

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, September 20, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: SNOW CLEARING BY-LAW REVIEW

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: DECISION

Purpose

In advance of the 2022 winter season, staff have reviewed Snow and Ice By-law 300-93, as amended, and are now seeking to provide greater clarity with respect to property owner responsibilities to clear snow, to establish administrative monetary penalties as an additional enforcement tool, and to enable the City to clear the snow promptly in instances where it is not done by the property owner.

Report Highlights

- This report seeks to update the Snow and Ice By-law, enabling the City to issue administrative monetary penalties if snow is not cleared, as well as to promptly clear the snow if there is no voluntary compliance, and recoup costs.
- The recommendations are intended to help ensure the City's sidewalks are clear of safety hazards and safe to use.

Recommendations

1. That the recommendations contained in Attachment 1 to this report be approved; and
2. That a By-law be enacted giving effect to these recommendations, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Background

Prompt and effective snow clearing is integral to enabling safe, walkable winter streets and efficient traffic flow in our city, and requires the collaborative actions of public servants, property owners and others involved in snow clearing activities. In line with the Council-approved *By-law Strategy*, staff have reviewed the Snow and Ice By-law, 300-93, as amended, for opportunities to encourage and enable prompt snow clearing, and thus safer streets for both pedestrians and motorists.

Snow clearing programs in Vaughan

In addition to plowing Vaughan roads, the City provides the highly valued service of windrow clearing, in which the City clears the bottom portion of driveways for all driveways which connect to Vaughan roads. In addition, for seniors and/or persons with disabilities that make snow clearing challenging, the City also offers the Community And Home Assistance For Seniors (CHATS) Program, which enable qualified residents to have someone clear snow and ice clearing and salting on their driveway and walkways.

Complaints

Between 2016 and 2021, our records show 145 complaints related to snow, so about 29 per year. Of those complaints, approximately:

- 39% are related to snow not being cleared from sidewalks, based on which updates to snow and ice removals provisions are being proposed;
- 41% related to snowplow activities, such as snow being placed on the road, clearing times, damages caused and advertising;
- 19% are related to cars on the road, blocking snow clearing.

With respect to snowplow activities, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services (BCLPS) staff are exploring licensing of snowplow operators to address these concerns. BCLPS staff are also collaborating with other departments to address cars which are impeding snowplow clearing.

Timeframe for snow clearing

The Snow and Ice By-law was enacted in 1993, requiring property owners to clear their sidewalks within 24 hours, with the option for staff to issue a penalty or clear the sidewalk at the owner's expense. A review of municipalities across Ontario, such as Richmond Hill, Markham, Toronto and Ottawa found that these by-laws require that every property owner maintain the sidewalk adjacent to his or her property clear of snow and ice, with no timeframe for removal. Staff believe this change would provide Enforcement Services officers with greater ability to provide a balanced approach to achieve compliance.

Tools to address prompt snow clearing

If snow is not cleared, at present, the by-law allows the homeowner to be charged with a provincial penalty, which if challenged, can take some time to address. The Municipal Act, which gives the authority to create by-laws, states that initial provincial fines may range from \$500 to not more than \$100,000. Staff suggest enabling the municipally managed administrative monetary penalty (AMPS) of \$100, which enables a lower, non-punitive fines to be charged and if challenged, addressed in a prompt manner by the City.

In reviewing other snow clearing by-laws across Canada, staff found a range of penalties for non-compliance with snow clearing, as listed here:

CITY	PENALTY FOR NOT CLEARING SNOW
BRAMPTON	\$75 to \$2000
EDMONTON	\$100 to \$10,000
KING CITY	\$100 to \$100,000
MARKHAM	Up to \$50,000 for a first offence, in line with the <i>Building Code Act</i>
MISSISSAUGA	There is a by-law to regulate snow removal for multi-residential buildings, but not detached homes. Up to \$50,000 for a first offence, in line with the <i>Building Code Act</i> .
NIAGARA FALLS	Up to \$1000 for a first offence, in line with the <i>Provincial Offences Act</i>
OSHAWA	\$75 to \$275 under AMPS, \$300 to \$25,000 under provincial regulations
OTTAWA	\$500 to \$10,000
PICKERING	\$1,000 to \$5,000 under provincial regulations
RICHMOND HILL	Up to \$1000 for a first offence, in line with the <i>Provincial Offences Act</i>

The proposed by-law also gives timelines upon which the City can, if snow is not removed, remove the snow and recuperate expenses from the property owner.

Environmentally conscious solutions

The current by-law requires that the homeowner “cover any slippery area with sand or salt”, however, a number of environmentally conscious alternatives have become prevalent, such as sugar beet juice, vinegar, and other products. As such, staff are suggesting adding these other “deicing substance of the equivalent or greater efficacy” as an option.

Previous Reports/Authority

[City of Vaughan By-law Strategy](#). Item 3, Report No. 3, of the Priorities and Key Initiatives Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 24, 2014.

[Winter Control Costs – Roads, Sidewalks and Parking Lots](#). Item 5, Report No. 8, of the Finance, Administration and Audit Committee, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on June 24, 2014.

Analysis and Options

Staff have included a list of suggestions and their reasons below:

NO	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTION	IMPACT
1	The Snow and Ice By-law has a main and amending by-law, by-laws 300-93 and 56-96.	To bring forward an updated, consolidated by-law.	To provide an easier-to-review by-law for the Vaughan residents.
2	The by-law allows property owners to have 24 hours to clear snow. This timeframe has been problematic in some instances. Several Ontario municipalities do not allow 24 hours, and instead, explain that the	To delete the provision that requires the removal of snow and ice within 24 hours and create a provision to advise that, “Every Owner shall maintain the sidewalk adjacent to his or her property clear of snow and ice.”	Staff believe this change would provide Enforcement Services officers with greater ability to provide a balanced approach to achieve compliance.

NO	CURRENT STATE	SUGGESTION	IMPACT
	property owner is responsible for clearing the snow and ice.		
3	The current by-law requires any slippery areas to be covered with sand or salt, however additional deicing substances have become available since the enactment of the by-law in 1993.	To allow slippery areas to also be covered with “other deicing substance of the equivalent or greater efficacy”.	To allow for other effective products to be used for deicing.
4	The by-law allows for provincial fines (in line with the Municipal Act, may range from \$500 to not more than \$100,000), but not Administrative Monetary Penalties (AMPS). AMPS penalties are lower than provincial fines, non-punitive and an additional tool to encourage compliance.	To allow the Snow Clearing By-law to allow Administrative Monetary Penalties and a penalty of \$100 for non-compliance with the by-law, which would still allow higher Provincial fines to be charged, such as for repeat offenders.	To provide an additional, less punitive penalty, that Enforcement Services can use to encourage compliance.

Financial Impact

The frequency and severity of snow fall is a key factor in anticipating the impact of the proposed, strengthened regulation. While BCLPS does not anticipate any significant financial impacts, staff will monitor the impacts of the updated by-law, if approved, and report back to Council should significant impacts be observed, and if additional resources are proposed to address them.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

There are no Regional implications as a result of the proposed amendments.

Conclusion

A key goal of the City’s *By-law Strategy* is to ensure that by-laws are relevant, effective

and reflective of the community's current needs. The proposed amendments will support increased compliance to maintaining safe, walkable winter streets in the city, contributing to the Term of Council strategic priority of Active, Safe and Diverse Communities.

This report was developed in consultation with staff from By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, Public Works, and Legal Services.

For more information, please contact: Susan Kelly, Director and Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services, ext. 8952.

Attachment

1. Recommendations.

Prepared by

Carol Ramchuram, Regulatory Policy Analyst, ext. 8783

Approved by

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gus Michaels'.

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager,
Community Services

Reviewed by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Spensieri'.

Nick Spensieri, City Manager