

### REPORT FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

Re: Post Season Report on Winter Maintenance 2023

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Staff be directed to review Municipal policies and by-laws relating to winter maintenance issues in advance of the 2023 Winter season to ensure mutual congruency as well as compliance with Ontario Minimum Maintenance Standards;

And that staff be directed to investigate opportunities for operations improvements relating to winter maintenance services previously contracted to third parties and to offer the Public Services Standing Committee recommendations for consideration in advance of the 2024 budget process;

And that Staff be directed to investigate technology solutions relating to winter maintenance to improve operations and communication with residents, and to offer the Public Services Standing Committee recommendations for consideration in advance of the 2024 budget process.

#### BACKGROUND

During the course of the 2023 winter season, staff was able to identify several issues relating to winter road maintenance based on constituent feedback.

This report seeks to detail several opportunities for improvement to ongoing operations for consideration.

#### ANALYSIS

Staff has identified potential improvements to the following areas of operations:

##### *Administration*

The City of Elliot Lake website hosts a page that details winter maintenance activities in plain language for residents to better understand the City's responsibilities and service levels.

Staff has reviewed this page and believes that while it does a very good job of describing the City's snow, removal activities and processes, there are some inconsistencies between this page and the

City's winter operations policy with respect to the times given for snow removal to complete after the weather event.

Furthermore, staff believes that the winter operations policy given on the website should be reviewed to ensure that it is fully congruent with the service levels outlined in Ontario's required Minimum Maintenance Standards.

Staff has also identified an opportunity to change communications procedures with the public that are outlined in O. Reg. 239/02 relating to significant weather events that are not detailed in the winter operations policy. Specifically, According to the Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways listed in the document known as O. Reg. 239/02, Staff has the ability to notify the public of significant weather events where do snow removal and maintenance efforts may be compromised in order to go to the public and to manage expectations.

Staff posted public notices to this effect twice during the 2023 season, but recognizes an opportunity to better incorporate these procedures into operations.

#### *Finger Roads*

Prior to the 2023 winter season the City contracted out winter maintenance of the finger roads located on Dunlop Shores Road to local vendors, but brought these services in house this year due to reporting and insurance requirements that were not able to be met by outside providers.

This is proving to be a challenge for the City (as it was for the vendors) primarily due to the confined nature of the road design in these areas. Given the topography of these areas, it is impractical to think that road improvements would be a solution to this problem, so staff is investigating options relating to different equipment and processes to better service these areas.

It is likely that these solutions will involve the requirement for additional personnel to service these areas, and staff is investigating how this requirement will impact the operational labour requirements throughout the year, and determining options for off-season work for this additional personnel.

Since January 2023 staff has been engaged with vendors that provide GPS real time tracking of winter maintenance vehicles, as well as fleet in general. Specifically, staff is interested in solutions that integrate with snow removal accessories installed on the winter, maintenance fleet (plows, spreader controllers) to allow for pre-programming of spread rates for salt and sand, as well as monitoring and time/data logging of maintenance activities for insurance purposes.

These type of systems allow for the real time monitoring of winter maintenance activities by roads managers. Moreover, it would allow for detailed post weather event reporting that staff could make it available to the public to detail service performance.

It is likely that this sort of system would pay for itself in salt and sand savings, but the feasibility and technical details of implementation of various vendors and products are still being evaluated by Staff.



## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Staff anticipates that changes to operations as identified above will impact the ongoing operational budget in various ways, and suggest that options and solutions relating to the above be identified and evaluated prior to the upcoming 2024 budget process.

## **LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This project directly relates to the following key section of the strategic plan:

- Continued investment into infrastructure
- Strong municipal corporate administration and governance

## **SUMMARY**

Staff has reviewed the performance of winter road maintenance for the 2023 season, and recommends that several targeted improvements to operations be investigated with respect to feasibility and cost in advance of the 2024 budget process.

