (SNIC) program, tree maintenance, natural area maintenance and site servicing.

KEY MESSAGES

Snow and Ice

- SNIC program details are available via the Snow and Ice Control procedure document. An SNIC information document is also updated and shared with Councillor's offices annually in advance of the winter season. This important communication tool details SNIC operations and service levels, and should be referenced when responding to citizen inquiries.
- Parks and Roads Services provides Council with a weekly update every Friday for all relevant seasonal services the branch is working on.
- A strong Snow and Ice Control program enables Edmontonians to connect to their city and move and live safely during the winter season.
- To keep city streets safe in the winter, we must work together. Edmontonians play a critical role in supporting City staff and contractors by moving their vehicles off the street during snow plow events.
- Crews work 24/7 to keep Edmonton's mobility network safe and people moving in the winter. The City uses a variety of tools, like sand and salt, plows, brooms and more to ensure the right resources are being used for the right jobs and conditions.

Trees and Natural Areas

- There are certain tree types that need maintenance during winter. Winter is also the time for removal of trees for replacement, tree lighting and consultation work.
- The City cares for the natural areas year round with the goal of allowing them to function naturally and for sustainable biodiversity of plant and animal life. Natural areas are maintained where necessary for any hazards.

BACKGROUND

- The SNIC program has been one of the most highly visible programs in recent years both with Council and the public, largely attributed to:

- The sand recycling audit in 2016 that led to the discontinuation of the winter street sand recycling program.
- An anti-icing pilot that started in 2017 but was discontinued in 2019 due to public and stakeholder feedback.
- The new version of the parking ban introduced in 2020 that extended parking restrictions (when announced), to residential areas as well.

Snow Clearing

- Significant winter weather fluctuations require SNIC operations to continuously improve and adapt. Currently, snow clearing activities are triggered primarily after a snowfall when there is an accumulation of 2cm or more. The City uses both internal and contracted crews.
- In 2020, City Council approved a new two-phase, city-wide seasonal parking ban bylaw which can be declared with 8 hours notice.
  - Phase one: the City clears major roads, core business areas and bus routes.
  - Phase two, the City clears residential and industrial roads. More information about the parking ban can be found here.
- The SNIC team maintains the mobility network using a Council approved priority system (last approved in August 2021), divided into two streams:
  - Roadways: About 12,000km of roadways including freeways, arterial roads, collector roads, industrial roads, residential roads and alleys.
  - Active Pathways: includes City sidewalks, shared pathways, bus stops, City facilities, bike lanes, stairs, wheelchair ramps and pedestrian bridges.
- In August 2021, Administration presented an updated Snow and Ice Control policy (C409K) and administrative procedure to Council, which included key outcomes and guiding principles. Service level changes were minimal and updates were focused on clarifying different elements of the program, especially residential maintenance, cul-de-sac clearing and windrow removal.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- The distribution of resources and prioritization of different roadways and active pathways, especially bike lanes, is a continual focus.
  - Roadways and active pathways are two separate operational teams with dedicated staff and equipment, to provide service on their own inventory.

- Despite the application of calcium chloride directly on the road surface being discontinued, some concerns may persist about how calcium chloride is being used.
    - Calcium chloride is still used on the protected bike lane network
    - Calcium chloride is diluted and used to pre-wet sand-salt mixes applied on roadways to help activate the melting process and prevent material scatter; this process is not new and has been used for decades.
    - A robust monitoring program is in place to track and mitigate environmental, infrastructure and corrosive impacts.
- An audit of the SNIC program was conducted in 2020 and 12 recommendations were made and subsequently accepted by Administration. More details are here.

Other Winter Operations

- Tree maintenance, natural area maintenance and site servicing.
- Tree maintenance: The Corporate Tree Management Policy outlines roles and responsibilities in managing the City's urban forest and outlines mechanisms to ensure preservation and protection of trees.
    - Winter operations also involves pruning certain types of trees, removal of trees that need to be replaced, decorative tree lighting, clean up related to storms, consultation on how to work around trees during construction and educational workshops with community members.
    - More information about Urban Forestry projects and initiatives is here.
- Natural Area maintenance: includes ensuring existing trails within the River Valley and other Natural Areas are safe and accessible for all users yearound.
    - This includes partnering with the Encampment Response Team to clean up vacant encampments and managing safety hazards within the Natural Areas.
- Site servicing: ensures City parks are clean, safe and accessible for all users and includes caretaking of amenity buildings, event and picnic booking support, park maintenance and signage, garbage collection and litter cleanup, as well as security checks on assigned premises, arming and disarming buildings.