



Report to Council

Department: Infrastructure Services
Division: Operations
Date: October 20, 2025
Prepared by: Norman Nussio, Manager of Operations and Drainage
Report Number: Operations-2025-11
Subject: Winter Control on Sidewalks in the Downtown Cores
Number of Pages: 9

Recommendation(s)

That Operations-2025-11 entitled “Winter Control on Sidewalks in the Downtown Cores” prepared Norman Nussio, Manager of Operations and Drainage dated October 20, 2025, be received.

Purpose

This report has been prepared to provide council with information and background on the Town’s level of service, annual cost, projected impact to increased level of service and minimum maintenance standards with respect winter control on sidewalks and pathways.

As per council’s notice of motion at the January 18, 2025, regular council meeting.

R25-02-075

That Council direct Administration to prepare a report on:

1. The current winter control service level for downtown core areas including:

- A detailed breakdown of existing service standards
 - Cost estimates and budget impacts associated with increasing the service level.
 - The projected effect of these changes on the annual Public Works operating budget and tax base.
2. An overview of the winter control By-law specifically:
- Current responsibilities of businesses in relation to snow removal in front of their properties.
 - Any potential gaps or challenges associated with the enforcement of these responsibilities.

Moved By Mayor Bondy
Seconded By Councillor Allard

Background and Discussion

Currently the Town of Essex utilizes the *Minimum Maintenance Standard for Municipal Highways* (O.Reg 239/02) under the *Municipal Act* to establish a baseline for maintaining sidewalks and pathways, however, in most cases the Town exceeds the minimum requirements. The *Municipal Act* states that sidewalks must be maintained at a minimum as defined below:

Snow Accumulation

Section 16.3

*(1) Subject to section 16.4 (**Significant Weather Event**), the standard for addressing snow accumulation on a sidewalk after the snow accumulation has ended is,*

- a) To reduce the snow to a depth less than or equal to 8 centimetres within 48 hours; and*
- b) to provide a minimum sidewalk width of 1 metre. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.*

(2) If the depth of snow accumulation on a sidewalk is less than or equal to 8 centimetres, the sidewalk is deemed to be in a state of repair in respect of snow accumulation. O. Reg. 366/18,

(3) If the depth of snow accumulation on a sidewalk exceeds 8 centimetres while the snow continues to accumulate, the sidewalk is deemed to be in a state of repair with respect to snow accumulation, until 48 hours after the snow accumulation ends. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

(4) For the purposes of this section, the depth of snow accumulation on a sidewalk may be determined in the same manner as set out in subsection 4 (4) and by the persons mentioned in subsection 4 (3) with necessary modifications. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

(5) For the purposes of this section, addressing snow accumulation on a sidewalk includes,

- (a) plowing the sidewalk;
- (b) salting the sidewalk;
- (c) applying abrasive materials to the sidewalk;
- (d) applying other chemical or organic agents to the sidewalk; or
- (e) any combination of the methods described in clauses (a) to (d). O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

Ice formation on Sidewalks

Section 16.5

(1) Subject to section 16.6 (**Significant Weather Event**), the standard for the prevention of ice formation on sidewalks is to,

- (a) monitor the weather in accordance with section 3.1 in the 24-hour period preceding an alleged formation of ice on a sidewalk; and
- (b) treat the sidewalk if practicable to prevent ice formation or improve traction within 48 hours if the municipality determines that there is a substantial probability of ice forming on a sidewalk, starting from the time that the municipality determines is the appropriate time to deploy resources for that purpose. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

(2) If ice forms on a sidewalk even though the municipality meets the standard set out in subsection (1), the sidewalk is deemed to be in a state of repair in respect of ice until 48 hours after the municipality first becomes aware of the fact that the sidewalk is icy. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

(3) The standard for treating icy sidewalks after the municipality becomes aware of the fact that a sidewalk is icy is to treat the icy sidewalk within 48 hours, and an icy sidewalk is deemed to be in a state of repair for 48 hours after it has been treated. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

(4) For the purposes of this section, treating a sidewalk means applying materials including salt, sand or any combination of salt and sand to the sidewalk. O. Reg. 366/18, s. 15.

Significant Weather Event

Under the *Municipal Act*, significant weather is defined as an approaching or occurring weather hazard with the potential to pose a significant danger to users of the highways within a municipality. A municipality declaring the beginning of a significant weather event or declaring the end of a significant weather event under this Regulation shall do so in a manner specified by the Act. The declaration of a Significant Weather Event suspends the Minimum Maintenance Requirements timelines and deems the roads in a 'state of repair' until a specified timeline as dictated by the Act.

Current Level of Service

Currently the Town maintains sidewalks and trails in three centres being Essex, Harrow, and Colchester. The areas being maintained under this contract are defined below (maps attached):

- Core business areas in all 3 centres
- Established and assumed trails by the Town adjacent to the roadways and part of CWATS trail systems
- Sidewalks and pathways adjacent to Town owned lands such as parks, facilities, and storm water ponds etc.

In accordance with the Minimum Maintenance Standards listed above administration procures a contractor to maintain sidewalks and pathways and maintain a one-meter pathway in the

above noted areas. The contractor must also reduce the snow depth in these areas to less than or equal to eight centimeters within 48 hours, by means of:

- plowing the sidewalk.
- salting the sidewalk.
- applying abrasive materials to the sidewalk.
- applying other chemical or organic agents to the sidewalk.

Resident & Business Owner Responsibilities

By-Law #1108 “The Removal of Snow and Ice from Sidewalks” states that (By-law attached):

- Every commercial property owner shall remove snow and ice from the sidewalk abutting the highways immediately adjacent to their properties within 4 hours of receiving the snow accumulation during daylight hours.
- Every owner of residential, institutional and industrial property shall remove the accumulation of snow and ice within 12 hours following a snow fall during daylight hours.
- Every owner shall remove accumulations of snow and ice from roofs of buildings on their property if the roof slopes directly onto a sidewalk/highway within 12 hours.

Increasing Level of Service and Projected Costs

Winter control budgets change year by year, administration uses past years to develop an estimated dollar value for contractors and materials that the town expects to incur during the winter months. The table below provide values on what the town spent in 2023 and 2024 for winter control services on sidewalks and pathways and the cost to date for 2025 not including November and December of this year.

Annual Cost for Contracted Services

Year	Callouts	Estimated Cost
2023	49	\$67,919.00
2024	45	\$66,107.00
2025 to date	76	\$105,773.00

As you can see each year can be very different in terms of cost, which is due to more frequent and/or intense winter events.

Downtown Clean-up

In previous years the Town has conducted what is called “Downtown Clean-up” in the event of significant weather or back-to-back storms leaving large accumulations of snow in the boulevards creating a safety issue for pedestrian to park or navigate trails and sidewalks. This work is typically performed during the nighttime hours in the core business centres of Harrow and Essex, which includes physically removing the snow from the downtown areas and relocating to designated dump sites. The cost of this operation can be significant but will depend on the amount of snow needing to be removed, and the extent of the clean-up. The typical cost for a downtown cleanup can vary from \$30,000.00 to \$60,000.00 per clean-up. This task is at the discretion of administration, considering operational factors including continued significant weather, forecasted temperatures, forecasted snow or ice, available resources, etc.

Additional Level of Service Options

There are some potential options to increase the level of service in the core business areas which would impact the overall operating budget. Considering that the current level of service is already to clear the sidewalk (minimum of 1.2 meters wide), options to consider are as follows:

1. Clear the sidewalk from the front of buildings (storefronts) to edge of sidewalk and clear various paths from the sidewalk to the parking spaces.
2. Clear the sidewalk from the front of the buildings (storefronts) to the edge of sidewalk and not clear any walking paths to the parking spaces.

These options could range from approximately \$4,500 to \$6,500 per snowfall or per call out for each centre. The amount of snow received in one event will drastically change the cost of performing this work meaning if we receive 2 inches of snow versus 8 inches of snow the scope of the work is very different, and most contractors would build some risk into these numbers.

Estimated additional cost for services based on previous years' expenditures

Year	Callouts		Estimated Cost Including Additional services based on previous call outs	New Total
2023	49	\$67,919.00	\$637,000.00	\$704,919.00
2024	45	\$66,107.00	\$585,000.00	\$651,107.00
2025	76	\$105,773.00	\$990,000.00	\$1,095,773.00

Impacts to Tax Rate

Approximately \$200,000.00 is equal to a 1% tax increase, using the number above on average if we supplied additional services based on the information provided for 2023, 2024 and 2025 the average annual tax increase would have been 2.3% to 4.95%. However, the high end of tax rate impact is based on 2025 which has not yet been closed out.

Financial Impact

This report has been prepared for informational purposes only; therefore, there are no financial impacts associated with receiving it. Should Council wish to explore service level adjustments, further discussion and direction could be incorporated into the upcoming budget deliberations.

Consultations

Kevin Girard, Director, Infrastructure Services

Joe Malandrucolo, Director, Legal & Legislative Services

Kate Rowe, Director, Corporate Services

Link to Strategic Priorities

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex "home".
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Snow On Sidewalks - Operations-2025-11.docx
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- By-Law No. 1108 - Sidewalk snow and ice removal.pdf- Ward1_Sidewalk_Snow_Removal_Essex_2023.pdf- Harrow_Sidewalk_Snow_Removal_2018.pdf- Colchester_Sidewalk_Snow_Removal.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 14, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Kevin Girard, Director, Infrastructure Services - Oct 14, 2025 - 11:15 AM

No Signature - Task assigned to Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer was completed by delegate Joseph Malandrucolo, Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk

Kate Giurissevich, Chief Administrative Officer - Oct 14, 2025 - 11:44 AM