COUNCIL REPORT

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

Recommendation

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

> That Snow and Ice Control Policy C409L, as set out in Attachment 1 of the August 31, 2026, City Operations report CO03513, be approved.

Requested Action	Council decision required
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	**ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals**
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	**Climate Resilience**
City Plan Values	ACCESS. PRESERVE.
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	• C409K - Snow and Ice Control Policy • Snow and Ice Control Administrative Procedure
Related Council Discussions	• January 19, 2026, Community Services report CS03123, Bylaw 21283 - Amendments to the Traffic Bylaw 5590 • August 11, 2025, City Operations report CO03079, Improved Accessibility - Active Pathway Snow Removal and Sidewalk Repair • April 23, 2024, Community Services report CS02243, Assisted Snow Clearing Program Pilot Project - Stakeholder Feedback • July 11, 2023, Community Services report CS01783, Assisted Snow Programs • June 19, 2023, City Operations report CO01733, Snow and Ice Control 2022-23 Winter Season Results • February 7, 2023, City Operations report CO01253, Flood Mitigation Storage Areas as Snow Dumps • June 27, 2022, City Operations report CO01277 Snow and Ice Control - Programmed Approach for the 2022-2023 Winter Season • April 25, 2022, City Operations report CO00778, Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards

	• January 31, 2022, City Operations report CO01051, Snow and Ice Control - 2022 Operational Update • August 11, 2021, City Operations report CO00396, Snow and Ice Control Policy Refresh • February 12, 2021, City Operations report CO00180, Administration Response - Snow and Ice Control Program Audit

Executive Summary

- Council Policy C409K - Snow and Ice Control Policy is due for renewal, with approval required from Council.
    - The main proposed change to the policy is the addition of 'Accessibility' as a Snow and Ice Control outcome.
- The 2026/2027 winter season will see the majority of service levels remain the same for the Snow and Ice Control program.
- The "Well Maintained City" service package outlines approximately $23.6 million annually in ongoing operating and $11.5 million in one-time capital funding to support baseline seasonal services. This service package information is provided ahead of the 2027-2030 budget deliberations, as it highlights proposed solutions for current service level gaps.
- Further optional service enhancements are presented to supplement the "Well Maintained City" service package, before the 2027-2030 budget deliberations. Operational delivery of any optional enhancements would be contingent upon approval of the 'Well Maintained City" service package.

REPORT

The Snow and Ice Control program supports a safe and livable winter city, where residents can access spaces, services, facilities and transportation networks. The City's Snow and Ice Control policy is reviewed every five years. The accompanying Administrative procedures are reviewed regularly and updated to align with industry best practices, other City policies and bylaws, resource changes, changing weather patterns, in response to resident and Council feedback, and to improve the safety, mobility and livability of Edmontonians.

The proposed Council Policy C409L - Snow and Ice Control (Attachment 1, with all changes visible in the redline Attachment 2), serves as the guiding principles for the program to support the following outcomes:

- Safety: To prevent or reduce collisions, slips, falls and injury to people, and to ensure that emergency responders can reach those who need help.
- Reliability: Residents understand when active pathways and roadways are to be cleared, and to what standard they are cleared to.

- Connectivity: Edmonton's snow clearing approach enables residents to move as needed, whether walking, rolling, biking, using transit or driving, through a mobility network of active pathways and roadways.
- Accessibility (new): Edmonton prioritizes transportation accessibility where it is needed most across all modes, specifically working to minimize barriers for those with mobility challenges, ensuring active pathways and roadways remain functional all winter.

The Snow and Ice Control (SNIC) Procedure defines how the broader policy is executed. Following a review of the past winter season, which synthesized performance metrics, front-line operational insights, 311 priority data and public and industry feedback, Administration has identified several strategic opportunities to better align service delivery with current expectations. Some of these opportunities will be implemented immediately, while some will potentially be addressed through a service package (Well Maintained City Service Package) as part of the 2027 - 2030 operating budget. Additionally, this report directly addresses Council's recent inquiries regarding service expansions, innovative operations and surge capacity. Operational improvements and enhancement options were developed collaboratively with front-line staff and industry experts to provide actionable, data-driven solutions for Edmontonians.

Background

The City of Edmonton's Snow and Ice Control policy has evolved since its inception to align with changing weather patterns, the City's growing needs and Council and public feedback. A detailed history of these policy changes can be found in Attachment 3.

- Policy Refresh: The policy is updated every five years, with the most recent update in August 2021 (City Policy C409K - Snow and Ice Control Policy). The policy focused on safety, reliability and connectivity for users of all modes of transportation.
    - Administration is presenting an updated policy further emphasizing the importance of accessibility, as well as minor updates to language (Attachment 1, with all changes visible in the redline Attachment 2).
- Procedure: Tactical execution of the policy using approved resources to achieve target service levels is approved annually by the City Manager.
- Reports Presented: Since 2016, Administration has presented 31 SNIC related reports to Council, reflecting on annual progress and updates, as well as providing reports in response to motions by council.

For the 2026-27 season, resources and service levels remain consistent with previous years, as substantial changes require significant resource shifts. Detailed snow and ice control clearing service levels (timelines and classifications) for both roadways and active pathways are provided in Attachment 4: Snow and Ice Service Levels.

2025-26 Season Overview

Performance metrics and detailed analysis are available in the 2025-26 Annual SNIC Report (Attachment 5). The 2025-26 winter season was defined by extreme volatility, including a

once-in-30-year snowfall event. December experienced nearly four times the average monthly snowfall, totaling 59.9 cm.[1]

Despite these conditions, service level standards were achieved as follows:

- Roadways: 90 per cent target met on arterial roads; 77 per cent on collector roads; 75 per cent on industrial roads.
    - While arterial roads met their 90 per cent maintenance target, progress on collector (77 per cent) and industrial (75 per cent) routes was slower than anticipated. This was primarily due to crews navigating limited contractor availability, and dealing with high snow volumes, following back-to-back snowstorms.
- Active Pathways: 80 per cent service level target met on key inventory (City facilities, bike lanes, trails); 83 per cent weighted average across all inventory.
- Residential Roads and School Zones: Due to the record snowfall and mid-season melt, residential clearing was combined with school zone pickups. This resulted in a 10-day turnaround for residential streets (ahead of the service level of 14 days), while school zone completion extended to a four-week timeline.
- Communications
    - Service Notifications: A total of more than 900,000 parking bans alerts were sent to nearly 60,000 subscribers.
    - Public Awareness: This season set a record for public information activity, yielding a 220 per cent increase in media inquiries/stories (180 total), and 100+ social media posts.
- Parking Enforcement: A total of 5,516 parking ban fines were written during the season.

Operational Strategy: Planned Changes for 2026-27

To improve service reliability and internal capacity, Administration has identified and initiated several key operational efficiencies. These measures, designed to maximize existing resources (with the current budget) and improve response times, will be fully enacted for the upcoming 2026-27 winter season:

- Fleet Optimization: Administration has analyzed and refined the integrated partnership with Fleet Services and equipment/parts procurement to reduce equipment downtime, accelerate equipment replacement and ensure replacement parts are available when needed most to keep critical machinery operational.
- Frontline Engagement: Increased engagement with CUPE 30 and CSU 52 to channel frontline operational experience into actionable improvements to service and experience. This insight-driven strategy informs our decision making for a team approach towards efficiency, and ensures staff is equipped with the necessary resources and safety protocols to manage dynamic winter conditions. More information is available in Attachment 6.

[1] Government of Canada, "Daily Data Report for December 2025", Historical Data, April 16, 2026, https://climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_data/daily_data_e.html?hlyRange=2012-04-10%7C2026-06-04&dlyRange=2012-04-12%7C2026-06-04&mlyRange=%7C&climate_id=3012216&Prov=AB&urlExtension=_e.html&searchType=stnProx&optLimit=specDate&StartYear=2025&EndYear=2026&selRowPerPage=25&Line=0&txtRadius=25&optProxType=navLink&txtLatDecDeg=53.306667222222&txtLongDecDeg=-113.60583583333&timeframe=2&time=LST&Day=1&Year=2025&Month=12#

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

- Active Pathway Service Level Review: Administration is conducting an inventory review to standardize service levels across all active pathways, in alignment with the Bike Plan and other corporate initiatives related to the development and operation of active pathways. This review, involving collaborative input across business areas, will ensure consistent service guidelines as well as increased consideration for accessibility based prioritization. Full implementation is scheduled for the 2027-28 season; additional details are available in Attachment 7.
- Climate Adaptation and Data Intelligence: In collaboration with the University of Alberta Faculty of Engineering, the City is leveraging advanced climate modeling to optimize service response during extreme weather. This initiative (Attachment 8), includes developing intelligent mapping for public transparency and deepening the understanding of local climate impacts on road conditions, including ice response.
- Communication Strategy: The communication service plan has been optimized to prioritize integrated resident education, transparency and accessibility. This includes real-time communication protocols to keep the public informed during active snowfall and operational events.
- Emergency and Surge Capacity: Internal emergency response protocols are being refined to clearly define deployment triggers, resource availability, the specific criteria required to scale resource mechanisms (emergency procurement and contracted capacity) and decision-making criteria during extreme winter weather events.

Operational Strategy: Well Maintained City Service Package (2027)

The following describes the proposed "Well Maintained City" service package (Attachment 9) that will be presented for Council's consideration during the upcoming budget deliberations. If approved for funding, changes would be applied for the 2027-28 season.

This initiative is designed to align our winter programs with current service demands and public baseline expectations. By right-sizing resource allocation and creating permanent skilled positions, this package would stabilize operations, balance dedicated winter positions with summer resources and provide year-round festival and event support, ensuring consistent, high-quality services that keep Edmonton's economy moving throughout the year.

- Winter Program Stabilization and Local Business Access: Developed with staff and public input, this initiative adjusts winter programs by maximizing roadway staffing to implement a more frequent eight-day residential blading service when called, and increasing residential road grooming to reduce the need to implement a residential parking ban, which creates unwanted windrows. Additionally, parking ban enforcement will be improved with more support. Delivering predictable, reliable clearing on arterial roads, collector routes and active pathway networks reduces travel friction across the city. Meeting bare-pavement standards

on primary corridors ensures people and goods can reliably reach workplaces and local commercial hubs, supporting Edmonton's business community[2].

- Scaling Services to Inventory: To keep pace with current population growth and city mobility asset inventory, this service package balances winter needs, with summer service levels, scaled to match current demand. Specifically, this includes increasing turf resources, structure safety inspections, adding street sweeping flushers to clean major corridors and increasing response capacity for on-demand cleanup requests. SNIC resources may also help to assist with pothole repair when resource redeployment opportunities exist in winter.
- Supporting Tourism and Events: In alignment with Pillar 3 (Action 3.1) of the Edmonton Advantage: Economic Development Strategy 2026–2030 to support arts, culture and sports as tourism drivers, and Pillar 2 (Action 2.3) to promote local expenditure and vibrancy in winter, event support would be strengthened through dedicated operational capacity for seasonal landscaping and snow removal in high-traffic event destinations. This tailored operational support includes detour services, new landscape inspectors for pre- and post-event triaging, and doubling graffiti removal efforts to halve delivery timelines to 15 days. Dedicated crews would manage event site snow clearing around scheduled winter festivals, major public events and commercial shopping corridors. Ensuring these sites remain safe, accessible and inviting supports local businesses and encourages resident and visitor spending during winter months.
- Accessibility Enhancements and Inclusive Growth: To support inclusive economic opportunities where every resident can access jobs and services, the proposed Council Policy C409L supports Accessibility as a core outcome. By reallocating internal resources and existing personnel, combined with additional growth personnel, the plan would establish a specialized Core Facilities and Pathways (Priority 1) Cycle Crew to clear active pathways for primary routes, allowing all other active pathway staff to focus on Machine City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access, Manual City-Maintained Pathways and Transit Access, and Community Support (Priority 2–4) infrastructure, for snow and ice control maintenance. This approach allows all infrastructure to have the dedicated attention expected. Operations would emphasize service in high-need zones like bus stops, crosswalks and traffic-calming measures through manual clearing during operational downtime. This would directly improve safety and mobility for transit riders and residents with mobility challenges navigating the active transportation network.

Operational Enhancements

To support a balanced, data-driven approach to service improvements, Administration evaluated additional enhancements against the following four scoring pillars:

[2] City of Edmonton. 2026. Edmonton Advantage: Edmonton's Economic Development Strategy 2026–2030. https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/documents/edmonton-advantage-economic-strategy.pdf

1. Resident Awareness and Popularity - Based on quantity by topic type of this recent season's 311 inquiries, Councillor Inquiries and public surveys (e.g., SNIC Maps Pulse, Multi-Modal and Communications surveys).
2. Operational Insights - Integrated feedback from City Operations staff on the effectiveness and practicality of each option.
3. Accessibility (GBA+) - Assessed and measured the positive community impact on vulnerable populations and low-mobility users.
4. Operational Benefit - Assessed the resource and funding requirements balanced with operational positive impact for implementation.

The opportunities address key operational interests, including public and industry feedback, climate adaptation requirements and readiness, response times, innovations and technology, and surge capacity. These optional enhancements are dependent on the 'Well Maintained City' service package, as that initiative provides the baseline resource stability required to support and scale these additional service improvements effectively. Initial administrative and planning implementation could begin immediately, subject to policy approval; full operational service-level improvements are projected for the 2027-28 winter season, subject to resource recruitment and procurement timelines. Items listed in the table below correspond to topics from previous council directions. Further options and details are available in Attachment 10.

Enhancement Type	Resident Awareness and Popularity	Accessibility	Operational Benefit	Operations Insights	Ongoing Costs	One Time Costs
Enhanced School Zones Clearing	+++	+++	+++	++	$2.1M	-
Adjust Residential Parking Bans with Standardization of Assigned Day	+++	+++	++	+++	$50K	$1M
Active Pathways Winter Bike Realignment	++	+++	+++	+++	-	$100K
Alley Maintenance	++	+++	++	++	$1.2M	-
Calcium Chloride System Upgrades	+	++	+++	+	$2.5M	$4.4M

Legend

+	Neutral effect on Resident Awareness and Popularity, Accessibility, Operational Benefit, or Operational Insights
++	Slightly positive effect on Resident Awareness and Popularity, Accessibility, Operational Benefit, or Operational Insights
+++	Positive effect on Resident Awareness and Popularity, Accessibility, Operational Benefit, or Operational Insights

One of the items listed, Calcium Chloride Systems Upgrade**,** would equip the snow and ice team with resources to implement the use of Calcium Chloride on major roadways. Further details and

considerations related to the requirements for Administration to deploy Calcium Chloride on City roadways is available in Attachment 11.

Implementation of any optional enhancements is contingent upon the approval of the Well Maintained City service package. If Council wishes to explore any of the enhancements listed in Attachment 10, formal direction to Administration is required in advance of fall budget deliberations.

Jurisdictional Scan

Administration conducted a comparative review of snow and ice control programs across nine Canadian cities to benchmark Edmonton's operational model (Attachment 12). Findings indicate that, while practices vary due to unique local climates, infrastructure and municipal challenges, several commonalities emerge:

- Program Governance and Funding: Municipalities do not follow a standardized industry model for spending, such as per-capita or density based metrics, as winter programs are highly tailored to unique local weather patterns, infrastructure networks and community priorities.
- Accessibility: While accessibility standards vary across municipalities, industry best practices prioritize pedestrian focused clearing in high-need areas, including healthcare zones, schools, transit networks and active pathways.
- Service Standards: Jurisdictional data shows that residential streets are designated as lowest-priority infrastructure, maintained as snowpack rather than bare pavement, with limited windrow clearing and operational reporting.
- Operational Mechanisms: Parking bans remain the primary tool across almost all reviewed jurisdictions to facilitate efficient snow clearing.
- Shared Responsibility: Most municipalities mandate that residential and commercial property owners are responsible for the maintenance of their own adjacent sidewalks.
- Local Distinction: Notably, Edmonton maintains the highest number of community sandboxes per capita for public use among the cities reviewed.

Enforcement

Snow and ice control relies on a shared-responsibility model between the City and property owners. Winter compliance is governed by Bylaw 14600 - Community Standards Bylaw and Bylaw 5590 - Traffic Bylaw, enforced through education, proactive monitoring and targeted ticketing.

In 2025-26, 21 permanent Municipal Enforcement Officers and five seasonal Snow and Ice Officers conducted over 13,000 sidewalk investigations, issued more than 10,000 warnings and issued 2,706 tickets. A compliance rate of 75 per cent shows that property owners cleared their sidewalks before a ticket was issued, indicating that the education-first approach continues to produce voluntary compliance. An integrated public education campaign reached over 44 million views across digital and traditional channels.

- Sidewalk clearing (Bylaw 14600 - Community Standards Bylaw, section 7): Property owners and occupants must maintain adjacent sidewalks clear of snow and ice to bare pavement, spanning full width and length. Non-compliance carries a $100 fine; a prior warning is not legally required, though Officers may issue courtesy notices or door hangers. Where public safety requires it, the City may deploy an external contractor and invoice the owner for actual clearing costs; unpaid invoices are applied to the property tax roll. For commercial properties, adjacent responsibilities include bus stops, ramps, curb cuts and alley entrances along property lines.
- Prohibited snow disposal: Depositing snow or ice from private property onto public roads, bike lanes, or alleys carries a $250 fine and creates hazards for plows, cyclists and storm drains. Residents and businesses must store snow on their own property or haul it to a designated municipal snow storage site.
- Parking ban enforcement: Vehicles left on a designated roadway during an active Phase 1 or Phase 2 parking ban are subject to a $250 fine and may be towed to the nearest cleared street. The City provides at least eight hours' notice before a Phase 1 ban and at least 24 hours' notice before a Phase 2 ban, including physical signage at neighbourhood entrances. Residents can track clearing progress on the real-time Roadways Snow Clearing Map to see when parking may resume. In 2025-26, 46 vehicles were towed; enforcement was expanded beyond the five dedicated Seasonal Snow Enforcement Officers to include Parking Enforcement and Community Standards Officers during major weather events. 5,516 tickets were issued for parking ban violations.

Budget/Financial Implications

In order to approve the proposed Council Policy C409L, no additional budget is required. Administration will bring forward the “Well Maintained City” service package to Council for consideration during the 2027-2030 Budget Deliberations. Implementation of any optional enhancements outlined in this report is contingent upon the approval of the Well Maintained City package, and Council may also direct Administration to bring forward a service package for any of these optional enhancements as part of the 2027–2030 budget deliberations.

Community Insight

Multiple surveys were conducted to gauge Edmontonian perceptions of winter maintenance, including the April Snow and Ice Communication survey and the May SNIC Maps Pulse survey. Key findings include:

- Awareness: Public awareness of the Residential Roadways (Phase 2) Parking Ban has risen significantly to 74 per cent, compared to 52 per cent last year[3].
- Communication: Residents prioritize clarity and accessibility in all communications regarding snow clearing.

[3] Based on the April 2026 Snow and Ice Communication survey.

These insights, synthesized from a wide array of public and internal sources - including the SNIC Maps Pulse, Multi-Modal and Communications surveys, 311 data, Councillor inquiries (POSSE), media coverage and frontline staff feedback- revealed clear areas for service improvement:

- Transparency: There is a significant demand for real-time map updates and increased data quantity and accuracy to address the discrepancy between "cleared" and "usable" infrastructure.
- Accessibility, Safety and Service: Residents expressed frustration regarding hazardous windrows left at crosswalks and bus stops, and data highlighted recurring requests for residential plowing as well as service concerns due to gaps in parking ban enforcement.

These insights directly informed the prioritization of accessibility layering and mapping enhancements within the service packages proposed for the upcoming budget cycle (Attachment 6).

GBA+

The Snow and Ice Control program applies Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to identify service inequities and ensure a safe, accessible winter mobility network for all residents. Key GBA+ findings include:

- Vulnerable Populations: Individuals on the Social Vulnerability Index, including seniors, persons with disabilities and those utilizing mobility aids or strollers, face significant barriers to movement during winter. These obstacles increase safety hazards, such as slips and falls, and limit daily independence.
- Accessibility and Safety for All Modes: Individuals relying on active transportation (walking, rolling, biking) or public transit experience disproportionately higher risks and service barriers compared to personal vehicle users.
- Policy Integration: In response to these findings, "Accessibility" has been elevated to a core outcome in the updated Snow and Ice Policy. Prioritization of winter maintenance activities based on equity is required to provide a mobility network that is accessible to people of all abilities and needs, and for all modes of transportation. Furthermore, accessibility now serves as a standalone scoring criterion for evaluating future service enhancements.
- Access to Reporting Tools: In some neighbourhoods, field leaders have experienced the volume of 311 reports does not reflect the severity of snow and ice conditions. Some in field evidence indicates that neighbourhoods with higher proportions of lower income households and newcomers report snow and ice concerns less frequently, potentially due to language barriers, limited internet access, and/or lower service awareness.

Moving forward, these insights will continue to guide service delivery, protect vulnerable mobility network users, and address systemic inequities, directly supporting the City’s Vision Zero and livability goals.

Environment and Climate Review

Edmonton's climate is shifting, posing a challenge for both capital and operational planning. The 2025-26 winter season recorded a significant total snowfall, with the highest volume of snow received in December. While short-term extreme weather events may occur, observed long-term climate trends in Edmonton have shown that overall winter precipitation in Edmonton has decreased by 31 per cent from the 1961-90 baseline, with average spring precipitation remaining unchanged[4].

Future climate projections for Edmonton indicate warmer and generally wetter annual conditions. Winter operational complexity is expected to rise due to an increased frequency of mixed precipitation, slush and ice formation from freeze thaw cycles. Anticipated increases in both average winter temperatures and precipitation fluctuations will likely affect winter road maintenance strategies such as snow removal scheduling, as well as salt, sand and pickled sand concentrations, application rates and volumes. Consequently, salt-dominant applications may be expected to increase relative to current operational levels. As road salts have the potential to be harmful to the environment, new environmental guidance documents and targeted infrastructure upgrades are required to meet industry best practice.

A detailed summary of environment and climate implications are included in Attachment 13.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Snow and Ice Control Policy (C409L) - 2026 Version
2. Snow and Ice Control Policy (C409K) - 2026 Version (Redline Version)
3. History of Snow and Ice Program 2016-2026
4. City of Edmonton Snow and Ice Control Program: Service Levels
5. Snow and Ice Control Annual Report 2025-2026
6. What We Heard Summary
7. Summary of the Active Pathways Service Level Review Project
8. Advancing Winter Road Maintenance Systems with Data Intelligence and Analytics
9. “Well Maintained City” Package Summary
10. Snow and Ice Enhancements - June 2026
11. Summary of Calcium Chloride Usage
12. 2026 Jurisdictional Scan of Winter Operations Priorities
13. Expanded Environment and Climate Review

[4] City of Edmonton. (2025). Understanding Edmonton’s Changing Climate 2025: Observed Climate Trends.