

2022-2023 Winter Operations Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who decides when to send out the plows?

Markham's Operations-Roads team makes this decision, based on Council approved service levels. Markham's winter service levels either meet or in many cases exceed the Province of Ontario's legislated service levels for clearing snow from roads and sidewalks.

How much snow has to fall before the City plows all streets?

It has to snow at least 7.5 cm or 3 inches before a full plow is activated.

How many big storms does the City of Markham receive each year?

It varies. Some years, like 2015 to 2016, we only had two storms that required plowing. Other years, we can see as many as nine or more storms over 7.5 cm of snowfall.

How long is the City of Markham road network?

Markham's road network (the area we control and plow) is approximately 2,250 km. That is the equivalent of travelling from Toronto to Montreal 4 times.

How long is the City of Markham sidewalk, multi-use pathway and cycle track network?

We have approximately 1,150km of sidewalks, multi-use pathways and cycle tracks that we clear.

How long does it take to plow all City streets?

That depends on how much snow falls and how fast. During a typical storm, it can take between 12-16 hours to completely plow all City streets inclusive of lane ways.

How many pieces of equipment does the City use to maintain its streets during a snow event?

The City can mobilize over 200 pieces of equipment to manage a winter storm event.

How does the City manage so many pieces of equipment?

The City has an Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) in every piece of equipment. We can use the AVL to monitor compliance and performance. The City also has a number of supervisory field staff on call should a storm hit and require plowing. Residents can now also see what the status of their local plow is by downloading the City of Markham Mobile App, and using our Winter Maintenance App available at markham.ca/winter.

Does the City of Markham ever review their service levels?

Yes, we do. Staff provide updates to Council approximately every two years, or as Council requests. These updates can be general reports to Council or extensive workshops. The last report was provided to Council on June 2019, outlining the 2018/2019 winter services standards. Council has approved the current service levels as presented.

Does Markham plow all the roads in the City?

No, the roads in Markham can be owned by a number of governing bodies: The City of Markham, York Region and the Province of Ontario. Markham only manages the services of Markham -owned roads – these are generally local roads and roads that do not cross over City boundaries.

The City of Markham has three types of roads and each has its own service level, approved by Council:

Primary Roads, which carry the largest volume of cars inclusive of bus routes, are our first priority. These roads (such as John Street, Denison Street, Carlton Road or Wooten Way) are maintained to achieve bare condition (e.g. you can see the pavement, and includes salting), 24/7.

Secondary Roads, are roads that feed onto Primary Roads, or are roads that have extreme hills, curves and multiple access points. They are maintained to be bare condition between the hours of 7AM and 6PM and are monitored beyond those hours.

Local Roads, are your typical roads within a residential neighbourhood (a crescent, trail or court, for example). Council has approved a snow-packed condition service level for Local Roads. However, if they are found to be slippery, staff will mobilize salters to improve their condition.

Why doesn't the City do all windrows like the City of Toronto?

The City of Toronto doesn't do all windrows. They provide this service only in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke, and only on streets where it is mechanically possible. City of Markham staff undertook a comprehensive review and presented a report to Council in June 2019. A City-wide windrow clearing program would significantly impact the tax base and result in an increase in the residential tax rate. Council supported the staff recommendation to only provide windrow clearing to approved residents - those who are either 60 years of age or older or have a disability.

Why don't they remove the entire windrow?

The intent of the program is to make your driveway passable so operators remove one single car width, 8 hours after the road has been plowed. All residents who are approved are responsible for clearing the remainder of their driveway.

I often get a windrow from sidewalk plows, why doesn't the City remove that too?

The windrow removal program only removes the snow from the end of your driveway. The two operations are not connected.

How many windrows does the City clear?

Currently, approximately 5,100 homes are approved for driveway windrow snow removal service each storm.

Why can't I have my rear lane way access included for windrow clearing?

The rear lanes are cleaned by loaders and not plows so little-to-no snow is left behind.

Why do I get more snow on my side of the street?

All operators are instructed to split the snow as evenly as possible on both sides of the road, sharing the snow load. Sometimes parked cars create an uneven split in the snow. Residents are reminded that parked cars restrict snow clearing activities and owners are subject to a fine and/or tow. Please do your part, and do not park on the street during a winter storm event.

I live on an inside corner. Why do I get so much snow in my driveway?

All snow is plowed to the right and those that live on an inside corner do receive a large amount of snow.

The City plows the snow to the curb and creates a windrow. Why can't I push that snow back out onto the road?

All municipalities are legislated by the Province of Ontario to ensure roads are maintained for the safety of all residents and road users. To meet the legislated requirements and maintain Council-approved service levels, a bylaw was enacted to prohibit snow dumping onto the roadway. Residents should not push snow back onto the road – it makes it unsafe for everyone.

I see private contractors plowing driveways and they often push snow across the road, making a mess, and pushing more snow onto my frontage. Is this allowed?

No, this is punishable under the same bylaw above, and subject to a fine. If this is happening, please contact the City and a Bylaw Officer will be dispatched to the home of the resident creating the mess.

What happens if a sidewalk plow damages my property?

A large portion of your boulevard is City property, roughly where your water supply valve is located in your driveway or front lawn. Residents are advised to remove all driveway borders, sprinklers, gardens or garden features near the road or sidewalks. The City is only responsible to repair sod damage. Sod repairs are completed in the spring once sod is available at sod farms.

Who maintains bus stops?

The proper transit authority does - the TTC, York Region Transit, VIVA and GO are all responsible for their stops including the shelters and the connection from the sidewalk to the shelter.

Who maintains Canada Post boxes?

Canada Post is responsible for all snow clearing in front of their community boxes. Residents should contact Canada Post Customer Service directly at 1.800.265.1177.

Does the City of Markham let the transit authorities and Canada Post know when they're plowing? Yes.

During every major snow storm the City notifies all agencies when we begin a full network plow. They are notified during snow storms where there is 7.5 cm (or 3 inches) or more of snowfall.