Agenda - Executive Policy Committee - June 13, 2007

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works - May 29, 2007

Item No. 1 Amendments to the Snow Clearing and Ice Control Policy
File SC-3.6

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 29, 2007, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the administrative recommendation and submits the following to Council:

1. That the City's Snow Clearing and Ice Control Policy be amended as shown in Appendix "I" contained in the Report of the Director of Public Works, dated May 22, 2007, to reflect an expansion to the geographical area considered as "Downtown" for the purposes of snow clearing.

2. That the City's Snow Clearing and Ice Control Policy be amended as shown in Appendix "I" contained in the Report of the Director of Public Works, dated May 22, 2007, to reflect the enhanced snow clearing service levels that were approved as part of the 2007 Operating Budget process.

3. That the identification of other potential service level improvements be submitted for information.

4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Agenda - Executive Policy Committee - June 13, 2007

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works - May 29, 2007

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On May 29, 2007, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works concurred in the administrative recommendation and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On May 16, 2007, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and granted an extension of time of thirty (30) days in order for the Administration to report back on the matter.

On March 21, 2007, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and granted an extension of time of sixty (60) days in order for the Administration to report back on the matter.

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On February 6, 2007, the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works recommended that the Public Works Department be directed to provide a report back to Committee within thirty (30) days on the following:

1. Amending the geographical area for snow clearing priority in the Downtown to conform to the boundaries established by the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law.

2. Amending the snow removal policy to include cleaning of sidewalks to a paved surface in the following areas:

    A. The Exchange District sidewalks on the following Priority 2 and 3 streets: Albert, Arthur, McDermot, Bannatyne, Rorie, Market and Lombard.

    B. City of Winnipeg regional streets with businesses.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 24, 2007, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works and granted an extension of time of sixty (60) days in order for the Administration to report back on the matter.

Report - Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works - May 29, 2007

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COUNCIL DECISION (continued):

On December 6, 2006, Council ruled automatic referral of the following motion to the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works:

WHEREAS the Exchange District is a vibrant destination site with heavy pedestrian traffic;

AND WHEREAS the current City snow clearing policy identifying the "Downtown Square" as the area for priority cleaning in the Downtown;

AND WHEREAS the Exchange District is within the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-Law boundaries;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the geographical area for snow clearing priority in the Downtown conform to the boundaries established by the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the snow removal policy regarding cleaning of sidewalks to a paved surface include the Exchange District sidewalks on the following Priority 2 and 3 streets to better reflect the needs of pedestrians: Albert, Arthur, McDermot, Bannatyne, Rorie, Market and Lombard.

RE: CONSIDERATION OF SNOW POLICY REVISIONS

FOR SUBMISSION TO:	**STANDING POLICY COMMITTEE ON INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL & PUBLIC WORKS**
ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED BY:	**L.S.W. Larkin, P. Eng., Director of Public Works**
REPORT DATE:	**MAY 22, 2007**

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the City's Snow Clearing and Ice Control Policy be amended as shown in Appendix I to reflect an expansion to the geographical area considered as "Downtown" for the purposes of snow clearing.

2. That the City's Snow Clearing and Ice Control Policy be amended as shown in Appendix I to reflect the enhanced snow clearing service levels that were approved as part of the 2007 Operating Budget process.

3. That the identification of other potential service level improvements be submitted for information.

Report Summary

Key Issues:

- Downtown area for enhanced snow clearing should be expanded
- Council has approved an enhanced level of service for removal of snow windrows on Priority I streets with fronting businesses.
- City's Snow and Ice Control Policy must be amended to reflect the Council decisions
- Opportunities identified for future enhancements to the City's snow clearing services

Implications of the Recommendation(s):

General Implications

	None
X	For the organization overall and/or for other departments
X	For the community and/or organizations external to the City
	Involves a multi-year contract

Comment(s):

The proposed changes to the Snow and Ice Control Policy will provide future direction for the provision of enhanced snow clearing services for our citizens and community

Policy Implications

	No
X	Yes

Comment(s):

Council approval of this report will result in improvements to the City's existing Snow and Ice Control Policy.

Regulatory Implications

X	None
	Eliminates or reduces regulatory impact
	Proposes regulatory impact

Comment(s):

Environmental Implications

	No
X	Yes

Comment(s):

Increased snow removal from the boulevard windrows on City streets will lead to less contaminants on our streets after the spring melt and assist in minimizing the environmental impacts of road salt use.

Human Resources Implications

No
X Yes

Comment(s):

Council direction to provide enhanced snow clearing services will result in a requirement for increased resources. The additional effort will be undertaken through the optimal use of City staff and private sector forces.

Financial Implications

X Within approved current and/or capital budget
Current and/or capital budget adjustment required

Comment(s):

The additional funding required for the enhanced snow clearing and recommended changes to the Snow and Ice Control Policy was previously approved by Council as part of the adoption of the 2007 Current Budget.

Report

REASON FOR THE REPORT:

The Standing Policy Committee on Public Works on February 8, 2005 requested that the Administration review and report back on the snow clearing policy, including consideration with respect to the provision for more immediate and timely snow clearing around schools.

In addition the Standing Policy Committee on Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works on February 6, 2007 directed the Public Works Department to provide a report back to Committee on the following:

1. Amending the geographical area for snow clearing priority in the Downtown to conform to the boundaries established by the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law.
2. Amending the snow removal policy to include cleaning of sidewalks to a paved surface in the following areas:

    A. The Exchange District sidewalks on the following Priority 2 and 3 streets: Albert, Arthur, McDermot, Bannatyne, Rorie, Market and Lombard.
    B. City of Winnipeg regional streets with businesses.

HISTORY:

The policy for Snow and Ice Control was originally adopted by Council in 1980 as part of the approval process of that year's Operating Budget. Significant concerns about the policy were raised following the major blizzard that occurred in November 1986, and a review was conducted the following summer to evaluate the appropriateness of the existing policy. As a result of that review, Council amended the policy on September 30, 1987, to moderately improve the level of service on Priority III streets and alleys, as well as sidewalks on Priority II and III streets.

In 1989, another review was undertaken to consider further improvements to the level of service for sidewalk clearing. However, at that time Council chose to reaffirm the existing policy that had been established in 1980 and amended in 1987.

The policy was again revised in 1991. As part of an effort to reduce the annual funding requirements, the snowfall accumulation normally necessary to warrant a snow clearing operation on Priority III streets and sidewalks was increased, thereby reducing the level of service in these areas.

In addition, a 20% reduction in the funding of the hauling program was also adopted and, as a result of this change, the hauling of windrows of snow from the boulevards in the Downtown Square and along other Priority I streets was reduced.

A very comprehensive review of the Snow and Ice Control Policy was undertaken again in 1993 and significant changes were made. One of the changes was a service level change in the Priority III Street Plowing to a requirement for plowing to "bare pavement" whenever an all-out plow was undertaken.

In 1997 Council restored the level of service on Priority III streets to the 1987 standard where plowing shall commence after an inspection warrants a clearing operation, usually following a 10 cm snowfall accumulation or equivalent drifting conditions. The action was a result of the preceding two winters having significantly higher than normal volumes of snow.

Snow clearing around schools was also a concern following the significantly above normal snowfall accumulations experienced during the 1995/96 and 1996/97 winters and on April 29, 1998 Council approved an increased level of service for snow clearing adjacent to public and private schools in the City of Winnipeg. However this enhanced work did not include any changes to the sidewalk snow clearing.

Another comprehensive review was again undertaken in 2003. Council approved the inclusion of a number of service enhancements including the clearing of walkways within neighborhood parks, increased removal of high piles and the removal of windrows from loading areas in front of seniors' complexes. However these extra snow clearing services were only to be provided if the additional funding that was required was included in upcoming budgets. The additional funding was subsequently not provided.

DISCUSSION:

Background Information

The objective of the City's Snow and Ice Control Policy is to maintain the City's roadways, alleys and sidewalks in such a manner so as to:

a) Provide safe and accessible operating conditions to motorists and pedestrians;
b) Reduce the hazards of icy road conditions;
c) Minimize economic losses to the community and industry resulting from unsatisfactory winter driving conditions;
d) Facilitate the handling of emergencies by Police, Fire and Ambulance Services during the winter;
e) Provide safe and accessible operating conditions for the Transit system and facilitate their essential operations during a snow emergency.

For the purposes of winter roadway maintenance, the entire street system has been assigned to one of three priority classifications. Specific levels of service are carried out on each classification generally based upon their importance in the total transportation system. When necessary for reasons of safety, the order of priority for the provision of the required services may be altered.

The City's Snow and Ice Control Policy was extensively reviewed in October 2003. During the past few years, a considerable number of concerns have been expressed by the public and others regarding the adequacy of the existing policy in dealing with the type and volume of snowfalls that the City has recently experienced.

Recommended Changes to the City of Winnipeg Snow and Ice Control Policy

A. Modifications to the Boundaries of the Downtown Area

The existing Snow and Ice Control Policy contains an enhanced service level for sidewalks in the Downtown Square. For the purposes of this policy, the "Downtown Square" was identified in 1993 as the area bounded by Broadway to Ellice and Main Street to Memorial. Notwithstanding these limits, Main Street from Higgins Avenue to Portage Avenue and from Broadway to the Assiniboine River was also included.

In recent years it has become evident that the Downtown area should be enlarged to include other vital areas such as Waterfront Drive and the Exchange Area. Accordingly It is recommended that the geographical area for snow clearing enhancements in the Downtown be amended to conform to the boundaries established by the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law and that the new clause as shown in Appendix I and identified as Clause C-2 replace the existing clause.

As further information, this amendment would provide for the desired enhanced service level for the Priority II sidewalks that had been identified by the Exchange Biz association as areas of concern.

B. Upgrades to the Existing Levels of Service

During the 2007 Current Budget deliberations, Council approved $2,000,000 in additional funding annually to provide an enhanced level of service on Priority I streets with respect to the removal of snow windrows that are a result of street clearing operations and are likely to be causing difficulties for business owners fronting these streets. As a result it is critical to amend the Snow and Ice Control Policy to reflect this enhanced level of service. Therefore it is recommended that the new clauses as shown in Appendix I and identified as Clause D-2a and D-2b be approved and replace existing Clause D-2 in the City's Snow and Ice Control Policy.

As indicated this policy is primarily applicable to Priority I streets only. However, as a further modification to reflect the unique character of the Exchange District, this enhanced policy will also include service on a minimal number of high volume Priority II streets in that area. Initially the Priority II streets that will be addressed are Albert Street, Arthur Street, McDermot Avenue, Bannatyne Avenue, Rorie Street, Market Avenue and Lombard Avenue.

C. Funding Implications

Council has already approved additional funding for the Snow Budget to cover the increase in expenditures that will be required to undertake the enhanced snow removal work in accordance with the revised Snow and Ice Control Policy. Although there is also a service level improvement for sidewalk clearing in the Downtown, it is anticipated that this enhanced work will not require any additional funding as the increased snow removal activities will allow some offsetting efficiencies in the sidewalk snow clearing.

Future Opportunities for Service Enhancement

One of the first steps in undertaking this review was to identify any concerns of our many stakeholders with the existing Snow and Ice Control Policy. A Council Seminar regarding the City's Snow Policy was held in early October 2005 and valuable input was received at that time. In addition, consideration has been given to the concerns and suggestions that have been raised by our citizens. This information has been collected from both the Public Works Annual Citizen Surveys and an analysis of the service requests received at our Customer Services Call Centre.

As background information, the City of Winnipeg typically provides a very high level of service for winter snow clearing activities and public expectations are equally high. A considerable number of concerns were expressed concerning the City's operations the past few winters and possible enhancements to the existing policy have been identified to deal with the most frequent suggestions received for level of service improvements.

A number of policy enhancements have been developed for information. The implementation of most of these suggestions would require a change to the existing policy and additional funding..

Service level improvements were considered for the following snow clearing activities:

Reduction of high piles to improve visibility

The mandate for dealing with high piles is to ensure that high piles at bus stops, crosswalks, lane entrances and intersections are removed so as to provide a cleared line of sight to motorists. The trend towards smaller vehicles that are much lower to the pavement has made it necessary to review the current practices in eliminating high piles.

A change could be made in the policy to warrant the complete removal of piles of snow at bus stops, crosswalks, lane entrances and intersections. Currently the snow would normally only be removed to the point that a clear line of sight to motorists and pedestrians is provided.

Additional funding in the estimated amount of $300,000 would be required to carry out this work.

Improved snow clearing of sidewalks, particularly around schools

There were many challenges during the past few winters with sidewalk snow clearing as the lack of adequate snow storage and the operational necessity to primarily use snow blowers made it a very long winter. However, the Streets Maintenance Division has been working closely with the City's Fleet Management Agency to upgrade our equipment fleet. This will enable us to deal more effectively with conditions experienced this past winter season. These equipment changes along with a more aggressive hauling strategy will hopefully result in a higher level of service on the sidewalks.

The condition of sidewalks adjacent to school yards and the provision of more immediate and timely clearing of these walks was also a major concern. Accordingly a change could be made in the policy that would mandate a higher level of snow clearing for such sidewalks.

Additional funding in the estimated amount of $300,000 would be required to carry out this enhanced work effort.

2003 Consideration of Enhanced Levels of Service

As previously indicated, an evaluation of the existing policy on Snow and Ice Control was undertaken in 2003 and some level of service improvements were developed for consideration. Council formally approved some policy amendments contingent on suitable funding able to be found during the 2004 budget deliberations. This did not happen and therefore these enhancements have not been included in the City's Snow Policy.

The level of service improvements considered at that time were as follows:

1. *Walkways Within Neighborhood Parks*

   The maintenance of walkways within the neighbourhood parks has become a major issue with our citizens. There is an increasing demand for accessibility throughout the winter months in order that the recreational opportunities that these parks offer can be taken advantage of.

   Most other winter cities have identified certain walkways as designated winter walkways and plowing of these walkways is routinely carried out.

   Additional funding in the estimated amount of $ 400,000 would be required to carry out this enhanced work effort

2. *Removal of High Piles*

   This issue was identified as a major concern in 2003 winter and has been discussed earlier.

3. *Removal of Boulevard Windrows*
   (Loading Areas – Seniors' Complexes)

   This issue is usually expressed every winter. During the policy review undertaken in 1993 a proposal was developed to clear a length of windrow in front of these buildings to allow better access. It was not approved by Council.

   A distance of 5 m in length could be cleared along the roadway in front of the main entrance of qualified buildings and a path cleared from the curb to the City sidewalk where necessary. It could probably be accomplished within 48 hours following a street plowing operation.

   Additional funding in the estimated amount of $ 400,000 would be required to carry out this enhanced work effort

Financial Impact Statement Date: May 18, 2007

Project Name:

Consideration of Snow Policy Revisions

COMMENTS:

Approval of this report's recommendations for changes in the City's Snow and Ice cntrol Policy will not require any additioanl funding as the monies for the enhanced snow clearing service levels were added as part of the adoption of the 2007 Operating Budget.

Original signed by Darcy Stewart, CA'
Manager of Finance & Administration

IN PREPARING THIS REPORT THERE WAS:

Internal Consultation With and Concurrence By:

City of Winnipeg Council Seminar – October 11, 2005

External Consultation With:

Exchange Area Biz Association

THIS REPORT SUBMITTED BY:

Department: Public Works Department
Division: Streets Maintenance Division
Prepared by: R.B. McPhail, P. Eng., Manager of Streets Maintenance
File No.

Appendix I

SUMMARY OF SNOW POLICY CHANGES

CLAUSE	PAGE NO.	ACTIVITY	SERVICE LEVEL	BUDGET IMPACT
C-2	13	Sidewalks in the Downtown Square *(replaces existing Clause C-2)*	Improved	Funded already
D-2a	14	Removal of Boulevard Windrows (General) *(replaces existing Clause D-2)*	Existing	None
D-2b	15	Removal of Boulevard Windrows (Commercial Areas) *(new clause)*	Improved	Funded already

Appendix I

SUMMARY OF SNOW POLICY CHANGES

SECTION C: PLOWING OF SIDEWALKS

CLAUSE C-2	SIDEWALKS IN THE DOWNTOWN
CURRENT POLICY AMENDED BY COUNCIL **JUNE 2007**	Sidewalks on Priority I and II streets within the Downtown shall generally be plowed to a paved surface whenever conditions allow. However, minor snowfalls and/or warming temperatures between plowing operations may result in a layer of compacted snow or ice on the sidewalk surface. A plowing operation shall be initiated when the snow has accumulated beyond a depth of 5 cm. The snow plowing operations shall be completed within thirty-six hours following the end of an average storm. For the purposes of this policy, the geographical area for snow clearing enhancements in the Downtown is established in conformance with the boundaries identified by the City of Winnipeg Downtown Zoning By-law.
COMMENTS	Sidewalks on Priority I and II streets within the Downtown are maintained to a higher standard than sidewalks in other areas of the city. The justification for such a policy is the significantly greater number of people that use these sidewalks on an everyday basis.
LEVEL OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	Expansion of the geographical area identified as the Downtown to allow the provision of an equitable level of snow clearing in this area of the City including unique communities such as the Exchange District and Waterfront Drive.
BUDGET IMPACT	Funding is already included in the 2007 budget.

Appendix I

SUMMARY OF SNOW POLICY CHANGES

SECTION D: SNOW REMOVAL

CLAUSE D-2a	REMOVAL OF BOULEVARD WINDROWS - GENERAL
CURRENT POLICY AMENDEDED BY COUNCIL **JUNE 2007**	**Windrows of snow shall normally be removed on Priority I and II streets where the following criteria are met:** (a) Bridges and underpasses (b) Where lack of adequate storage results in a reduction in the number of available traffic lanes thereby prohibiting the reasonable movement of vehicular traffic under normal winter driving conditions. (c) Where lack of adequate storage prohibits the reasonable movement of pedestrians using the adjacent sidewalk. (d) Traffic safety devices such as guardrails and impact barriers (e) Notwithstanding any of the above, the City shall take advantage of mechanical blowing snow to adjacent properties to accommodate snow storage wherever possible, rather than resorting to hauling.
COMMENTS	This page replaces Clause D-2 of the existing Policy
LEVEL OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	The service level of snow removal of boulevard windrows has been improved by the inclusion of Clause D-2b which provides for additional snow removal on Priority I streets with fronting commercial businesses.
BUDGET IMPACT	None.

Appendix I

SUMMARY OF SNOW POLICY CHANGES

Removal of Boulevard Windrows - Business Areas

CLAUSE D-2b	REMOVAL OF BOULEVARD WINDROWS - GENERAL
CURRENT POLICY AMENDEDED BY COUNCIL **JUNE 2007**	**Windrows of snow shall normally be removed on Priority I streets where the following criteria are met:** (a) Fronting commercial business areas with on-street parking (b) Windrows present significant barriers to street/sidewalk access
COMMENTS	The introduction of this new initiative provides direction towards a focused approach to the removal of boulevard windrows in front of commercial business areas located on the Priority I street system. It is expected that this hauling operation will be carried out at least once each winter season
LEVEL OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT	The new service will improve citizen accessibility and safety that may be impacted by the significant windrows of snow that can be found on the boulevards as a result of street snow clearing operations.
BUDGET IMPACT	Funding is already included in the 2007 budget.