Major Snow Event Response Plan

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

Date: May 6, 2024

Vince Sferrazza, Director
Operations and Maintenance
Transportation Services

Jennifer Niece, Manager
Strategic Policy and Initiatives
Transportation Services

TORONTO

DECISION HISTORY

- Infrastructure and Environment Committee, at the March 27, 2024 meeting received the report for information: https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.IE12.7
- City Council on March 29th 2022: https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.IE28.11
- The Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee on February 22, 2022: https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.DI19.3
  - recognize and quickly respond to Urgent Service Requests made by people living with disabilities or seniors, even during "black-out" periods;
  - create a proactive accessibility service standard by incorporating an intersectional gender equity lens similar to Sweden's "Gender Equal Plowing Strategy";
  - prohibit City snowplows from storing snow and ice on sidewalks and bike lanes that create additional accessibility barriers;
  - develop a public education campaign to inform property owners, business operators, residents, landlords and tenants about the City's winter maintenance strategy and to clarify the division of responsibility for snow and ice clearing and removal; and
  - report through the 2023 Budget process on the funding required to ensure that the City can meet its revised levels of service including for winter storms with over 35 cm and over 50 cm of snow.

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

1. Major Winter Event Background
2. Past Engagement and Key Definitions
3. Response Plan updates since January 2022
4. Current work to improve further
5. Next Steps

MAJOR WINTER EVENT BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND MAJOR WINTER EVENT

- January 2022 Major Snow Event brought **55 cm of snow in 48 hours**.
- City Staff and Contractors took **30 days** to remove approximately **179,000 tonnes of snow**
- Council requested a Major Snowstorm Response Plan

TORONTO

PAST ENGAGEMENT AND KEY DEFINITIONS

PAST ENGAGEMENT: SURVEY BENCHMARKING

- Jan 2023: **Representative survey of Torontonians** with disabilities regarding navigating the City's sidewalks and streets
- **Seasonal maintenance ranked second among six categories** that most negatively impacted the ability to move around the city in the 12 months prior to the survey.
- Greatest concerns were **icy sidewalks** and **poorly cleared snow**

KEY DEFINITIONS:
Snow Clearing vs Snow Removal

- **Snow Clearing** is use of salt, salt-brine, and/or plowing so that snow is melted or pushed to the side

- **Snow Removal** is collecting snow and relocating to an off-street storage facility

TORONTO

KEY DEFINITIONS:
Managed vs Major Snow Removal

- **Managed Snow Removal** is localized removal of snow where storage constraints create access barriers or sightline issues, even after minor storms.
- **Major Snow Removal** is city-wide removal of snow when snow accumulation exceeds snow storage capacity

Snow removal operations on Richmond Street East
January 20, 2022

KEY DEFINITIONS:
Municipal and Provincial Laws

Municipal: Major Snowstorm Condition

- City can declare a '**major snowstorm condition**' when 5cm has accumulated and substantially more snow is expected (Chapter 950)
- When major snow accumulates, City moves to Major Snow Removal Operations.

Provincial: Significant Weather Event

- City can declare a '**Significant Weather Event**' when an approaching or occurring weather hazard has potential to pose significant danger to road users
- This declaration results in suspension of the provincial minimum maintenance standards (and by extension suspension of the City's own Levels of Service for snow clearing)

TORONTO

RESPONSE PLAN UPDATES SINCE JANUARY 2022

RECENT UPDATES TO MAJOR SNOW EVENT RESPONSE

New procedures introduced following 2022 storm:

- Earlier and more frequent public communications prior to storms
- New 311 protocols to assist residents with emergency needs
- Updating the PlowTO website to provide timely information snow clearing activities

Formal update of Major Snow Event Response Plan began in 2023 and has involved:

- Internal and third-party review of existing practices
- Jurisdictional review of best practices
- Reinforcing the prohibition on City snowplows storing snow and ice on sidewalks and bike lanes
- Public education campaign regarding City vs resident and business owner responsibilities for snow and ice clearing and removal

TORONTO

ASSESSMENT OF AODA REQUIREMENTS

- Municipalities must have multi-year accessibility plans (MYAP) that specify policies and procedures for maintenance of public infrastructures and spaces. There is no specific requirement related to winter maintenance.

- City of Toronto's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2020-2024 includes a commitment by Transportation Services to "conduct a review of snow clearing policies, practices and procedures using an accessibility and equity analysis, and develop a strategy to reduce barriers that significantly limit the mobility of people with disabilities."

- The City's Major Snow Event Response Plan will both recognize and prioritize the level of service required to address the needs of people living with disabilities, with actions to focus on removing barriers, rather than simply meeting Provincial standards.

CURRENT WORK TO IMPROVE FURTHER

MAJOR SNOW EVENT RESPONSE PLAN:
DRAFT VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Draft Vision

Remove snow and prevent snow hazards to facilitate the safe travel of people on our public right-of-way infrastructure.

Draft Guiding Principles of the Framework for the Major Snow Event Response Plan

- SAFETY
- ACCESS
- MOBILITY
- ENVIRONMENT
- EFFICIENCY
- COMMUNICATION

TORONTO

DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
SAFETY, ACCESS, AND MOBILITY

SAFETY

Facilitate removal of snow on travel paths in an equitable manner that maintains the integrity of infrastructure and minimizes emergency situations due to snow hazards.

ACCESS

Ensure an equitable way or means to get to emergency and essential services for all users of the right-of-way.

MOBILITY

Facilitate safe movement for all modes of transport in a manner that supports equity deserving groups throughout the year.

DRAFT GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
ENVIRONMENT, EFFICIENCY, AND COMMUNICATION

ENVIRONMENT

Mitigate operational impacts to the environment while facilitating safe travel paths. Preserve snow covering on natural landscaping to allow the benefits of snow on permeable ground cover.

EFFICIENCY

Achieve a productive operational process that mitigates increased costs and time.

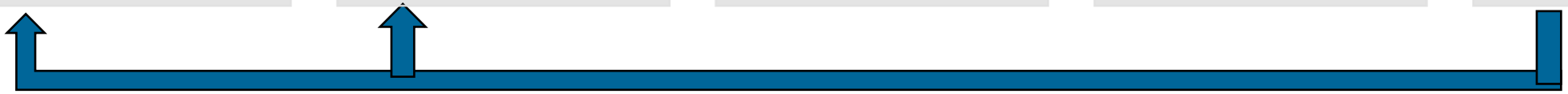
COMMUNICATION

Effective and equitable communication with the public, City staff and partner agencies about expectations for operational outcomes, respective responsibilities to facilitate efficient snow removal, and coordination among service providers.

TORONTO

Major Snow Event Response Plan: Five Phase Action Plan

1. Base Planning	2. Action Planning	3. Implementation	4. Tracking and Documentation	5. Post-mortem
• Pre-planning that takes place before the season that considers factors that are constant	• Action planning of the base plan which takes place when a major snow event is imminent. • Variables are considered including weather (temperature and conditions), available equipment, people resources etc.	• Execution of base plan and action plan outlined in phases 1 and 2.	• Tracking, and documentation takes place once the action plan is implemented. • Database of outcomes that can be compared to the plan.	• Observed results and outcomes are reviewed against original plan. • Successes and areas for improvement are identified, updates are made to the base and action plan



MAJOR SNOW EVENT RESPONSE PLAN PRIORITIES

Plan Priorities are:

- Provide access and safe movement on sidewalks (including for people living with disabilities), support transit use, and gender equity needs
- Remove snowbanks in key areas such as streetcar stops, bus stops and school bus loading zones;
- Ensure all bike lanes are safe and passable, including the expanding kilometres of physically separated bike lanes;
- Prioritize snow removal on narrow roads with limited snow storage capacity, recognizing that larger roads have more snow storage capacity for temporary snow storage.

COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- Major Snow Events that require major snow removal operations do not occur frequently.
- Each snow event has unique elements and requires customization of the standardized response plan.
- Updates of the Major Snow Event Response Plan will be undertaken iteratively to adapt to changing infrastructure, incorporate lessons learned from past events, and improve social equity in the city.

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT

- Survey to consult with selected communities including people with disabilities and people who cycle.

- Engaging with partner agencies to develop coordinated response among City service providers:
  - Emergency Services (Toronto Fire, Toronto Police Service, Paramedics)
  - TTC
  - School Boards (TDSB, CDSB)
  - Other City Divisions

NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

Continuing Engagement process:

- Public Survey open until May 15, 2024
- Ongoing discussions with partner agencies and City Divisions

July Report:

- Infrastructure and Environment Committee - July 3rd 2024
- City Council – July 24th – 26th 2024

Ongoing Work:

- Refining the criteria and preparing specific action plan for 2024-25 season
- Annual review and iterative improvements

QUESTIONS