



## INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES *Staff Report*

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REPORT NO: IS-2025-11

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Jeff Molenhuis, P.Eng., Director of Infrastructure Services

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REVIEWED BY: Greg Clark, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: 2025-04-07

SUBJECT: **Winter Operations Plan Development**

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report IS-2025-11 Winter Operations Plan Development be received for information.

### SUMMARY:

This report outlines the development of the Township of Wilmot's (Township) Winter Operations Plan, created through the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) online template which integrates provincial regulations. The report provides an overview of applicable legislation, significant weather and snow events and includes a recommendation to make the plan available to the public upon its approval.

### BACKGROUND:

A Winter Operations Plan outlines the Township's strategy for maintaining public safety and accessibility during the winter months. It includes timelines for snow and ice control, defines levels of service, and ensures compliance with provincial standards. A well structured plan enables the Township to effectively manage resources, reduce liability, and ensure continuous mobility and safety for residents and emergency services.

## REPORT:

### *Minimum Maintenance Standards*

The Township provides winter maintenance services to the public in accordance with O. Reg 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) for Municipal Highways, established under the Municipal Act, 2001 and governed by the Province of Ontario. These standards set the minimum requirements for municipal road maintenance to act as a framework for reasonableness and due diligence in maintenance activities. It's meant to balance the need for timely response in road operations and winter control, as well as establish clear thresholds for municipal negligence and liability.

Roads are classified based on traffic volumes and speed limits, which determine the required maintenance standards and response times. To ensure compliance and road safety, the Township follows the MMS as a guideline for proactive winter maintenance. This includes timely road patrolling, plowing and salting to minimize hazards and meet legal obligations. This document is included as *Attachment 1 – O. Reg. 239.02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways*.

### *Significant Weather and Snow Events*

A significant weather event (SWE) is declared by the Township when extreme weather conditions, such as heavy snowfall, freezing rain, or severe ice accumulation, make it difficult to meet the MMS. The MMS recognizes that severe weather can temporarily prevent compliance, allowing the Township, under Section 16.9 of the regulation, to declare a SWE when necessary. During a SWE, MMS requirements are temporarily suspended, and the Township is exempt from liability for non-compliance. Residents are advised to avoid unnecessary travel to help keep roads and sidewalks clear for snow removal.

A Snow Event (SE) is declared to enforce temporary parking bans, ensuring that roads remain clear for winter maintenance equipment. This allows plows and salt trucks to properly service the entire roadway, ensuring safe travel for all users, including emergency vehicles.

The Township's Communications Team informs the public about SWE and SE declarations, as well as potential delays in snow and ice control. Notifications are issued through the Township's website, social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter/X), and through local media channels including The Waterloo Regional Record, The Wilmot-Tavistock Gazette, CityNews Kitchener, CTV Kitchener, 570 News, and CBC Radio Kitchener-Waterloo.

To ensure effective winter maintenance and public safety, the Township coordinates with the Region of Waterloo and neighboring municipalities on declarations. However, that does not necessarily mean all area municipalities issue declarations together all the time. Collaboration helps align winter maintenance practices and ensures SWE and SE declarations are made based on the most accurate information. Once an event is lifted, regular maintenance resumes as per the Ontario MMS.

### *Ontario Good Roads Association*

The Township has adopted the Winter Operations Plan OGRA template which serves as a structured framework to aide in the implementation of effective winter maintenance strategies. By adhering to the OGRA template, the Township ensures its winter maintenance practices align with both O. Reg 239/02 Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) for Municipal Highways, and O. Reg 555/06 Hours of Service under the Highway Traffic Act, as these regulatory standards are integrated into the platform. The template outlines key components of winter maintenance and provides details of the maintained system, service levels, target response times, and material usage, including salt application rates for the Township.

### *Consultation and Engagement*

As the development of the Winter Operations Plan progresses, it is recommended that, once finalized, the plans be made available on the Township's website to improve transparency and manage community expectations. Making the plan accessible would provide residents with clear information on winter maintenance service levels, response timelines, and SWE and SE related procedures.

### *By-Law No. 84-72 – Removal of Snow and Ice from Sidewalks and Roofs*

The Township's snow and ice removal by-law depicted in *Attachment 2 – By-Law No. 84-72 Removal of Snow and Ice from Sidewalks and Roofs*, outlines the responsibilities of property owners and occupants during winter months. From October to April, residents are expected to clear snow and ice, within 24 hours of a snow or rainfall event, from sidewalks adjacent to their property and in a manner that does not damage any sidewalk or curb within the Township. Owners of buildings with roofs which slope towards sidewalks must remove accumulated snow and ice by 9:00 am daily, apart from Sundays. The by-law prohibits depositing snow on public sidewalks or roadways and, where no boulevard is present, requires that snow be placed in a manner that does not obstruct drainage, fire hydrants, or vehicle traffic. If property owners fail to meet the requirements, the Township may issue a 24-hour notice directing them to remove all snow and ice. If the owner does not comply within the specified timeframe, the Township may arrange the removal at the owner's expense. Failure to fulfill these requirements may result in penalties upon conviction.

Staff are currently in the process of review and updating the By-Law to establish clearer timelines for snow and ice removal. The proposed changes state snow and ice are to be removed within 24-hours following the conclusion of a weather event, which will apply year-round, including Sundays. The revisions will also address snow removal requirements for roadways without boulevards.

### *Next Steps*

As Staff continue to develop and review the Winter Operations Plan, and ensure it aligns with the MMS, it is anticipated that the plan will return to Council for endorsement later in 2025.

Updates to By-Law No. 84-72 are also in progress to clarify snow and ice removal timelines for residents.

#### ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

This initiative supports the goals and strategies of enhancing Responsible Governance through Active Communications, Fiscal Responsibility, and Infrastructure Investments as well as Quality of Life through Accessibility and Inclusivity, Active Transportation and Transit.

#### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

During a heavy winter season, such as the 2024-2025 season, the Township's costs for winter operations are elevated due to increased staff time, materials, and equipment usage. Higher snow and ice accumulation, along with the frequency of Significant Weather Events and Snow Events, result in more frequent snow clearing operations and the use of more de-icing materials, such as salt. Additionally, equipment wear and tear, as well as repair costs for winter maintenance vehicles, increase during such seasons. Establishing the Level of Service desired by the community will determine financial impacts and will drive operational decision making.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – O. Reg. 239.02 Minimum Maintenance Standards for Municipal Highways

Attachment 2 – By-Law No. 84-72 Removal of Snow and Ice from Sidewalks and Roofs