

**MEETING DATE: JULY 15, 2025**

# **BRIEFING NOTE - TO COUNCIL**

## **SUBJECT**

**SNOW CLEARING SERVICES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the County of Vermilion River accept the information on snow clearing services on private property for information.

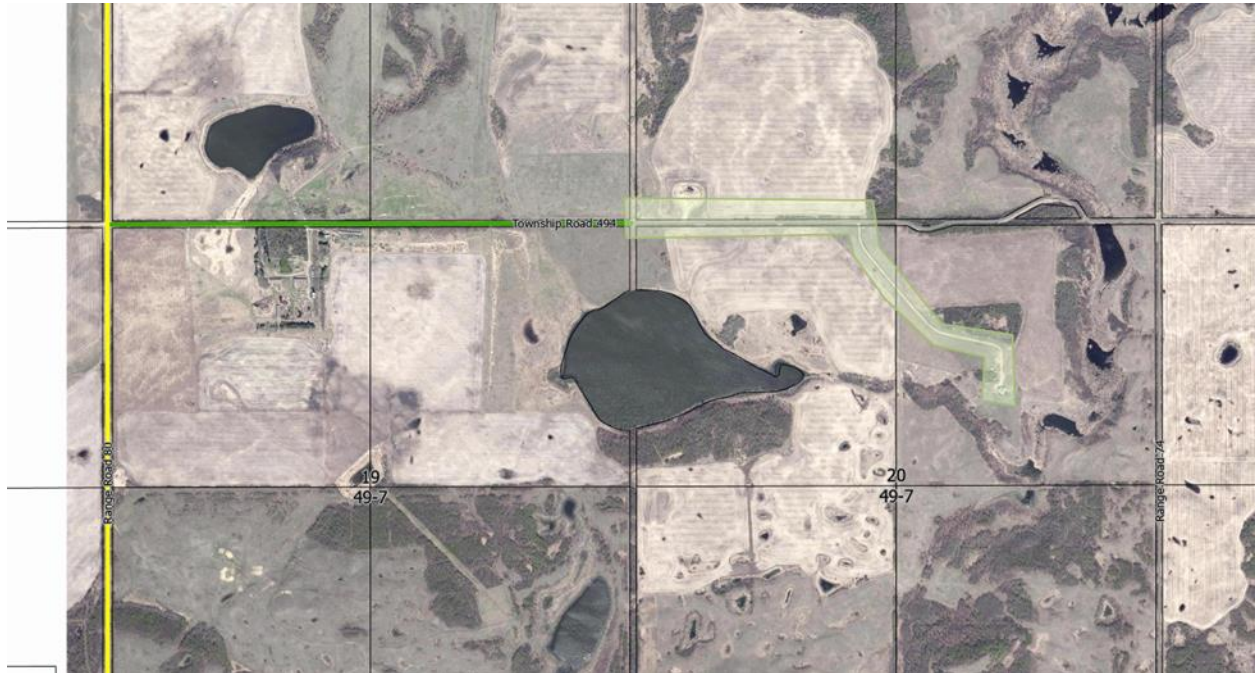
## **DETAILS**

Background: At the June 17<sup>th</sup> Policies and Priorities Committee Meeting when reviewing the proposed changes to Policy PW015 Snow Plow Flag the Public Works department received a request for information regarding providing snow plow services to a specific private business/organization since they offer a space for a community group periodically. The discussion as to whether to provide a snow plowing service level to private businesses/organizations if they can demonstrate a benefit to the community, for example by meeting space for a community group or club, was to be brought back to Council in July 2025 for further discussion and options regarding the subject.

Discussion: Currently private businesses/organizations are not eligible to purchase a snowplow flag as it has not been identified as a level of service that the County wishes to provide. Snow plow flags are only available to purchase for snow clearing of driveways for personal residences.

In regard to the property in discussion at the June 17<sup>th</sup> committee meeting, Public Works has brought back further information regarding this request. The section of road within the road right of way would be a length of 700m, with the driveway length with the property being 740m, for a total clearing length of 1,440m. The road right of way is classified as an undeveloped road and is not regularly maintained in the winter months as there is not adequate ditches to hold the snow load. This facility is used for private rentals, but is also used

by a community group for gatherings. This facility owner provides this at no cost to the community group at this time. The property owner has expressed to a Councilor that they would be willing to pay an hourly rate for snow to be cleared once in a while.



Examples of some of the many businesses/organizations located within the County that could potentially demonstrate a benefit to the community include:

- Red Feather Ridge
- Vermilion Gun Club
- Hidden Ridge Sporting Clays
- Dewberry Arena
- Mount Joy
- Old Clandonald School
- Private wedding venues or lodges
- Private riding arenas.
- Large private businesses that could rent out board rooms or shop space for charity events and community group meetings.

It is not recommended to add a specific locations to the snow plow flag policy as a “one off” as it opens the door to future requests that will result in frequent policy changes and updates and



inconsistent messaging to the rate payers. If a change is desired, a wholistic view is recommended.

There are a number of factors to consider to determine if this is an additional level of service that the County would like to provide for rate payers.

1. Availability and capacity of resources. Does the County have the equipment and personnel to meet current defined levels of service for snow clearing of roads and driveways and the addition of this level of service, specifically if demand for the service grows? There is the potential for a “snowball effect” of requests for service that may increase demand beyond the capacity of the current resources.
2. Providing a service that is already met by private businesses within the County. There are a number of businesses that provide snow clearing services as part of their business model, does the County want to be seen as being in competition with them? If it was decided to offer this service, what would be considered a fair rate to charge? Public Works would recommend that it be in line with roadbuilders rates or higher so as not to be perceived as offering these services for a discount.
3. Demonstrate a benefit to the community. What is required to demonstrate a benefit? How is a community benefit defined? Who will determine if a benefit to the community is being provided? Public Works would require good guidelines to define what this means and what information is required to prevent potential abuse of this type of service.
4. Setting a precedent for other types of services on private property. Will providing snow clearing services lead to the request for other types of services, for example, grading in summer? Does the County have the capacity and desire to add any more additional services?
5. When it comes to the snow clearing aspect of the custom work, it would be recommended that the other guiding principles of the Snow Plow Flag policy apply to this work as well. Key items would be the completion of an inspection prior to significant snow accumulation, signing of a damage waiver, and accepting that clearing timelines are done as per the Winter Road Maintenance policy (driveways are completed last, with no timeline provided).

Public Works does not recommend providing a custom work ability to the snow plow flag policy or to other aspects of services within the County. This is to ensure that we are not in competition with private enterprise.



Relevant Policy/Legislation Practices: PW 015 Snow Plow Flag and PW 032 Winter Road Maintenance Standards.

Desired Outcome (s): THAT the County of the Vermilion River accept the information on snow clearing services on private property for information.

Response Options:

1. Accept the information on snow clearing services on private property for information.
2. Accept the information on snow clearing services on private property for information and prepare a draft revision of the policy PW 015 Snow Plow Flag to include a exemption that outlines providing snow clearing services to businesses/organizations that can demonstrate a benefit to the community.

## IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

Organizational: None

Financial: None

Communication Required: None

Implementation: None

Pertains to this Corporate Goal: None

## ATTACHMENTS

CURRENT ALBERTA ROADBUILDER RATES

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Robertson, PW Finance Lead & Ben McPhee, GM of PW

DATE: July 8, 2025