

# Public to help shape snow clearing policy

BY KIM GUTTORMSON, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 12, 2010



John Sickles cleans snow from around a friend's 1968 Plymouth Barracuda on an Albert Park street, Thursday morning. Heavy snow storm blanketed Calgary.

**Photograph by:** Archive, Calgary Herald

Calgary residents frustrated by the city's snow clearing policies will be able to play a role in the fix after the committee studying the problem agreed to accept citizen members.

At the first meeting of the audit subcommittee Thursday, aldermen decided the public should have one or two seats at the table.

"It's something that affects everybody," said Ald. Brian Pincott, who asked for the audit. "It's something everybody is concerned about."

After the second meeting next week, when the audit's terms of reference are approved, a call will go out seeking applications from Calgarians who would like to sit on the committee.

Chairwoman Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said criteria to help select citizen members also will be established. The timeline for the audit is short, with a preliminary report expected back before council in July and a final version in November, in time for budget deliberations -- and winter.

That final report would be discussed at a public meeting where anyone can have their say.

"Any change is going to cost money," Pincott said of the level of service the city provides.

Colley-Urquhart said it's important to have something for Calgarians to see and discuss this summer.

"It will be a good topic for debate and there's an election coming up," she said. "Because it costs some money."

"Whether citizens can agree with the cost or not," Ald. Ray Jones said, "(the audit's) got to be done, because we've been putting it off and putting it off. We're a winter city and we're going to continue to get winters."

The city spends about \$25 million a year on snow clearing, but recent storms resulting in impassable streets and ice ridges on the roads have led to a revolt over the policy.

For the most part, residential roads aren't plowed, with the bulk of the spending happening to keep the most-travelled routes clear.

Previous reports have said that increasing the level of service could cost another \$14 million a year to plow all roads up to five times a year, while \$88 million would plow the roads and also remove the snow twice in a season.

The audit will look not just at road clearing, but pathways and transit issues, as well as what other cities do, the cost of implementing different levels of service and a review of Calgary's existing practices.

As well, Colley-Urquhart said, the outside consultant who will put together the report -- which will go to tender after next week's meeting -- will review the viability of suggestions members of council have made in nine recent notices of motion.

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