

**Subject: Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Update**

**File Number: ACS2023-PWD-RPS-0002**

**Report to Transportation Committee on 16 November 2023**

**and Council 22 November 2023**

**Submitted on November 6, 2023 by Alain Gonthier, General Manager Public Works Department**

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**Ward: Citywide**

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**Dossier: ACS2023-PWD-RPS-0002**

**Rapport au Comité des transports**

**le 16 novembre 2023**

**et au Conseil le 22 novembre 2023**

**Soumis le 6 novembre 2023 par Alain Gonthier, Directeur général, Direction générale des travaux publics**

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**Quartier: À l'échelle de la ville**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Transportation Committee and Council:**

- 1. Receive this report and supporting documentation for information.**
- 2. Direct Roads and Parking Services to come back in Q3 2024 with an update.**

## RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT

Que le Comité des transports et le Conseil municipal :

1. prennent connaissance de ce rapport et des pièces justificatives pour information;
2. demandent aux Services des routes et du stationnement de déposer un compte rendu en 2024.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Assumption and Analysis

The purpose of this report is to inform Council on the work done through the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (WMQS) Review in response to the Transportation Committee direction to review the City's maintenance standards to improve the condition of roads, sidewalks, and other pedestrian facilities during the winter ([Motion TRC 2019 2/2](#)).

The standards set in the City's WMQS continue to exceed the winter maintenance standards set by the Province of Ontario in Regulation 239/02: Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways (MMSMH) a regulation to the Municipal Act, 2001. It is important to note that while the WMQS define the level to which winter services are provided, they don't define how to achieve these standards. That is why focusing on improving how services are delivered are as important as the standards themselves. For added context, Council approved the WMQS in 2003, since then Roads and Parking Services has regularly reviewed service delivery and enhanced our operational practices. These efforts have led to incremental improvements to the original adoption of the winter maintenance standards to reflect changing Council priorities, changing climate conditions and a greater focus by the community on walking and cycling. This report highlights enhancements made through the 2019 Service Delivery Review and continuous improvement initiatives. These include:

- Providing 24/7 sidewalk maintenance as required
- Responding more proactively and aggressively to all types of winter events
- Alternating starting points of residential beats to make plowing more consistent and equitable
- Phasing out the use of sand and replacing it with grit on sidewalks and most roads to treat ice and slippery conditions more effectively
- Replacing all steel plow blades with rubber blades which helps the plow follow the contours of the road better and allows for improved snow and ice removal
- Updating GPS technology on all equipment to improve operational performance

- Developing and implementing a policy to declare significant weather events when winter operations will take longer than expected, to inform the public and manage expectations
- Calling winter parking bans at set times and for a consistent length of time to manage public expectations and providing additional off-street parking during parking bans at City recreation facilities, OC Transpo park-and-rides, and City parking garages
- Providing proactive communications to Councillors and residents before, during and after winter events
- Improving the winter maintenance page on ottawa.ca to be more educational and user friendly
- In collaboration with the Corporate Accessibility Office, a training video was created and shared with all staff in Roads and Parking Services on accessibility awareness, highlighting specific challenges and barriers on the active transportation network for people with disabilities
- Review and updated the Salt Management Plan used to mitigate the environmental impacts of salt use which includes:
  - Review of best management practices
  - Update of new and current technologies used to monitor salt usage
  - How operators use salt differently across the transportation network
- Annual training on salt and salt application policy to increase understanding of environmental benefits of reducing salt use

To support the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review, Wood PLC (Wood) was hired as a consultant to assist with the comprehensive review. Additionally, Hill+Knowlton Strategies were hired to coordinate the public engagement portion of the review. The consultation piece took place in two phases:

- Phase 1: Current State and Best Practices Review
- Phase 2: Engagement

The report provided as part of Phase 1 can be found as supporting documentation of this report and Phase 2 is on the [Engage Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review project page](#). A summary of each phase is provided below.

Phase 1 Current State and Best Practices Review is included as supporting Document 1 of this report. Phase 1 consisted of reviewing the current Winter Maintenance Quality Standards, background materials including media articles, committee and council reports, policies, plans, service requests and claims. Phase 1 also included interviews done internally across the city as well as other municipalities across Ontario, Canada, United States and Europe to acquire an understanding of their maintenance operations and identify potential opportunities.

Through Phase 1 and as communicated in our response to a Council Inquiry dated April 17, 2023, ([TRC 23-02 - Comparison of Snow Removal Service Standards](#)), the city

provides a relatively high level of service when compared to other municipalities and exceed the Minimum Maintenance Standards for Ontario Municipalities.

Phase 2, the public engagement process can be found on the [Engage Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review project page](#). The engagement process ran between November 2020 and February 2021, when winter operations was front of mind. Staff also established a Stakeholder and Diverse Community Group Engagement Team to provide advice on the engagement process and to help ensure resident and stakeholder feedback was incorporated wherever possible. Through the feedback from this group, staff provided the following opportunities for engagement:

- Engage Ottawa page (250 comments)
- Public opinion research (999 respondents with a sample that represents Ottawa's demographics and wards)
- Survey (776 responses)
- Four public engagement sessions (200 participants)

Overall, residents are generally satisfied with the current winter maintenance standards and participants in all streams expressed an interest in increased attention to sidewalks and residential roads. When asked which principles should guide the review, participants in all streams prioritized injury prevention and maintaining accessibility and inclusivity for all mobility levels.

As identified in the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review Update memo to Council on May 19, 2022, Roads and Parking Services has been working on identifying how changes or improvements to the City's winter standards could be implemented and what resources would be required. During this time, the cost of any changes or additional resources was difficult to determine given the global financial situation, with high rates of inflation, unpredictable and very high fuel prices, a continued rise in insurance costs, and a general increase in pricing for contracted services and equipment. While 2023 has shown a downward trend in the rate of inflation and positive signs of stability in fuel pricing, rising costs persist in the areas of insurance premiums, contracted services, materials and equipment. These factors, along with weather conditions, have contributed to the \$19.7 million winter maintenance deficit reported in the 2023 Tax and Rate Operating and Capital Budget Q2 Status Report ([ACS2023-FCS-FSP-0012](#)) and the \$6.6 million deficit incurred in the 2022 winter maintenance budget. For these reasons, staff are not recommending any changes or improvements to the winter maintenance quality standards at this time in order to further analyze and work to address these financial pressures. Roads and Parking Services will provide an update to Transportation Committee on this work as well as next steps regarding any changes or improvements to the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards in Q3 2024.

While staff are not recommending a change to the standards at this time, this does not mean that staff are not continuing to look for opportunities to improve how services are delivered. Heading into the 2023/2024 winter season, staff are committed to continuing to provide a high level of service and incorporate the improvements made through Service Delivery Review and the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review. In a continued effort to adapt and improve, new to this winter season, Councillors will see:

- Access for Councillors to our GPS tracking on winter operations equipment
- Additional parking options during winter weather parking bans
- Review feasibility of additional stairways for winter maintenance
- Structural refinement within Roads and Parking Services to align resources to better deliver on the service area's mandate, responsibilities and operational activities.

Roads and Parking staff will come back to Transportation Committee in 2024 with an update on the status of the base budget for continuing to deliver on current service levels, service improvements for the 2024/2025 winter season, and next steps for the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review.

## **SYNTHÈSE ADMINISTRATIVE**

### **Hypothèse et analyse**

L'objectif de ce rapport consiste à donner au Conseil municipal de l'information sur les travaux réalisés dans le cadre de l'Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal (NQE), afin de donner suite à la directive du Comité des transports d'examiner les normes d'entretien de la Ville afin d'améliorer l'état des routes, des trottoirs et des autres infrastructures piétonnes durant l'hiver ([Motion TRC 2019 2/2](#)).

Les normes établies dans les NQE de la Ville continuent de respecter largement les normes de l'entretien hivernal adoptées par le gouvernement de l'Ontario dans le Règlement 239/02 (Normes d'entretien minimal pour les voies publiques municipales [NEMVPM]), règlement d'application de la *Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités*. Il est important de noter que bien que les NQE définissent le niveau auquel sont assurés les services d'entretien en hiver, elles ne définissent pas les moyens de respecter ces normes. C'est la raison pour laquelle il est aussi important de prioriser l'amélioration des services offerts que de se consacrer aux normes elles-mêmes. Pour préciser le contexte, le Conseil municipal a approuvé, en 2003, les NQE : à l'époque, les Services des routes et du stationnement ont revu à intervalles réguliers les services offerts et ont amélioré nos services opérationnels. Ces efforts ont donné lieu à des améliorations progressives des normes pour l'entretien hivernal adoptées à l'origine afin de tenir compte de l'évolution des priorités du Conseil municipal, des dérèglements climatiques et de l'importance de plus en plus grande consacrée par la collectivité aux déplacements à pied et à vélo. Dans ce rapport, nous mettons en lumière les

améliorations apportées dans le cadre de l'Examen des services mené en 2019 et des initiatives d'amélioration continue. Il s'agit entre autres :

- d'assurer au besoin l'entretien des trottoirs 24 heures sur 24 et sept jours sur sept;
- de réagir plus proactivement en ambitieusement à tous les types d'événements hivernaux;
- de faire alterner les points de départ des trajets dans les secteurs résidentiels pour veiller à ce que le déneigement soit plus cohérent et équitable;
- d'éliminer progressivement l'épandage du sable et de le remplacer par de la grenaille sur les trottoirs et sur la plupart des routes afin de traiter plus efficacement la glace et les surfaces dérapantes;
- de remplacer toutes les pales de chasse-neige en acier par des pales de caoutchouc, ce qui permet à la charrue de mieux suivre les contours de la voie publique et d'améliorer le déneigement et le déglacage;
- de mettre à jour la technologie de géolocalisation GPS sur tous les biens d'équipement afin d'améliorer le rendement opérationnel;
- d'élaborer et de mettre en œuvre une politique pour déclarer les épisodes météorologiques importants lorsque les opérations hivernales prennent plus de temps que prévu, afin d'informer le public et de gérer les attentes;
- de prévoir des interdictions hivernales de stationner pendant certaines périodes et pour une durée cohérente afin de gérer les attentes du public et d'offrir, pendant les périodes d'interdiction de stationner, d'autres places de stationnement hors rue dans les établissements récréatifs de la Ville, les parcs relais d'OC Transpo et les garages de stationnement de la Ville;
- d'adresser aux conseillers municipaux et aux résidents des communiqués proactifs, avant, pendant et après les événements de l'hiver;
- d'améliorer la page consacrée à l'entretien hivernal sur le site [ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca) pour qu'elle soit plus informative et conviviale;
- en collaboration avec le Bureau de l'accessibilité, nous avons créé une vidéo de formation, qui a été communiquée à tous les membres du personnel des Services des routes et du stationnement et qui porte sur la sensibilisation à l'accessibilité, en mettant en lumière certaines difficultés et certains obstacles du réseau de transport actif pour les personnes en situation de handicap;
- nous avons examiné et mis à jour le Plan de gestion des sels de voirie pour maîtriser les impacts environnementaux de l'épandage des sels, dont :
  - examiner les règles de l'art de la gestion;
  - mettre à jour les technologies nouvelles et récentes auxquelles on fait appel pour surveiller l'épandage des sels de voirie;
  - se pencher sur les différents modes d'épandage des sels de voirie par les opérateurs dans tout le réseau de transport;
- nous assurons la formation annuelle sur les sels de voirie et sur la politique relative à leur épandage afin de permettre de mieux connaître les bienfaits environnementaux de la réduction du volume de sels épandus.

Pour étayer l'Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal, nous avons fait appel à Wood PLC (Wood), cabinet-conseil, pour nous aider à mener cet examen complet. Nous avons aussi fait appel à Hill+Knowlton Stratégies pour coordonner la partie de l'examen consacrée à la consultation publique. Cette consultation s'est déroulée en deux phases :

- Phase 1 : Examen de la situation actuelle et des règles de l'art;
- Phase 2 : Consultation.

Le rapport déposé dans le cadre de la phase 1 fait partie des pièces justificatives du présent rapport, et le rapport de la phase 2 est publié sur la page du projet de l'[Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal de la plateforme Participons Ottawa](#).

Voici la synthèse de chaque phase.

Le rapport de la phase 1 (Examen de la situation actuelle et des règles de l'art) fait partie de la pièce justificative 1 du présent rapport. La phase 1 a consisté à examiner la version actuelle des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal, ainsi que les documents sur le contexte, dont les articles publiés dans les médias, les rapports déposés auprès du Comité des transports et du Conseil municipal, les politiques, les plans, les demandes de service et les demandes de règlement d'indemnités. La phase 1 prévoyait aussi des entrevues, menées en interne dans toute l'administration municipale, ainsi que dans d'autres municipalités partout en Ontario, au Canada, aux États-Unis et en Europe, afin de connaître leurs opérations d'entretien et de cerner les solutions potentielles.

Selon le rapport de la phase 1 et d'après l'information communiquée dans notre réponse à une demande de renseignements du Conseil municipal en date du 17 avril 2023 ([TRC 23-02 – Comparaison des normes de service de déneigement](#)), la Ville offre un niveau de service relativement élevé par rapport à d'autres municipalités et un niveau de service supérieur à celui des normes d'entretien minimum pour les municipalités de l'Ontario.

Le rapport de la phase 2 sur la consultation publique est publié dans la page du projet de l'[Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal de la plateforme Participons Ottawa](#). Cette consultation s'est déroulée entre novembre 2020 et février 2021, alors même que les opérations hivernales étaient au cœur des préoccupations. Le personnel de la Ville a aussi mis sur pied l'Équipe de consultation des intervenants et des groupes communautaires divers pour donner son avis sur le déroulement de la consultation et pour veiller à tenir compte, dans toute la mesure du possible, des commentaires des résidents et des intervenants. En s'en remettant aux commentaires de cette équipe, le personnel de la Ville a pu offrir les activités de consultation suivantes :

- page de la plateforme Participons Ottawa (250 commentaires);
- recherche sur l'opinion publique (999 répondants, selon un échantillon représentatif du profil démographique et des quartiers d'Ottawa);

- sondage (776 réponses);
- quatre séances de consultation publique (200 participants).

Dans l'ensemble, les résidents sont généralement satisfaits des normes actuelles de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal, et dans tous les secteurs d'activité, les participants souhaitent que la Ville soit de plus en plus attentive aux trottoirs et aux routes résidentielles. Lorsqu'on leur a posé des questions sur les principes qui devaient guider cet examen, les participants représentant tous les secteurs d'activité ont priorisé la prévention des blessures et la préservation de l'accessibilité et de l'inclusivité pour tous les niveaux de mobilité.

Comme le précise la note de service adressée au Conseil municipal le 19 mai 2022 pour faire le point sur l'examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal, les Services des routes et du stationnement se sont penchés sur les moyens d'apporter des changements ou des améliorations aux normes d'entretien hivernal de la Ville et sur les ressources à mobiliser. Dans le même temps, il a été difficile de déterminer le coût des changements ou des ressources supplémentaires compte tenu de la conjoncture financière mondiale, de la flambée de l'inflation, des prix imprévisibles et très élevés de l'essence, de la hausse soutenue des primes d'assurance et de l'augmentation générale des prix des services externalisés et de l'équipement. Même si le rythme de l'inflation a évolué tendanciellement à la baisse en 2023 et malgré les signes positifs de stabilité des prix de l'essence, l'augmentation des coûts perdure pour ce qui est des primes d'assurances, des services externalisés, des matériaux et de l'équipement. Ces facteurs, de concert avec les conditions météorologiques, expliquent le déficit de 19,7 millions de dollars déclaré pour l'entretien hivernal dans le Rapport d'étape du T2 sur le budget 2023 de fonctionnement et des immobilisations pour les programmes financés par les recettes fiscales et les redevances ([ACS2023-FCS-FSP-0012](#)), ainsi que le déficit de 6,6 millions de dollars engagé dans le budget de l'entretien hivernal 2022. Pour ces raisons, le personnel ne recommande pas d'apporter pour l'instant de changements ni d'améliorations aux Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal, afin de mieux analyser ces impératifs financiers et de tâcher d'y répondre. Les Services des routes et du stationnement soumettront au Comité des transports le compte rendu de ces travaux et des prochaines étapes dans les changements ou les améliorations à apporter, au troisième trimestre de 2024, aux Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal.

Bien qu'il ne recommande pas, pour l'instant, de modifier ces normes, le personnel ne continue pas moins de se pencher sur les occasions d'améliorer les modes de réalisation des services. En prévision de la saison hivernale 2023-2024, le personnel entend continuer d'assurer un niveau élevé de service et d'intégrer les améliorations apportées dans le cadre de l'Examen des services et de l'Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal. Dans le cadre d'un effort soutenu d'adaptation et d'amélioration, qui est nouveau durant cette saison hivernale, les conseillers municipaux pourront :



- avoir accès à notre système de géolocalisation GPS sur le matériel des opérations hivernales;
- constater que nous offrons des options supplémentaires de stationnement pendant les interdictions hivernales de stationner;
- revoir la faisabilité des travaux d'entretien hivernal d'escaliers supplémentaires;
- constater les mises au point structurelles apportées aux Services des routes et du stationnement pour faire concorder nos ressources afin de mieux nous acquitter de notre mandat et de nos responsabilités dans notre secteur d'activité et pour mieux exercer les activités opérationnelles.

Le personnel des Services des routes et du stationnement déposera en 2024, auprès du Comité des transports, un compte rendu sur la situation du budget de base pour continuer d'assurer les niveaux de service actuels, d'améliorer les services pour la saison de l'hiver 2024-2025 et d'enchaîner avec l'Examen des Normes de qualité pour l'entretien hivernal.

## **BACKGROUND**

Home to more than 1 million residents, Ottawa is the second largest municipality within the province of Ontario and is the sixth largest city in Canada by population after Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton. The City maintains 12,969 lane kilometres of roads (more than the driving distance from Halifax to Vancouver and back again during each storm, often multiple times), along with 2,550 kilometres of sidewalks (the equivalent of walking from City Hall to Tampa Bay, Florida), 276 kilometres of the Transitway and Highway 174, and more than 50 kilometres of winter maintained cycling lanes. These distances may be traversed multiple times during storm events. This complex transportation system consists of an urban area surrounded by a heavily populated and growing suburban community with an extensive rural countryside consisting of villages, farms, industry, and some isolated homes.

Residents, businesses, visitors, and emergency services all rely on the City's winter operations to ensure the transportation network is safe and passable during the winter. Roads and Parking Services plays an integral role in helping make Ottawa a liveable city. Staff are committed to delivering essential services to the community and take pride keeping in the Nation's Capital safe, healthy, clean, and green.

On April 3, 2019, after a particularly harsh winter with higher-than-average snow fall amounts, freezing rain hours and freeze thaw cycles, the Transportation Committee provided two directions to staff. Firstly, staff were directed to conduct a service delivery review of winter operations ahead of the 2019/2020 winter to apply a consistent approach across the city and to address icy sidewalks and rutting on residential roads ([Motion TRC 2019 2/4](#)). Secondly, staff were directed to review the winter maintenance standards to improve the condition of roads, sidewalks, and other pedestrian facilities during the winter ([Motion TRC 2019 2/2](#)).

The purpose of this report is to provide Transportation Committee and Council with a summary of the changes made through the Service Delivery Review, information gathered through the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review, along with next steps.

By way of background, the following sections provide an overview of what guides winter maintenance services provided by Roads and Parking Services (RPS), including the provincial and municipal standards of service, previous service delivery reviews, and how the standards are operationalized.

## **Provincial Regulations**

On November 1, 2002, the Province of Ontario (the Province) set out minimum standards for road maintenance through the Municipal Act, [Regulation 239/02: Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways](#). Municipalities are required to follow this regulation; it is used to ensure roadways are kept in a reasonable state of repair and to provide municipalities with a defence against liability from actions arising from roadway maintenance. The standards describe a desired outcome, but do not prescribe which methods or materials should be used to meet it. A municipality may be liable for injuries or damages caused by unsafe conditions that do not meet the minimum standards.

Effective May 3, 2018, the Province amended the [Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways](#), introducing winter maintenance standards for bicycle lanes and sidewalks, along with more focus on the prevention of ice formation on roadways. The amendments also gave municipalities authority to officially declare a significant weather event, granting them more time to meet the minimum standards when weather hazards pose a significant danger to users of municipal highways.

The Province typically does a review of the Minimum Maintenance Standards every five years, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic this process has been delayed. The latest review is in progress, and, at this time, it does not look like there will be any changes to the winter maintenance standards. If this changes to the point of impacting the City of Ottawa's Maintenance Quality Standards, Roads and Parking Services will bring an update to Council.

## **Municipal Standards**

While the provincial regulations focus on public safety and providing municipalities with a defence against liability, they do not address infrastructure preservation or quality of life or consider local climate conditions. To protect the City's capital investments and improve quality of life for residents and visitors, the City built on the provincial regulations with municipal standards that fall under Council's discretion.

Following extensive consultation with residents and reviews of the practices of the former municipalities and of similar municipalities and agencies, Council approved Maintenance Quality Standards – Roads and Sidewalks/Pathways ([ACS2003-TUP-SOP 0004](#)) on June 11, 2003, with two relating to winter operations – snow and ice control, and snow removal.

The standards outline the time and extent of maintenance activities under normal conditions, with the intent to provide a consistent and appropriate level of service to all residents.

### *Snow and Ice Control*

Snow control, or snow clearing, refers to plowing and then pushing the snow to the side of the road. Ice control is managed through treating, or material application, and is the use of salt and grit on our transportation network to treat or prevent icy conditions. The main outcome of snow and ice control of roads, sidewalks, bus pads and winter-maintained pathways is a safe and passable network by reducing the hazards caused by snow and ice accumulation. These operations are based on a priority system, with high-use roads, emergency and transit routes cleared and treated first. Resources must be deployed once snow has accumulated to a certain depth and as soon as practicable after staff become aware of icy conditions. Completion times vary based on priority.

Based on the classification of the road or sidewalk, there are three surface conditions that staff clear and treat to:

- Bare pavement: Snow and ice are controlled, cleared and/or prevented for the full travelled width of the surface.
- Centre bare: Snow and ice are controlled, cleared and/or prevented in a strip down the middle of the road pavement width.
- Snow packed: Snow and ice are cleared. Ruts and potholes are levelled off.

In order to meet the maintenance quality standards, snow and ice control operations are organized into beats, which are the routes operators follow to clear and treat roadways and sidewalks in an area. Staff review and adjust beats annually to account for growth in the transportation network.

### *Snow Removal*

Snow removal is the process of removing the snowbanks when they begin to encroach on the transportation network. It is a highly planned event that typically happens a few times in a winter season, depending on the amount of snowfall the city receives. The main outcome of snow removal is safe and passable roads and sidewalks for all users by reducing the hazards caused by snowbanks that restrict access or visibility.

The city uses two methods for snow removal: casting/winging back or removal/disposal. Casting/winging back involves pushing the snow from the roadway onto the City's right of way. This is a safe operation which allows the roads to be widened without hauling snow away. Snow removal/disposal is when snow is hauled away and brought to one of six city-owned engineered snow disposal sites that are acceptable for the storage of snow for the duration of the winter season.

Snow removal operations are based on the road priority system, with the highest priority roads (freeways and the Transitway) removed first to ensure snow does not encroach at all on the travel lanes. Snowbanks that restrict sightlines at intersections and at pedestrian, school and railway crossings are next priority and then all other types of roads follow based on encroachment conditions. Snow removal timelines are subject to weather conditions, and if another storm occurs during snow removal operations, resources are redirected back to snow clearing operations.

### *Winter Cycling Network*

On November 26, 2013, Council approved the Winter Cycling Network as part of the Transportation Master Plan, Ottawa Pedestrian Plan and Ottawa Cycling Plan Update ([ACS2013-PAI-PGM-0193](#)). Centred in the downtown core where cycling rates are highest, the network of approximately 50 kilometres of cycling facilities along roads and pathways is winter maintained to bare pavement, at the same service level as the adjacent sidewalk or roadway. Snow removal is scheduled when snowbanks cover half the width of the bike lane.

Council approved the Transportation Master Plan – Part 1 ([ACS2023-PRE-TP-0001](#)) on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This included the approval of Policy 7-8 Enable Winter Cycling with a target of doubling the total kilometres of winter cycling routes by 2030. Currently, the winter cycling network is expanded when new segments connect to the existing network. With the newly approved policy, new routes will be evaluated based on connection to the existing winter cycling network, having an interprovincial link, or a link to a rapid transit station.

### **Operationalizing Standards**

To meet provincial regulation, achieve the Council-approved Maintenance Quality Standards and address all other factors affecting winter operations service delivery, Roads and Parking Services allocates resources, distributes staff, optimizes routes, and rationalizes equipment and deployment centres.

When it comes to winter operations, the city is divided into four areas – Urban, Suburban East, Suburban West and Rural. Each area is overseen by an Area Manager, and experienced supervisors. The areas are grouped by similar infrastructure and community type, in addition to geography. Within those four areas, there are 17 winter

works yards located across the city, where equipment and materials are housed and then deployed by the 535 skilled winter maintenance operators.

Roads and Parking Services uses seven distinct types of equipment with multiple attachments, all of which require specialized training and can take up to 24 months to procure. When possible, Roads and Parking Services procures standard equipment that can accommodate all the different detachable tools needed to plow, sweep, break ice and spread abrasives. Staff are trained to work in all community types (urban, suburban, and rural) so they can operate in all contexts. This versatility in equipment and training allows Roads and Parking Services to accommodate growth in the transportation network without requiring extensive staff training and equipment procurement. Contracted crews supplement services as needed throughout the winter.

**Funding Winter Operations**

Winter operations are funded by property taxes. The annual budget for winter operations is based on various factors, including the activities outlined in the City’s Maintenance Quality Standards, a three, five and 10-year average of winter weather, the type and volume of infrastructure that needs to be maintained, the previous years’ budget actuals, and costs related to equipment, staff and materials.

The City uses a three, five and 10-year average of winter weather as one of the factors to determine the budget, as winter weather in Ottawa can vary significantly year-over-year. Over the past 5 years, Ottawa has received an average of 229 centimetres of snow and 75 hours of freezing rain each year/winter. Extreme temperature fluctuations between +5°C and –28°C have created an average of 79 freeze-thaw cycles each winter, which affect road, sidewalk and pathway conditions.

These winter conditions have been increasing over the past 20 years. Table 1 shows the average annual snowfall, freezing rain hours and freeze-thaw cycles over the past three, five, 10 and 20 years.

**Table 1: Average Annual Snowfall, Freezing Rain Hours, and Freeze-thaw Cycles**

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Snowfall</b>	<b>Freezing rain</b>	<b>Freeze-thaw cycles</b>
<b>20 years</b> (2003-2022)	220 centimetres	64 hours	70
<b>10 years</b> (2013-2022)	233 centimetres	63 hours	75
<b>5 years</b> (2018-2022)	229 centimetres	75 hours	79
<b>3 years</b> (2020-2022)	210 centimetres	47 hours	76

According to the [Climate Projections for the National Capital Region](#), Ottawa will continue to get warmer year-round with rain increasing in both amount and intensity

from October to May. Variability from year to year will continue, with some years much warmer or wetter than others. Winters will get shorter and see fewer days with snow but more freeze-thaw cycles. These conditions could lead to more extreme weather like freezing rain, winter storms, rapid freeze-thaws, excessive rain, and spring flooding.

The budget for winter operations is also significantly tied to the costs of running the operation, which has been directly affected by the global financial situation that began during COVID-19. The high rates of inflation, unpredictable and very high fuel prices, a continued rise in insurance costs, and a general increase in pricing for contracted services, materials and equipment has had significant impacts on the Roads and Parking Services budget.

The winter operations budget for 2023 is \$85.8 million. As reported in the 2023 Tax and Rate Operating and Capital Budget Q2 Status Report ([ACS2023-FCS-FSP-0012](#)) Roads and Parking Services showed a \$19.7 million winter maintenance deficit which can be attributed to the extreme winter weather experienced in the first half of 2023, in addition to inflation, fuel prices, insurance costs, and contracted services and equipment.

### **Service Delivery Reviews**

Although the Maintenance Quality Standards have not been revised since 2003, staff are continually reviewing, making changes and improving their operational practices to address the evolving needs and requirements of the community.

The latest Service Delivery Review was completed after the 2018/2019 winter being extremely challenging, exceeding both short- and long-term averages for snowfall, freezing rain, and freeze-thaw cycles. That winter also saw back-to-back snowfalls of more than 25 centimetres, which led to an unprecedented build-up of ice on sidewalks and residential roads causing severe rutting of roads and ice-coated sidewalks.

On April 3, 2019, the Transportation Committee directed staff to conduct a service delivery review of winter operations before the 2019/2020 winter to apply an approach consistently across the city and to address icy sidewalks and rutting on residential roads ([Motion TRC 2019 2/4](#)). The Committee also directed staff to review the winter maintenance standards to improve the condition of roads, sidewalks, and other pedestrian facilities during the winter ([Motion TRC 2019 2/2](#)).

Staff brought forward the Service Delivery Review Report ([ACS2019-PWE-RPS-0015](#)) to Council on November 27, 2019. The significant changes included:

- Restructuring area boundaries to focus on urban, suburban, and rural communities, rather than the previous geographic locations
- Strategically deploying resources across the transportation network
- Redeploying staff to create more capacity for maintaining sidewalks 24/7

Further details on the changes made through the 2019 Service Delivery Review are included below.

### *Restructuring Boundaries*

Prior to the Service Delivery Review (SDR), Roads and Parking Services boundaries (Core, East, West, and South) were based mainly on ensuring an equal division of the City, dividing Ottawa into 4 zones with a “one-size fits all” approach. The current boundaries of Urban, Suburban East, Suburban West, and Rural were structured based on their similar geography, infrastructure, and community type. This boundary model empowers the frontline supervisors to make deployment decisions that respond to the conditions in their area of the city and provides consistency across communities rather than the city as a whole.

### *Strategic Deployment*

Staff monitor the type of weather events to strategically deploy resources by ensuring that the right resources are used to respond to specific events through more proactive and aggressive deployment.

Strategic deployment also involves tracking consecutive winter weather events and, in some instances, as an operational practice, supervisors may deploy resources earlier than what is outlined in the maintenance quality standards in order to meet the desired outcome. This is in alignment with the 2018 update to the provincial standards with the focus on the prevention of ice formation on roadways. This operational improvement is one that has resulted in significant improvement to the transportation network, especially on residential roads. By responding more aggressively to smaller weather events, it has minimized pack-on snow that typically leads to ice buildup and rutting, especially on residential roadways.

This is evident when comparing the 2018-2019 weather that prompted this review to our previous winter season of 2022-2023. Both winters saw similar conditions, as outlined in the Table 2 below, but with the improvements made through SDR and continued annual improvements there was a 42 per cent reduction in service requests.

**Table 2: Weather Events 2018/2019 and 2022/2023**

<b>Event</b>	<b>2018/2019 Winter Season</b>	<b>2022/2023 Winter Season</b>
<b>Snow accumulation (cm)</b>	311	329
<b>Freezing Rain Hours</b>	103	92
<b>Freeze-thaw Cycles</b>	75	73

### *Redeploying Staff*

To address the concerns around icy sidewalks, staff found opportunities for resource balancing, by redeploying staff to sidewalk maintenance. As a result, there are approximately 250 of the 535 winter resources clearing sidewalks and pathways. Balancing these resources allowed, for the first time, sidewalks to be maintained 24/7 if required, across the entire network.

### **Continuous Improvements**

On October 6, 2021, staff presented to Transportation Committee on the progress made on the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review along with improvements to winter operations identified through discussions with operational staff ([TRC Minutes 22](#)).

Roads and Parking Services continues to review and enhance its operational practices to increase efficiency and improve service. Improvements made over the past two winters include:

- Continue to respond more proactively and aggressively to all types of winter events, specifically smaller events earlier in the winter season to prevent significant snowpack on sidewalks and residential streets, which leads to ice buildup and rutting
- Alternating starting points of residential beats to make plowing more equitable
- Analyzing winter weather events and deploying resources earlier and as required based on forecasts and local conditions
- Phasing out the use of sand and replacing it with grit on sidewalks and most roads to treat ice and slippery conditions more effectively
- Replacing all steel plow blades with rubber blades which helps the plow follow the contours of the road better and allows for improved snow and ice removal
- Updating GPS technology on all equipment to improve performance and provide idling monitoring
- Developing and implementing a policy to declare significant weather events when winter operations will take longer than expected, to inform the public and manage expectations
- Calling winter parking bans at set times and for a consistent length of time to manage public expectations and providing additional off-street parking during parking bans at City recreation facilities, OC Transpo park-and-rides, and City parking garages



- Establishing set times to declare both day and night-time parking bans
  - Nighttime winter weather parking bans are called by 9 am on the day that the ban is scheduled to go into effect. During a nighttime ban, street parking is prohibited between 7 pm and 7 am.
  - Daytime winter weather parking bans are called by 3:30 pm on the day before the ban is scheduled to go into effect. During a day time ban, street parking is prohibited between 10 am and 7 pm
- Continuing to allow paid parking during winter parking bans in designated business areas
- Continuing proactive communications to Councillors and residents before, during and after winter events
- Connecting with community stakeholders to increase understanding and information-sharing regarding winter operations
- Improving the winter maintenance page on ottawa.ca to be more educational and user friendly
- In collaboration with the Corporate Accessibility Office, a training video was created and shared with all staff in Roads and Parking Services on accessibility awareness, highlighting specific challenges and barriers on the active transportation network for people with disabilities
- Review and updated the Salt Management Plan used to mitigate the environmental impacts of salt use which includes:
  - Review of best management practices
  - Update of new and current technologies used to monitor salt usage
  - How operators use salt differently across the transportation network
- Annual training on salt and salt application policy to increase understanding of environmental benefits of reducing salt use

A fulsome description of the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review process and findings is further outlined in the discussion section of this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the City's winter maintenance standards is to ensure the transportation network is safe and passable for all users. The City of Ottawa's standards, although remain unchanged from when they were approved by Council in 2003, continue to provide a high-level of winter maintenance. This was identified during the consultation process for the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review, which is further detailed below, and also highlighted in a recent inquiry response ([TRC 23-02 - Comparison of Snow Removal Service Standards](#)) that compared Ottawa's standards to other Canadian municipalities. The inquiry response focused on four winter maintenance activities: sidewalk clearing, roadway clearing, winter cycling network maintenance, and snow removal. Overall, Ottawa's winter maintenance standards stand out as being amongst the highest and this is especially true for our sidewalk and roadway clearing.

## Review Process

In response to [Motion TRC 2019 2/2](#), staff undertook a review of the winter maintenance standards. Areas of focus for the review included: changes to climate and trends, equity and diversity lenses, and changes in community expectations since 2003.

To support the review work, Wood PLC (Wood) was hired as a consultant to assist with the comprehensive review. Additionally, Hill+Knowlton Strategies were hired to coordinate the public engagement portion of the review. The consultation piece took place in two phases:

- Phase 1: Current State and Best Practices Review
- Phase 2: Engagement

The report provided as part of Phase 1 can be found as supporting documentation of this report and Phase 2 is on the [Engage Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review project page](#). A summary of each phase is provided below.

### *Phase 1: Current State and Best Practices Review*

Phase 1 Current State and Best Practices Review is included as supporting Document 1 of this report. Phase 1 consisted of reviewing the current Winter Maintenance Quality Standards and reviewing background materials including media articles, committee and council reports, policies, plans, service requests and claims.

The plans/tools/strategies that were reviewed included the following:

- Ottawa Official Plan
- Ottawa Transportation Master Plan
- Infrastructure Master Plan
- Ottawa Cycling Plan
- Ottawa Pedestrian Plan
- Older Adult Plan
- Climate Change Master Plan
- Greenspace Master Plan
- Human Services Plan
- City of Ottawa Municipal Accessibility Plan
- Accessibility Report
- Public Engagement Feedback Report, Accessibility Consultations
- Equity and Inclusion Lens
- Women and Gender Equity Strategy
- Infrastructure Planning and Design Strategies

Some of the key impacts based on the review of the above documentation are included below.

The [Older Adult Plan](#), the City's New Official Plan ([ACS2021-PIE-EDP-0036](#)) approved by Council on October 27, 2021, and Transportation Master Plan – Part 1 ([ACS2023-PRE-TP-0001](#)) approved by Council on April 26, 2023, all focus on Ottawa's goals for sustainable transportation. These plans were essential to the Winter Maintenance Quality Standard Review to ensure the standards are reflective of the City's priorities.

The City's [Equity and Inclusion Lens](#) and the [Women and Gender Equity Strategy](#) were an important part of this review to ensure the transportation network addresses the needs and experiences of all residents and helps connect all residents to jobs, recreation, services, school, shopping, and other activities to help narrow disparities in access.

The Climate Change Master Plan and Energy Evolution Model report ([ACS2019-PIE-EDP-0053](#)) states that in the coming decades Ottawa will experience considerably wetter springs and winters and much warmer winters. By 2030 winters are expected to be 4 weeks shorter than they currently are with an average increase in temperature of 1.8°C and 20% fewer cold days (cold days are colder than -10°C). Snowfall quantities are expected to drop by 10%, however, there is an overall increase in precipitation and intense precipitation by 5% which is expected to be in the form of rain and freezing rain. The increase in temperature results in an increase in freeze-thaw cycles by 15%. This was a key consideration of the review to ensure the standards can be achieved in Ottawa's climate.

Interviews were conducted internally across the city and with other municipalities across Ontario, Canada, United States and Europe to acquire and understanding of maintenance operations and opportunities. These municipalities included Toronto, Brampton, Montreal, Edmonton, New York City, Minneapolis, Oslo, and Stockholm. An interview was also conducted with the National Capital Commission (NCC) for a deeper understanding of their standards.

The findings from Phase 1 found that the City's current maintenance quality standards provide a relatively high level of service when compared to other municipalities and exceed the Minimum Maintenance Standards for Ontario Municipalities. The work conducted in phase 1 did recognize the opportunity to review the MQS against the City's strategic plans and priorities, as well as residents needs to ensure the standards are inclusive and clear for both the public and staff. In order to fully understand residents' needs an extensive engagement process was required.

## *Phase 2 – Engagement*

A priority for staff when reviewing the standards, was to ensure feedback was received from residents and key partner groups in the community, and so staff began an engagement process in the fall of 2020. Before engaging with the public, staff established a Stakeholder and Diverse Community Group Engagement Team to provide advice on the engagement process. The engagement team included members of community associations and school boards, and diverse community groups like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Council on Aging, and special interest groups like Bike Ottawa. The 40-member engagement team advised staff on when and how to engage most effectively, what types of questions to ask, and how to promote engagement.

Between November 2020 and February 2021 staff engaged with residents and stakeholders virtually (due to public-health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic) through two streams:

- Public opinion research and Survey
- Engagement sessions

### Public opinion research and Survey

The City commissioned Hill+Knowlton Strategies to survey 999 residents through online panel in December 2020. And between January 18 and February 19, 2021, the City hosted a bilingual online survey on Engage Ottawa, which received 776 responses. Through the Accessibility Office, respondents were able to take the survey over the phone in English or in French, thus removing internet or computer access and familiarity as barriers to participation. This is the first time the City has offered this alternative.

For the panel, respondents were asked to prioritize what is important to them in the context of winter maintenance, and how much more, if anything, they would be willing to pay to improve service. The goal of the panel was to find concrete evidence of resident preference. The feedback gathered through the panel helped guide the subsequent survey and engagement sessions.

A third to half of all respondents are satisfied with the current level of winter maintenance and the remainder either neutral or not satisfied. When asked to rank considerations that should guide the review, survey and panel respondents prioritized the same three issues: injury prevention, healthy and livable communities, and maintaining accessibility and inclusivity for all mobility levels.

### Engagement sessions

Between January 25 and 28, 2021, Hill+Knowlton Strategies facilitated four, two-hour, bilingual, online engagement sessions about winter maintenance that had 120

registrants. Each session was capped at 50 participants to ensure everyone could participate. Participants included residents from across Ottawa, private snow contractors, Councillors, staff, residents with disabilities, young parents, older adults, transit users, cyclists, and community groups such as Bike Ottawa, Council on Aging of Ottawa, Ottawa Riverkeeper and Senior Watch Old Ottawa South.

The purpose of the engagement sessions was to gather specific input on priorities, along with feedback on different options. Participants highlighted the challenges of navigating sidewalks and pathways during the winter, and that sidewalks, pathways, and intersections should be prioritized because everyone needs to use these types of infrastructure, regardless of how they get around. Participants noted they felt residential areas are often not prioritized when it comes to winter maintenance and emphasized the importance of coordinating winter maintenance between different types of infrastructure, surrounding areas, and other stakeholders with transportation infrastructure like the National Capital Commission.

### Online Feedback

In November 2020, staff launched a project page on Engage Ottawa about the winter maintenance standards review. Engagement efforts focused on identifying gaps in the current standards and seeking ideas and improvements for updated standards.

Staff responded to more than 200 questions residents submitted on Engage Ottawa. More than 150 comments and questions were submitted through social media. The most common concerns were about the quality of winter maintenance of sidewalks and its impact on safety and mobility for all, but particularly older adults, residents with disabilities, children, residents with strollers, and marginalized residents.

### Overall Engagement Findings

Overall residents are generally satisfied with the current winter maintenance standards and participants in all streams expressed an interest in increased standards for sidewalks and residential roads. When asked which principles should guide the review, participants in all streams prioritized injury prevention and maintaining accessibility and inclusivity for all mobility levels.

Based on the feedback of the engagement phase of the winter maintenance quality standards review, Roads and Parking staff did make operational improvements the following winter without requiring any changes to the standards. A training video was created and shared with all staff in Roads and Parking Services to educate operators on accessibility barriers, staff increased communications with Councillors, residents and stakeholders before, during and after a storm to inform everyone on winter maintenance activities and continued to incorporate the improvements made through Service Delivery Review to prioritize sidewalks and pathways.

It is also important to note that engagement with the public was done over the 2020/2021 winter and that this past winter (2022/2023) was our first true test of the changes made through service delivery review, and as was detailed earlier in the report, increased services to sidewalks, residential roadways and communications has resulted in lower service requests.

### **Current Status**

Roads and Parking staff have provided updates to Council throughout the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review project on progress made. Since the last update staff have continued to review operations, beats, contracts, and resource requirements to determine the most effective and fiscally efficient way to incorporate any updates to the standards.

A memo was circulated to Council on May 19, 2022, that delayed any staff recommendations due to the global financial situation with high rates of inflation, unpredictable and very high fuel prices, a continued rise in insurance costs, and a general increase in pricing for contracted services and equipment. 2023 has shown a downward trend in the inflation rate and promising signs of stabilization with fuel prices, but there is still on-going instability with contracted services, insurance premiums and material and equipment costs. Due to this, it is difficult to forecast an accurate cost for any enhancements to the current Winter Maintenance Quality Standards at this time.

The past couple of winters have been a true test to the improvements made since 2019 and winter operations spending is demonstrating a trend of incurring deficits. This includes the Q2 2023 winter operations deficit of \$19.7 million and the \$6.6 million in 2022.

For these reasons, staff are not recommending any changes or improvements to the winter maintenance quality standards at this time in order to further analyze and work to address these financial pressures. Roads and Parking Services will provide an update to Transportation Committee on this work as well as next steps regarding any changes or improvements to the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards in Q3 2024.

### **Expectations for 2023/2024 Winter Season**

Heading into the 2023/2024 winter season, staff are committed to continuing to provide a high level of service and incorporate the improvements made since 2019, such as more proactive and aggressive deployment, 24/7 sidewalk network coverage and enhance communication, and improvements made through the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards review process such as alternative residential plow beats, connecting with internal and community stakeholders, and educating staff on accessibility barriers. In a continued effort to adapt and improve, new to this winter season, Councillors will see:

- Access for Councillors to our GPS tracking on winter operations equipment
- Additional parking options during winter weather parking bans
- Review of additional stairways for winter maintenance
- Structural refinement within Roads and Parking Services to align resources to better deliver on the service area's mandate, responsibilities and operational activities.

### *GPS Tracking on Winter Operations Equipment*

As mentioned in the background section of this report, the GPS equipment was updated on all winter operations equipment. With this update staff are now able to see if a roadway or sidewalk plow has completed its beat and when the piece of equipment was there through a telematics software called Geotab. This winter, Councillors will have access to Geotab to be able to see if winter maintenance has been completed on a roadway/sidewalk.

### *Additional Parking During Winter Weather Parking Bans*

Currently during a winter weather parking ban residents are able to park at select park-and-ride locations and City facilities, as well as overnight availability at five City-owned parking garages and one University of Ottawa Garage. Staff have heard from Councillors and residents about their concerns of where to park during winter weather parking bans. For the 2023/2024 winter season, the City will be offering parking at additional facility parking lots. The full list of available parking during winter weather parking bans can be found on [Ottawa.ca/WinterParking](https://ottawa.ca/WinterParking).

### *Review Additional Stairways for Winter Maintenance*

Currently only stairways that have no ramp or alternative access point to a pathway within a reasonable distance are winter maintained. Ramps or nearby alternative access points are prioritized over stairways for winter maintenance as they are inclusive to all active transportation network users. Alternative access points are a different way (pathways, sidewalk, etc.) of getting to the same location within a reasonable distance of the stairway. Roads and Parking staff recognize stairways are an important piece of the transportation network and will work with affected Councillors to determine opportunities and the feasibility of piloting the maintenance of additional stairways to assist with determining level of cost, benefit and effort for this operation.

### *Roads and Parking Services Structural Refinement*

Roads and Parking Services completed an internal review to align resources in a way that would allow for more efficient delivery of their operational mandate and responsibilities. This has resulted in a recategorization of some work zones to better align with operational areas (Urban, Rural, Suburban East and Suburban West). This also led to the creation of two new branches: a standalone Special Operations Branch

manages specialized activities and events (Transitway, Highway 174, 24/7 Shift, Rideau River Flood Control, Pretoria Lift Bridge and Special Events requiring Roads and Parking Services support) and the Service Planning and Program Improvements Branch that focuses on delivering operational and departmental priorities as well as operational work planning for Roads and Parking Services. The 2023/2024 winter season will be the first winter season with these changes in place.

## **Next Steps**

Roads and Parking Services will be in contact with Councillors to discuss winter preparedness and expectations and to provide offices with helpful information and resources to support residents in the upcoming Winter season. This includes information on how to use the new Geotab function, additional stairways and parking lots, and in some cases introduce Councillors to their new Area Manager. Roads and Parking Services will continue to monitor the global financial situation, work to address the financial pressures and provide an update to Transportation Committee on this work as well as next steps regarding any changes or improvements to the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards in Q3 2024

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the report recommendations.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

Municipalities in Ontario have a statutory duty under the Municipal Act, 2001 (the City of Toronto Act, 2006 for that municipality), to keep their highways in a state of repair that is reasonable in the circumstances. A “highway” is understood to include a sidewalk and/or cycling lane.

Three statutory defences are provided for in the legislation such that a municipality should avoid liability with respect to disrepair of a highway if any one of the defences is met:

- (a) the municipality did not know and could not reasonably have been expected to have known about the state of repair of the highway or bridge;
- (b) the municipality took reasonable steps to prevent the default from arising; or
- (c) at the time the cause of action arose, minimum standards established (i.e. the provincial MMSMH) applied to the highway or bridge and to the alleged default and those standards have been met.

As long as the WMQS do not fall below the provincial MMSMH, the City is able to assert a defence to a highway maintenance action under the third statutory defence when the



standards have been met.

## **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

This is a City-wide report.

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

There are no advisory committee comments for this report.

## **CONSULTATION**

For the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review staff initiated the consultation and engagement process in the fall of 2020. This included consultation with both internal partners and residents and stakeholders. To assist with developing the public engagement staff worked with the City's Accessibility Office and Gender and Race Equity, Indigenous Relations, Diversity and Inclusion team and also established a Stakeholder and Diverse Community Group Engagement Team to provide advice on the engagement process and to help ensure resident and stakeholder feedback was incorporated wherever possible. The consultation and engagement process took place from November 2020 to February 2021, when winter operations were front of mind. The consultation tactics included:

- 30 staff interviews
- Engage Ottawa page (250 comments)
- Public opinion research (999 respondents with a sample that represents Ottawa's demographics and wards)
- Survey (776 responses)
  - Through the Accessibility Office, respondents were able to take the survey over the phone in English or in French, thus removing Internet or computer access and familiarity as barriers to participation. This is the first time the City has offered this alternative.
- Four public engagement sessions (200 participants)

Engagement efforts focused on identifying gaps in the current standards and seeking ideas and improvements for updated standards. Across engagement streams, residents emphasized that pedestrian accessibility and inclusivity should be a top priority. Other areas of focus included better connection of transportation modes, environmental sustainability, snow removal obstacles caused by parked cars, financial responsibility, assessing best practices of other national and international regions, as well as coordinating with other City departments and involved stakeholders. When asked which principles should guide the review, participants prioritized injury prevention and maintaining accessibility and inclusivity for all mobility levels.

The report on the [Engage Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review project page](#) provides an overview of the engagement process and its findings.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

The City's current winter maintenance standards exceed the Province's Minimum Maintenance Standard for winter operations. Accessibility was a key consideration throughout the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review, starting with a review of the relevant legislation (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*) and City policies (Older Adult Plan, Accessibility Policy).

The City's Accessibility Office advised staff on the engagement process and shared bilingual ads promoting engagement opportunities with their network. Staff established a Stakeholder and Diverse Community Group Engagement Team to advise staff on the engagement process and to help ensure resident and stakeholder feedback was incorporated wherever possible. The City's Accessibility Office suggested who should be part of the team. Members included the Accessibility Advisory Committee, ABLE2, CNIB, Council on Aging of Ottawa, Ottawa Seniors Transportation Committee, Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, Senior Watch Old Ottawa South, Snow Moles, Social Planning Council of Ottawa, and The Good Companions Seniors' Centre. During the engagement process, staff ensured there was representation from people with disabilities and accessibility concerns. Part of the engagement process included a survey on Engage Ottawa and through the Accessibility Office, respondents were able to take a survey over the phone in English or in French, thus removing Internet or computer access and familiarity as barriers to participation. This is the first time the City has offered this alternative.

Throughout the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review process staff would provide Council with updates on improvements for each winter. As part of these updates, a training video was created for operators that educates them on accessibility and winter barriers. A second accessibility training video is currently in the works.

## **INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

Gender and equity implications were a key consideration throughout the project, starting with a review of the relevant City plans and policies (Human Services Plan, Older Adult Plan, Equity and Diversity Policy).

To ensure the engagement process was done in an equitable manner, the City's Gender and Race Equity, Indigenous Relations, Diversity and Inclusion team advised staff on the engagement process and shared bilingual ads promoting engagement opportunities with their network. Staff established a Stakeholder and Diverse Community Group Engagement Team to advise on the engagement process and to help ensure resident and stakeholder feedback was incorporated wherever possible. The City's Gender and Race Equity, Indigenous Relations, Diversity and Inclusion team

suggested who should be part of the engagement team. Members included Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, Caldwell Family Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association Ottawa, Causeway Work Centre, Citizen Advocacy Ottawa, City for All Women's Initiative, Coopérative Ami Jeunesse, Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition, Ottawa ACORN, and several community houses and community resource/support centres throughout Ottawa. During the engagement process, staff ensured there was representation from equity deserving groups, including racialized people, those who identify as women, those who identify as LGBTQI2S, older adults, immigrants, Francophones, people with a disability, people with a low-income, and Indigenous peoples.

Feedback from the engagement process included residents feeling that sidewalks and pathways, intersections, and cycling paths should be prioritized over roads. Residents would like sidewalks to be prioritized to avoid dangerous and slippery conditions as when these conditions occur, they are forced to go on the roadways. These concerns were raised by seniors, people with physical disabilities, cyclists, people walking their children to school and those pushing strollers. People requiring mobility devices such as wheelchairs and walkers were further challenged with getting stuck in the snow and having to wait for assistance.

The report on the [Engage Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards Review project page](#) provides an fulsome overview of the engagement process and it's findings.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

This report outlines all risks and mitigation measures.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

This is a city-wide report. There is no recommended changes in this report that would impact rural areas.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

A city that is more connected with reliable, safe and accessible mobility options

## **DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no delegation of authority implications with this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 - Current State and Best Practices Review

## **DISPOSITION**

Roads and Parking Services will continue to monitor the global financial situation, work to address the financial pressures and provide an update to Transportation Committee on this work as well as next steps regarding any changes or improvements to the Winter Maintenance Quality Standards in Q3 2024.