

**BACKGROUNDER
WINTER MAINTENANCE REVIEW
PROGRESS-TO-DATE AND KEY THEMES**

The Winter Maintenance Operations Review examines all operations for Roads Division, Parks and Fleet as it relates to snow and ice control, snowclearing and fleet operations. KPMG Consultants were hired to conduct the review, which included public consultation, national benchmarking, operational evaluation and recommendations.

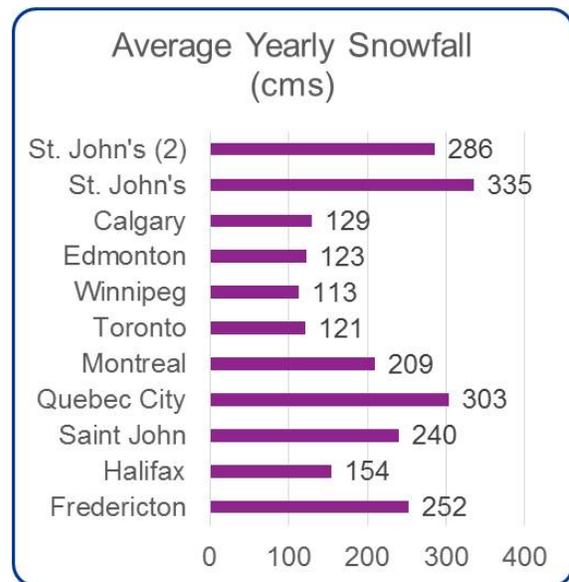
The consultants have already delivered one report on “As Is” operations. Working with City staff, they have also presented an infographic capturing public consultations and feedback gathered. The interim report includes some analysis and quick hits for this season. The final report is expected in November.

Supporting Documents/ Public Communications

Media Release: [Winter Maintenance Review Underway](#), June 18, 2014
Community Dialogues: [June 24, 2014](#) and [June 25, 2014](#)
Social Media Information Gathering @ #snowsj
KPMG Website and Survey site: www.snowsj.com
Infographic: [What We Heard](#), September 18, 2014

Progress-to-date

- The goals of the project were to review levels of service; find low cost approaches to achieve an improved level of service reliability; and to identify mid- to long-term changes that may be required, due to growth and changing regulations.
- KPMG consulted with both internal and external stakeholders, including staff, union, Council and management; associations and public service providers such as Downtown St. John’s, the George Street Association, Happy City, Metrobus, Canada Post, the NL English School District, MUN and the Coalition of Persons with Disabilities; and the general public.
- KPMG compared winter maintenance in St. John’s with practices in five other cities: Fredericton, Halifax, Quebec City, Saguenay and Mount Pearl. An extensive comparison will be included in the final report.



2013-2014 was particularly severe in St. John’s with 413cm of snow at the airport and 440cm at some locations.

Key Themes

1. Vehicles and Equipment

- A major issue in the 2013-2014 winter season was the availability and reliability of vehicles and equipment. Issues included the unavailability of parts, operational damage, outdoor storage for smaller plows and attachments, inspection issues, fleet operations and ineffective communications.
- The consultants found that, while the vehicles used here for winter control are generally appropriate for the type of snow and ice we get, there were not often enough vehicles available to carry out winter maintenance operations as planned last year.

2. Pedestrians and Sidewalks

- The consultants discovered that most cities provide a higher level of service for pedestrians, with a continuing trend in recent years towards a focus on sidewalk clearing.
- The City of St. John's acknowledges the importance of walkability in building and supporting strong, complete neighbourhoods, as identified in the city's new municipal plan. Walkability is also a key theme in the City's developing Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (still in development).
- In the past, St. John's has not typically started sidewalk work until one day after the snow ends; street pushback has always been the first priority.
- To achieve a higher level of service on sidewalks, the City must salt them before snow falls (when possible), and start sidewalk plowing and begin snow removals earlier.

3. Commercial Core

- KPMG have demonstrated that cities with downtown commercial areas make them a priority for snowclearing and snow removal.
- The downtown core is a vital part of St. John's. Therefore, the City will change its practices in this area. While the consultant recommended that snow removals be conducted after every storm of every storm of 10 cm or more, this may not be practical, given the City's typical weather patterns. For example, an early winter 12 cm storm that is followed by a forecast of warm weather may not in fact necessitate a removal and the KPMG recommendation may not allow sufficient flexibility of response.
- The City commits to conduct snow removals on Duckworth, Water and George Streets at the frequency and timing necessary to minimize impact to pedestrians, parking, and access to the business and entertainment areas.
- The on-street parking ban commenced January 8 last year; Council is considering implementing the ban the first time there is a snowfall in excessive of 10 cm, to facilitate improved snow operations.

4. Roadway Maintenance

- The consultants confirmed that the City's roadway maintenance is generally good and is consistent with other cities.
- The standard most comparable cities aim to achieve is passable, snow-packed residential streets. However, St. John's and Mount Pearl aim for bare pavement.
- While the consultant recommended considering a lower standard for residential streets, the City does not agree and will not reduce our standards.

5. Staffing

- City staff are integral to our snowclearing operations; we want and need to invest in our staff and forepersons.
- The City will focus its efforts on investing in its winter maintenance team through training, providing forepersons with more autonomy to act quickly when processes changes need to be made, and supplementing internal resources with external, contracted resources, particularly for snow removal.
- We will put measures in place to help our fleet, roads and supply staff communicate more often and more effectively about failures, repair delays and inventory. Normally, these teams work independently, but bringing the staff together should result in reduced equipment downtime and maintenance costs.

6. Communications

- Public Works, Access St. John's and the Office of Strategy and Engagement will discuss a revised protocol for handling 311 and other important calls on snow issues.
- We believe the communication protocol and process between key stakeholders can be adjusted as required to allow a more timely response to service interruptions and other challenges.