



What We Learned Report

Snow Plow Contractor Licensing Review: Engagement Results

Table of Contents

Definitions	2
Engagement Overview	2
Public Survey.....	2
Industry Surveys	3
Internal and External Engagement	3
Findings: Public Survey	3
Snow Storage and Disposal	3
Noise and Nuisance	4
Findings: Industry Survey.....	5
Industry Survey 1	5
Broadband Back-up Alarms	5
Driveway Markers	6
Snow Storage and Disposal	7
General Comments	7
Industry Survey 2	7
Broadband Back-up Alarms	7
Snow Disposal and Storage	8
Driveway Markers	8
Consumer Protection	8
Next Steps	9

Definitions

- **Broadband back-up alarms:** device installed on the back of a vehicle, which produces an audible white noise warning (“whoosh-whoosh”), when a vehicle is in reverse. [This video](#) highlights the difference between broadband and tonal back-up alarms.
- **Driveway marker:** a temporary, non-illuminated marker used to indicate the boundaries of a private property driveway and provide contact information for the responsible snow plow contractor.
- **Snow plow contractor:** a person who is engaged in the business of plowing or removal of snow on or from private property using a snow plow.
- **Tonal back-up alarms:** device installed on the back of a vehicle, which produces an audible warning (“beep-beep” sound) when a vehicle is in reverse. [The video](#) highlights the difference between broadband and tonal back-up alarms.
- **Licensing By-law:** a by-law of the City of Ottawa respecting the licensing, regulating, and governing of certain businesses. Snow plow contractors are a licensed business under the [Licensing By-law \(No. 2002-189\)](#).

Engagement Overview

Public Survey

Public engagement included a survey and a poll hosted on Engage Ottawa and promoted on social media. The Snow Plow Contractor Licensing review's public survey launched on February 22nd, 2024, and remained open until March 31st, 2024. There were 1749 responses in English as well as 21 responses in French, resulting in 1770 responses total. The public survey gained a better understanding on what about the existing system works well and what areas of private snow plow contractor's operations could benefit from modified regulations. Further, the public survey offered valuable perspective on how snow plow contractors and their operations impact the lives of the City's residents.

Industry Surveys

In addition to public consultations, two industry surveys were conducted wherein City staff requested input from private companies and contractors in the snow plow business. These two surveys sought out the expertise of those in the industry and requested feedback on the potential impacts of specific policy changes. Industry surveys were hosted on MS Forms and emailed to all active snow plow contractor licensees within the city. To increase awareness, the second survey was published on Engage Ottawa and promoted through social media. The first industry survey ran from October 17th, 2023, to November 17th, 2023, and it had 43 licensee respondents. The second survey, which garnered 12 licensee responses, was launched on April 19th, 2024, and closed on May 31st, 2024.

Internal and External Engagement

This review included consultations with internal City departments, including By-law and Regulatory Services, Public Works (Roads and Solid Waste), Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development, and Fleet Services.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee, Ottawa Disability Coalition, and The Council on Aging of Ottawa were also consulted on this file to improve staff's understanding of the possible barriers to snow clearing and removal for persons with disabilities and older adults.

Findings: Public Survey

Snow Storage and Disposal

Snow storage and disposal was one of the key issues mentioned by residents in the public survey. Analysis of the text-based responses from residents showed significant concerns with snow dumping on both public and private property. Despite 86 per cent of respondents advising their property has sufficient space to store snow for an entire winter, text responses suggested a need for better education regarding legal placement and storage of snow. Residents further highlighted issues regarding visibility, safety, and neighbour relations due to improperly placed snow. Safety and accessibility

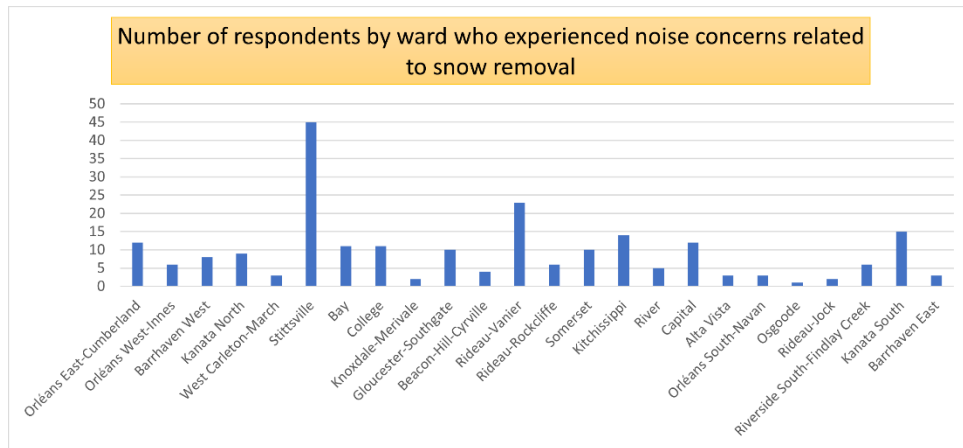
concerns were raised numerous times in text-based responses from residents as they noted any deposit of snow onto the roadway results in said roadway becoming narrower, icier, and more difficult to use. The same concern was expressed in reference to sidewalks, with residents stating that this issue is especially problematic for individuals using assistive mobility devices or pushing strollers.

Noise and Nuisance

Residents in our survey also raised the issue of noise that results from clearing snow overnight. Interestingly, comments on overnight operations were somewhat divided. Several text-based responses on the issue were in support of preserving overnight operations, with those who were in favour of the practice citing the need for professionals, individuals with disabilities, and young families to be able to leave their driveways first thing in the morning without needing to clear their laneways. Further, responses on this issue highlighted the potential for added congestion on City streets if private plowing were to be regulated to business hours. These responses are supported by the fact that 87.1 per cent of respondents reported not having experienced noise concerns with private snow plow contractors. Conversely, those who have experienced noise issues and thus were not in favour of overnight clearings mentioned sleep disturbances for themselves and their young children as reasons to consider implementing restricted hours of operations.

Issues of noise disturbances seem, in part, to be a geographical issue. For instance, certain wards such as Osgoode, Rideau-Jock, Knoxdale-Merivale, and West Carleton-March reported almost zero noise concerns, with only 3 or 4 residents from these wards in our survey advising of noise issues. In contrast, areas such as Rideau-Vanier had 23 respondents raising noise concerns, and the Stittsville ward had 45 respondents who indicated noise from snow clearing was an issue.

Figure 1



Findings: Industry Survey

Industry Survey 1

Broadband Back-up Alarms

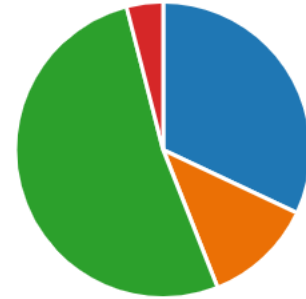
25 out of 43 respondents identified that their company vehicles are equipped with back-up alarms; 52 per cent of them are using a combination of tonal and broadband technology, 32 per cent are using only tonal, 12 per cent are using only broadband, and 4 per cent are unsure of the technology installed. When asked if they supported the requirement to replace tonal back-up alarms with broadband technology, 88 per cent of respondents were opposed. Reluctancy for this change was due to cost, lack of benefit, and a concern with safety. Respondents identified alternate solutions to reduce community noise and nuisance including using proper lighting on vehicles and the installation of back-up cameras.

Figure 2

7. What type of back-up alarms does your vehicle(s) have?

[More Details](#)

● Monotonal (Beep Beep)	8
● Broadband (Whoosh Whoosh)	3
● Both	13
● Unsure	1



Driveway Markers

Survey responses demonstrated the most used material of driveway markers are fiberglass and a combination of metal and fiberglass. Fiberglass and metal were deemed by respondents to be most cost-effective and durable. Fiberglass, plastic, and metal were deemed by respondents to be the safest Eighteen respondents did not agree that the City should permanently allow metal driveway markers versus 16 who responded yes and 9 who did not have an opinion. Those opposed to allowing metal driveway markers indicated concerns with damaging property and equipment if set back limits from the roadway were not followed. Two (2) comments indicated concern for public safety if metal markers were to be used as weapons. Comments in support of metal driveway markers highlighted environmental sustainability, ease of putting them into the ground without damage, durability, and sleeves to make them safe for the public if installed properly. General comments included changing the installation dates to be earlier (October 15th) due to early snowstorms.

Figure 3

17. Do you believe that the City of Ottawa should permit the use of metal driveway markers by snow plow contractors on a permanent basis?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● Yes	16
● No	18
● No opinion	9



Snow Storage and Disposal

Eighty-one per cent of respondents indicated that they work on properties where there is a lack of space to push or blow the snow. Recommendations provided by respondents to manage inadequate snow storage on-site included using snow plows instead of blades and buckets, transporting snow off the property, using other neighbouring properties with their permission, and for the City to allow the use of their snow dumps or permission to dump on City easements.

General Comments

Several respondents expressed the requirement for better communication between private snow plow contractors and City snow clearing and removal operations. In addition, licensees expressed a desire for easier licence renewals, such as online application platform.

Industry Survey 2

Broadband Back-up Alarms

Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that their snow clearing vehicles have a back-up alarm installed. Fifty-five per cent did not support replacing tonal back-up alarms with broadbands, 25 per cent supported the replacement, and 20 per cent did not know. The main concerns for not transitioning to broadband were related to safety, lack of sound recognition for the modern technology, and high replacement costs. Those who supported the transition indicated that it would reduce noise pollution and nuisance for the community.

Snow Disposal and Storage

Snow plow contractors indicated that the design of new development properties and limited front lawn space for snow storage is a challenge. Of the 65 per cent that indicated that they work on properties where there is lack of space to store snow on-site, only 69 per cent of those indicated that snow removal is included in these contracts; 60 per cent have refused contracts due to limited space. The most common equipment being used to clear snow from private property are tractors with blowers, pickup trucks with plows, and backhoes or front-end loaders with buckets and blades. Only 15 per cent supported prohibiting the use of buckets and blades in places with limited space for storage. Eighty-five per cent agreed that snow plow contractors should be required to receive written permission if they are storing snow on neighboring properties that are non-clients.

Driveway Markers

Forty per cent of respondents agreed that metal driveway markers should be permanently allowed in Ottawa, 30 per cent did not know, and 30 per cent did not support them. The main reasons highlighted to not allow metal driveway markers was due to equipment damage if they were placed too close to the edge of driveway and potential safety hazards to pedestrians. Other comments related to driveway markers were to allow the installation date to be earlier than October 20th given earlier snow falls and increased enforcement for set back limits not being followed.

Consumer Protection

Seventy per cent support or did not have an opinion on requiring snow plow contractors to provide clients with a copy of the regulations. Eighty-five percent indicated there would be no impact to an increase of insurance coverage. In addition, 60 per cent would like the City to prepare educational material on regulations to share with snow plow operators and customers.

Next Steps

Staff are preparing the Snow Plow Contractor Licensing report for the Emergency Preparedness and Protective Services Committee meeting on September 19, 2024. Subscribe to the [Snow Plow Contractor Licensing Review Engage Ottawa](#) page for future updates.