



## REQUEST FOR DECISION

File # 5400-11, 1715-02

Report To: **Mayor and Council**  
From: **Jeremy Garner, Director of Public Works and Utilities**  
Presenter: **Gary Meir, Roads Manager**  
Subject: **Administration Report No. 0004/26  
Snow Clearing Operations and 2025 Budget Update**  
Meeting: **Committee of the Whole**  
Meeting Date: **February 9, 2026**

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### **CAO'S COMMENTS:**

In keeping with the City's approach to transparency, this report details our experience with unprecedented snowfall events earlier this winter along with their budgetary impacts. These snowfall events occurred shortly after the adoption of our new snow clearing policy and allow an evaluation of that policy under extreme circumstances.

### **DEFINE THE TOPIC:**

This update highlights the snowfall levels, snow clearing methods, and budget impacts for the City of Fort St. John during the last three months of 2025. It also includes a summary of the last five years of snowfall and spending. Snow clearing is an essential service in the city, and operations follow a category system that prioritizes major roads, collectors, transit routes, commercial lanes, and residential streets (Categories 1–5).

It is important to note that the budget calendar is from January to December each year, while the winter season is typically October to April across two calendar years. This can create challenges and data abnormalities in budgeting and reporting.

### **KEY INFORMATION:**

During the final three months of 2025, Fort St. John saw 128.7 cm of total snowfall according to the Environment Canada records:

Month	Snowfall accumulations (cm)
October	27.1
November	31.4
December	103.9
Total	162.4

Year	October	November	December	Total
2025	27.1	31.4	103.9	162.4
2024	7.6	77.5	36.6	121.7
2023	10.6	25.7	7.2	43.5

**Key Point:**

Snowfall in late 2025 was more than three times the amount recorded for the same period in 2023.

**RELEVANT OBSERVATIONS:**

The City uses a Category 1–5 system to decide which roads get plowed first. Major roads are Category 1 and are always cleared before anything else. Residential streets are Category 5 and are done last. During a snow fall greater than 15cm, contractors may be brought in to help clear Category 5 areas once the main roads are safe. If another snowfall happens while crews are working on a category, they must go back and start again at the higher-priority category. Because of several heavy snowfalls in a row, crews had to clear Category 1 roads many times, which caused snow in the other category areas to build up.

Category 5 roads follow a two-week, day-of-the-week cyclical schedule so snow removal offsets garbage collection.

After the heavy snowfall in December, the region experienced unusually warm weather. The packed snow began to melt, which caused problems for some drivers. Contractors were sent to the worst areas—outside the usual day-of-the-week schedule—to deal with flooding and melted, compacted snow.

**COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PILLARS:**

*Managing Assets – Build and manage assets that support the current and future needs of the community.*

**DETERMINED DESIRED OUTCOMES  
(If the essential question is answered)**

**KEY RESULT:**

Because of the heavy snowfall during the month of December, contractors were hired to work continuously on Categories 4 and 5. Contractor equipment included:

- Up to 10 loaders
- Up to 5 graders
- Up to 3 bulldozers pushing snow at the public snow dump

Note: The public snow dump is provided free of charge for all business and residences both inside and outside city limits.

Contracted services were also used for:

- Downtown overnight snow haul-off
- Clearing and maintaining downtown paved lanes

The end of 2025 brought one of the heaviest snow periods Fort St. John has experienced in recent memory and recent years. City crews worked long hours and enlisted contractor support in an effort to keep the roads safe and passable. This increased the overall cost of operations, and dramatically increased the costs for contracted services and additional materials.

Although the overall annual snowfall for 2025 was less than 2023, the fact that a large accumulation came over a short period of time in Q4 resulting in the added cost of contracted services to support clearing operations. Despite these challenges, the City crews along with the contracted crews, worked hard to maintain roadway safety and continued to follow the Snow and Ice Policy.

Continued monitoring of winter material storage, contractor availability, and budget impacts will help guide improvements for 2026. Moving forward consideration will be given to how the Road categories align with road volumes, proximities to hospitals, emergency services, schools and public spaces affect the categories and what changes are warranted.

#### **UNINTENDED OUTCOMES:**

##### Winter Salt and Sand

Over 90% of the winter sand intended for Q4 2025 and Q1/Q2 2026 was used because of the back-to-back storm events.

- Additional winter sand had to be purchased using 2026 funds to ensure there was enough material for the rest of the season.
- Salt use exceeded expectations due to ice and rain conditions in the early winter resulting in a \$57,000 budget shortfall

The major over-expenditure in contracted services was directly caused by the heavy December snowfall, which required additional equipment and operators to keep roads safe.

- For the period of Oct-Dec 2025 the City spent nearly \$100,000 on contracted services just to clear City parking lots.
- Long stretches of heavy snowfall increased fuel use, equipment wear, and staff scheduling pressures to operate City equipment.
- Contracted services for road clearing equipment from Oct-Dec 2025 totaled well over \$500,000.

Personnel Budget Update - Roads Department (2025 Q4)

The Roads division experienced significant budget pressure:

- Overall budget impact was \$484,000 over budget.
- Overtime was \$9,000 over budget.
- Contracted services were \$468,000 over budget. This overage was largely due to the use of additional contract services.

Roads Five Year Snowfall & Budget Overview (rounded)

Year	Snowfall	Budget	Actual	Variance
2021	153.4	\$ 1,851,000	\$ 1,713,000	\$138,000 (under)
2022	257.0	\$ 1,941,000	\$ 2,093,000	\$152,000 (over)
2023	116.0	\$ 2,036,000	\$ 1,885,000	\$151,000 (under)
2024	200.5	\$ 2,442,000	\$ 2,556,000	\$114,000 (over)
2025	214.1	\$ 2,464,000	\$ 2,948,000	\$484,000 (over)

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Snow Clearing Operations and 2025 Budget Update

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Jeremy Garner, Director of Public Works and Utilities



# Snow Clearing Operations & 2025 Budget Update

Gary Meir, Roads Manager

# Overview

- Snowfall Summary
- Five-Year Comparison
- Snow Clearing Priorities
- Contracted Services
- Roads Five Year Snowfall & Budget Overview

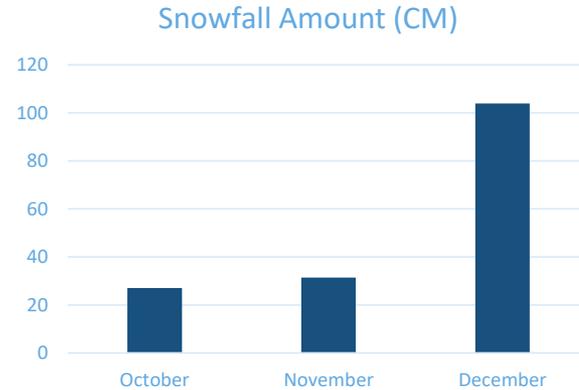
# Snowfall Summary

## October – December 2025

- October: 27.1 cm
- November: 31.4 cm
- December 103.9 cm

Q4 Total: 162.4 cm

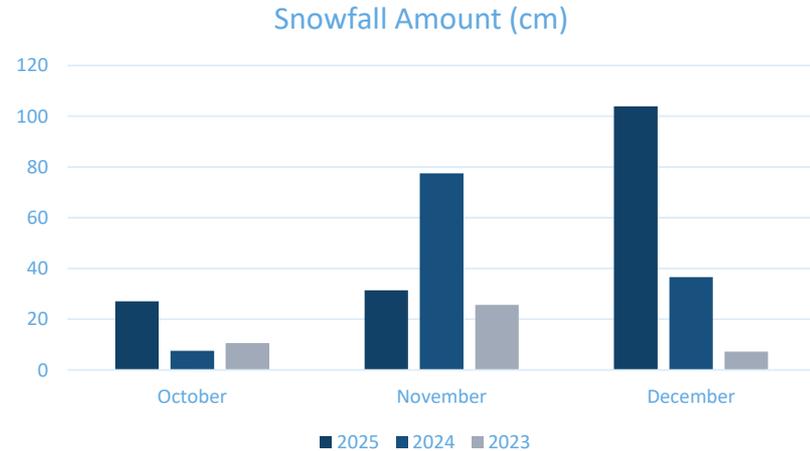
2025 Annual Total: 214.10 cm



# Three-Year Comparison

## 2023 – 2025 Snowfall (Oct-Dec)

- 2023 – 43.5 cm
- 2024 – 121.7 cm
- 2025 – 162.4 cm (Q4)



# Snow Clearing Priorities

Category	Roadways
Category 1	100 St & 100 Ave, major thoroughfares & adjacent sidewalks
Category 2	Collector routes & adjacent sidewalks
Category 3	Transit routes, transit stops & adjacent sidewalks, core avenues
Category 4	All frontage roads & core commercial paved lanes
Category 5	Residential areas

# Contracted Services

## Contractor Equipment Used:

- Up to 10 loaders
- Up to 5 graders
- Up to 3 bulldozers

## Additional Contractor Work

- Downtown overnight snow haul
- Downtown paved lane maintenance

# Roads Five Year Snowfall & Budget Overview

Year	Snowfall	Budget	Actual	Variance
2021	153.4	\$ 1,851,000.00	\$ 1,713,000.00	\$ (138,000.00)
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# Questions

