



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To:	Council
From:	Doug Sampano, Commissioner, Community Services
Date:	June 23, 2025
Report No:	COMS-008-25
Subject:	Winter Operations Review
Recommendation:	<p>THAT COMS-008-25 Winter Operations review, be received for information</p> <p>AND THAT staff be directed to bring forward any necessary by-law amendments to parking regulations for Council consideration.</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Notice of Motion 040-2025 was approved by Council at the March 17, 2025, meeting that directed staff to a post-mortem review on winter operations and snow buddy program and report back to Milton Council by the end of Q2 2025.

- To include a discussion about what worked and what did not,
- What Milton Council and Town staff should be considering in the 2026 Operating Budget regarding additional snow removal measures.
- A volunteer program be considered as an additional Winter Control measure, which connects residents in need of snow removal on residential property with available volunteers in a timely fashion, a program that would be coordinated by the Town of Milton, unless another agency may be deemed more suitable for this purpose.

REPORT

Background

Each winter season, the Town undertakes an extensive winter control program to maintain safe and accessible transportation routes for residents, businesses, and visitors. Spanning over 2,400 kilometres of regional and local roads, along with more than 250 kilometres of sidewalks and walkways, this effort is guided by a priority-based system aligned with Ontario's Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS). This ensures that winter operations follow a logical and efficient sequence to achieve full storm clean-up.

Background

In addition to roads and sidewalks, the Town's winter maintenance responsibilities include municipal parking lots, bus stops, and targeted snow removal at key locations. This essential work is carried out through a coordinated blend of internal staff and contracted service providers.

From November 15 to April 15, winter operations shift into high gear. Throughout this period, Town staff maintain a 24/7 presence—monitoring conditions, mobilizing responses, and ensuring timely clean-up after each event to keep the community moving safely.

Discussion

The Town experienced 69 winter events over the 2024/2025 (November 15-April 15) season where Operations units were dispatched to perform a variety of winter maintenance, i.e. sanding, salting, plowing or a combination thereof. Of these 69 events, winter maintenance on residential routes was required 27 times. These roads were serviced within the provincial timelines set by the Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS). Additionally, winter maintenance on primary and secondary roads also met or exceeded provincial MMS. Sidewalks were dispatched 50 times throughout the season, again, meeting standards.

During significant weather events, various areas of Milton experienced issues with on-street parking, particularly due to parked vehicles impacting the ability of plows to thoroughly clear roads. In some cases, vehicles parked on the street prevented plows from accessing certain streets and/or causing significant delays.

Currently, on-street parking exemptions can be suspended for overnight parking (2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.) but there are no daytime restrictions other than no on-street parking for more than 5 hours. The Town's existing parking regulations require the officer to identify a windrow around the vehicle before an infraction notice is issued. This process requires the plow operator to drive around a parked vehicle, potentially having to return once the vehicle is removed from the roadway.

In mid-February 2025, Milton was faced with a multi-storm event over 8 days. Over 78cm of snow fell in a very short time span coupled with high winds, creating challenging conditions. On February 12th, a Significant Weather Event was declared allowing for extended MMS timelines and allowing crews to work up to sixteen (16) hours before mandatory rest periods.

Challenges impacting the operation during these snow events included parked cars, which slowed route completion requiring multiple return trips to a significant number of streets. Volume of snow and limited snow storage capacity also impacted maintenance activities; however, all roads were completed to a safe and passable condition.

Discussion

Sidewalk clearing experienced challenges as plowing methods struggled with snow volume, to address this issue two additional snow blowers were acquired to deal with the conditions. Although blowers are effective removing the volume of snow, they operate at a much slower pace than plows.

On February 19th, the operation transitioned into a snow removal operation requiring coordination with various stakeholders and user groups. Within 10 calendar days over 1000 truck loads of snow removed from various locations including the DBIA, facilities and other town-owned locations.

Overall, winter operations met or, in some cases, exceeded the provincial minimum maintenance standards (MMS) and Town's level of service (LOS) in all areas during the 2024/2025 season. The Town's winter control program demonstrated it's effective and additional investment is not required at this time to achieve current levels of service.

Volunteer Snow Removal Program

Staff conducted a comparison review of snow removal assistance programs at 14 neighbouring municipalities ranging from small to large populations. From the 14 sampled neighbouring municipalities, it was found that:

- Nine (9) do not offer volunteer snow clearing assistance programs.
- Those with a population of up to 50,000 are directly managing volunteer snow clearing assistance programs but do not offer staff/contractor supported windrow programs.
- Those with a population of 50,000 to 140,000 are partnering with third party organizations when offering volunteer snow clearing assistance programs; most also offer staff/contractor supported windrow programs including subsidy for qualifying residents.

Those with a population of more than 140,000 are not offering volunteer snow clearing assistance programs but most offer staff/contractor supported windrow programs including subsidy for qualifying residents. It also highlighted the following challenges related to acquiring consistent and reliable support.

- the lack of volunteers.
- the loss of volunteers from injuries, conflicts, commitments, difficult conditions.
- difficulty finding and maintaining matches based on geography.
- clients requiring more service mid-season, often neighbours assist at the start of the season but tire as the winter goes on.

Discussion

Staff review also found that several Ontario municipalities provide a link to the [Snow Angels Canada website](#). This is a national non-profit organization that has existed since 2015. Those interested in helping or being helped can sign-up on the website and determine a match amongst themselves.

Risk Management was consulted during this review, and advised that a Town-managed volunteer snow clearing assistance program would be outside the scope of the Town's existing insurance coverage.

Concerns also exist with respect to the potential for injury (to volunteers and/or program participants), and the potential for property damage (e.g. cars, sidewalks, driveways, decorative brick/concrete treatments etc.) that could occur.

Recommendations:

- Staff are proposing amendments to the Town's Uniform Traffic By-law 1984-1 parking regulations to prohibit parking on any Town street at any time (day or night) when the Town has declared a Significant Weather Event.

The new offence would be defined within the by-law as:

Winter Prohibition - No person shall park or stop a motor vehicle on any roadway when a significant weather event is declared.

To align with comparator municipalities who have similar regulations in place and have penalties in the range of \$50.00 to \$100.000, staff recommend a proposed fine amount for parking on-street during a weather event of \$100.00. The higher amount will hopefully serve as a deterrent and assist with compliance.

Enforcement of this new regulation will be conducted with existing enforcement staff on a proactive and reactive basis, working to address on-street parking issues identified by the Operations team during snow clearing.

Other minor amendments to the parking regulations may be required in order to support effective on-street parking enforcement during Significant Weather Events.

Enforcement staff have received inquiries relating to towing vehicles in a Significant Winter Event to support snow clearing operations. Towing will only occur to the degree that is deemed necessary and in consultation with senior enforcement staff to allow the snow clearing equipment access to a street to perform required duties. Vehicle owners are responsible for all fees associated with towing in addition to the fine amount.



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Discussion

- Pending further review of the Snow Angels Canada and applicable Town of Milton standards, it is recommended that a link to this organization be listed on www.milton.ca.
- Clear and timely information can help manage expectations and foster greater understanding of operational timelines. There is an opportunity to strengthen public awareness through more focused messaging. In addition to live call handling, enhancements to the automated phone messaging system are recommended to provide timely and detailed updates during winter events. Future communications will go beyond general storm information to include clear explanations of road clearing priorities based on road classification. This will help residents better understand the sequencing of operations, while also outlining their responsibilities—such as clearing sidewalks and windrows.
- During significant weather events, additional quality assurance measures will be introduced through the redeployment of existing staff. These efforts will ensure that maintenance activities are carried out thoroughly and in alignment with established performance standards.

Financial Impact

Full detail pertaining to the Town's winter operations to date in 2025 will be presented as part of the Town's consolidated variance reporting for the period ending May 31, 2025. The financial implications of the recommendations contained within this report are minimal, and will be reflected in the Town's budgeting and reporting once implemented.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Sampano
Commissioner, Community Services

For questions, please contact: Doug Sampano

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Attachments

n/a

CAO Approval
Andrew M. Siltala



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Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.