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TAMRMS#: B05

INFORMATION REQUEST (IR) - Snow and Ice Control Standards

Requested by: Councillor Clark

Date of Request: January 27, 2026

Date Response Due: February 27, 2026

Confidential Response: No

QUESTION

Snow and ice control standards require the City to clear sidewalks and pathways when 2-5 cm of snow or ice has accumulated. However, the Community Standards Bylaw permits snow accumulation on residential sidewalks adjacent to private property up to 30 cm, provided the condition is not deemed “dangerous.”

Please provide the following information:

1. What is the rationale for the significant difference between the City’s snow-clearing standard (2-5 cm) and the residential standard permitted under the Community Standards Bylaw?
2. What policy objectives were considered when establishing the current residential threshold and the reliance on the definition of a “dangerous condition”?
3. What snow and ice removal standards apply to residential sidewalks in other municipalities within the Edmonton metropolitan region?
4. For municipalities that require residents to clear sidewalks, what timelines are provided for compliance following a snowfall event?
5. How is “dangerous condition” interpreted and applied in practice by Peace Officers, and what guidance is provided to ensure consistent enforcement?
6. Does Administration consider the current bylaw sufficiently clear and objective for both residents and enforcement officers?
7. Does the current Community Standards Bylaw support the City’s Flourish objective of “Accessibility and Comfort: Design St. Albert to be accessible and inviting to everyone in all seasons,” particularly for residents using mobility aids, strollers, wheelchairs, or scooters?

8. Has Administration evaluated whether the lack of a requirement to clear residential sidewalks to pavement creates barriers to year-round pedestrian accessibility?

9. Has Administration considered amendments to the Community Standards Bylaw to introduce clearer, measurable snow-clearing requirements (e.g., accumulation thresholds or timelines) for residential sidewalks to improve consistency, accessibility, and public understanding?

RESPONSE

1. What is the rationale for the significant difference between the City's snow-clearing standard (2-5 cm) and the residential standard permitted under the Community Standards Bylaw?

- *Council Policy C IS 01 (Snow and Ice Control) outlines the snow accumulation thresholds that trigger Public Operations to deploy equipment for roadway and public sidewalk/trail clearing in areas not maintained by private property owners. The policy does not require that all snow and ice be fully removed after every accumulation; rather, its overarching intent is to ensure that hazardous or dangerous conditions are addressed and mitigated as reasonably as possible once the trigger amounts are reached.*

Similarly, the Community Standards Bylaw establishes expectations for private property owners that align with this philosophy. Property owners are required to remove hazardous conditions caused by snow and ice within 48 hours of their formation. The bylaw defines a dangerous condition as anything that may cause someone to slip, trip, or fall including, but not limited to, slippery ice, snow accumulation exceeding 30 cm, or significantly uneven packed snow.

2. What policy objectives were considered when establishing the current residential threshold and the reliance on the definition of a "dangerous condition"?

- *The Community Standards Bylaw, including the provisions related to sidewalk snow removal, was established in 2010 as part of a comprehensive review and consolidation of several existing bylaws. Prior to 2010, requirements for sidewalk snow removal were more subjective. Property owners were simply required to remove "dangerous conditions" within 48 hours, but the bylaw did not define what constituted a dangerous condition. This lack of clarity created challenges for both enforcement and public understanding.*

The 2010 updates were intended to address this gap by providing clearer guidance and examples of what would be considered dangerous, helping both enforcement officers and residents understand expectations more consistently. The overarching philosophy at the time recognized that St. Albert is a winter city, and expecting residents to remove all traces of snow and ice from sidewalks was neither realistic nor achievable. It was also acknowledged that the City's own snow and ice control service levels did not include removing all snow and ice from municipal sidewalks and trails. Requiring residents to meet a higher standard than the City itself was not considered appropriate.

3. What snow and ice removal standards apply to residential sidewalks in other municipalities within

the Edmonton metropolitan region?

- *Administration completed a high-level scan of residential sidewalk snow removal requirements in Strathcona County, Spruce Grove, Leduc, Stony Plain, and Edmonton. All of the municipalities reviewed require property owners to maintain the public sidewalk adjacent to their property. The City of Edmonton and the Town of Stony Plain explicitly require sidewalks to be kept “clear of all snow and ice,” while the remaining municipalities require snow and ice to be removed but leave a degree of subjectivity in how that standard is interpreted.*

4. For municipalities that require residents to clear sidewalks, what timelines are provided for compliance following a snowfall event?

- *The review revealed that the 48 hrs time limit for residents to remove snow and ice was consistent amongst all with the exception of Edmonton and Stony Plain which do not provide a 48 hrs time period within their Bylaws. Public messaging from the City of Edmonton revealed that they advise residents to remove snow and ice “as soon as possible” whereas Stony Plain public messaging states that snow/ice removal should be done within 48 hrs of the end of the snowfall.*

5. How is “dangerous condition” interpreted and applied in practice by Peace Officers, and what guidance is provided to ensure consistent enforcement?

- *In practice, Peace Officers assess a “dangerous condition” using an objective, safety focused approach. They evaluate whether snow or ice accumulation creates a foreseeable risk to pedestrians such as reduced traction, uneven or rutted surfaces, compacted ice, or any condition that could reasonably lead to slips or falls. Each situation is assessed on a case by case basis through on site inspections, supported by photographs and detailed documentation to ensure decisions are fair, consistent, and well substantiated. All investigations are reviewed by a supervisor to help maintain consistency in enforcement and interpretation.*

6. Does Administration consider the current bylaw sufficiently clear and objective for both residents and enforcement officers?

- *Yes. Administration considers the current bylaw to be clear in outlining the responsibility of property owners to maintain sidewalks free of dangerous conditions caused by snow and ice. At the same time, Administration recognizes that there are opportunities to further strengthen both internal and external communication to support consistent enforcement and encourage proactive compliance across the community.*

7. Does the current Community Standards Bylaw support the City’s Flourish objective of “Accessibility and Comfort: Design St. Albert to be accessible and inviting to everyone in all seasons,” particularly for residents using mobility aids, strollers, wheelchairs, or scooters?

- *The Community Standards Bylaw was adopted prior to the development of the current Municipal Development Plan (Flourish). While the bylaw focuses on maintenance standards and day to day responsibilities for property owners, the MDP is intended to guide long term*

municipal growth, design, and strategic direction. That said, the requirement for property owners to remove dangerous snow and ice conditions from sidewalks does align with the MDP's Mobility Choices goal, which emphasizes supporting a safe and efficient transportation network for all users.

8. Has Administration evaluated whether the lack of a requirement to clear residential sidewalks to pavement creates barriers to year-round pedestrian accessibility?

- *Administration has not specifically evaluated this barrier; however, it is acknowledged that winter mobility in our region can be challenging, particularly for individuals with mobility limitations. Requiring residential sidewalks to be cleared down to bare concrete would exceed the level of service the City provides on its own sidewalks and trails.*

9. Has Administration considered amendments to the Community Standards Bylaw to introduce clearer, measurable snow-clearing requirements (e.g., accumulation thresholds or timelines) for residential sidewalks to improve consistency, accessibility, and public understanding?

- *Administration has not recommended resident snow removal amendments to the Community Standards Bylaw since the 2010 clarity that was added.*

Report Date: February 27, 2026

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