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Submitted on: January 19, 2001  
Report: PW-01-006

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Report To: Public Works Advisory Committee  
Subject: SIDEWALK SNOW CLEARING

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## ORIGIN

One of the issues brought forward at the Strategic Planning session held on Friday, January 5, 2001 was that of snow clearing of sidewalks. This report reviews the experience to date since a new policy was implemented in the winter of 1999/2000 and recommends alternative options for consideration.

## BACKGROUND

The current By-law No. 115-71 which was enacted in 1971, places the responsibility for the clearing and removal of snow and ice from municipal sidewalks upon the abutting property owner (whether or not the building is occupied or vacant). Failure to do so within 12 hours of the snow having fallen or being formed, the Town may carry out the work at the direction of the Clerk and recover the costs incurred from the abutting property owners.

Policy No. PDS-BLE-003 was approved in 1994 to give staff more specific direction in implementing the by-law. It directed that snow and ice be removed from public sidewalks as soon as practicable after it has fallen or formed in order to afford reasonable passage to persons wishing to use the sidewalk. It further prescribed that where passage is restricted and a complaint is received, all snow and ice will be removed at the direction of staff and all costs incurred will be invoiced to the appropriate property owner in accordance with municipal regulation. A corresponding procedure set out the direction for enforcement staff to follow.

Council amended Policy No. PDS-BLE-003 on October 25, 1999 in accordance with Public Works Report PW-99-68. The change was intended to ensure that key sections of sidewalk (along arterial roads or within 150 metres of a school, hospital or seniors complex) are maintained to the standards set out in By-law No. 115-71. The Public Works Department was now involved in reviewing and updating the priorities for sidewalk snow clearing; patrolling the priority sidewalks after a storm event; arranging for contractors to carry out the work, if necessary; and ensuring that noncompliant properties are billed

for the service.

Council further amended the Policy on October 23, 2000 in accordance with Public Works Report PW-00-77. The revision provided for the Department to make observations within 12 to 16 hours following a storm event (previously 8 to 12 hours), provided that there is an accumulation of at least 75 mm (3 inches) of snow, (previously 50 mm [2 inches])

## DISCUSSION

The October report to the Public Works Advisory Committee provides a summary of activity and experience during the first season (see copy attached).

Due to the late billing in the Fall of 2000 for three storm events which took place in early 2000, Council directed that staff retract these invoices. Letters were sent from the Chief Administrative Officer in early December 2000.

A notice was again posted this year reminding residents of their obligations in respect of the by-law and the Town's proactive approach. To date this winter season there have been three storm events which required follow up, and the respective invoices have subsequently been issued or are in the process of being issued.

The process has become quite involved. Consequently the cost, which is being passed on to the abutting property owner, is significant. The unit cost averages approximately \$0.50 per foot of frontage per event.

As a result, there have been numerous calls from irate property owners who have expressed their view that they are being unfairly burdened. Various circumstances have been cited for this: absentee landlord; vacant properties; elderly or frail residents; contractor was late; Regional plows had pushed snow back onto the sidewalk. It is reminded that these issues gained prominence upon moving from a reactive to a proactive policy on sidewalk snow clearing.

## ANALYSIS

Several options are available should Council wish to reconsider the current by-law and policy. These have financial and service implications which are outlined below.

### SIDEWALK SNOW CLEARING OPTIONS:

#### A/EXISTING

##### Service Description

Town monitors all priority 1 and 2 municipal sidewalks (14.1 km), and employs contractor as necessary. Adjacent property owner is responsible per By-law 115-71 for clearing all municipal sidewalks (36.8 km).

[Note: The cost of \$0.50 per foot of frontage is charged to the abutting property owner. The Town assumes minimal cost to clear unclaimed sections of sidewalk]

#### B/TOWN ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRIORITY SIDEWALKS ONLY

##### Service Description

Town assumes responsibility for clearing all priority 1 and 2 municipal sidewalks save and except those

in front of Queen/Picton businesses (13.1 km). Adjacent property owner is responsible in all other areas per the by-law.

#### C/TOWN ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL SIDEWALKS

##### Service Description

Town assumes responsibility for clearing all municipal sidewalks save and except those in front of Queen/Picton businesses (35.7 km),

Since the cost of purchasing the proper equipment is estimated at \$100,000, should Council agree with either Option B or C, it is recommended that the Town employ a contractor(s) to carry out the snow clearing operation. Staff have obtained a quotation from the current service provider. Based on a 3 month season and assuming 4 events per month, the cost estimate for Option B is \$22,100 and for Option C is \$58,900, taxes included. These estimates are based on monthly leasing cost for a trackless sidewalk snow plow of \$4,800, an hourly rate of \$38.00 for operator and fuel; and assuming that the time for completion remains 12 hours following a storm event.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The unit cost per Option B is \$0.46 per foot of sidewalk cleared (for the season) and would go up or down depending on snow storm activity.

The benefits would be to all road users, drivers and pedestrians alike. As such it would be appropriate that this expenditure be supported by the general tax levy.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Selecting either Options B or C will require revisiting both the by-law and policies that are currently in place. While the cost to taxpayers would increase, the level of service provided may justify the expenditure. There would be less effort required in administering the operation. Moreover, problem areas would be handled, when required, with fewer resident complaints.

#### RECOMMENDATION

That PW-01-006 be referred to the 2001 budget meeting for further consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

E.J. Kuczera, M.Sc. P.Eng.  
Director of Public Works

Lew Holloway  
Chief Administrative Officer

## ATTACHMENTS

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**COTW Amendments  
for PW-01-006 - SIDEWALK SNOW CLEARING**

**Enter your Amendment(s) here:**

the recommendation contained in the report -- that PW-01-006 be referred to the 2001 budget meeting for further consideration was

**lost.**

a motion was put forward that the Public Works Department be directed to implement Option "B/Town Assumes Responsibility for Priority Sidewalks Only" of Report PW-01-006 for the balance of the 2000/2001 winter season with funding from contingency reserves; and that maps showing priorities 1 and 2 sidewalks and the financial implications be provided for the January 29th, 2001 meeting of Council.