

Winter Control Fact Sheet 2025/2026

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Operational information

The Operations Workload (2025 Stats)

Category	Quantity / Description
Total roadway lane kilometres	1240 lane km
Roadways	535 km of roadways
Residential streets	705 km of residential streets
Sidewalks	716 km of sidewalk
Bus stops	598 bus stops throughout the city
Crossings & walkways	197 crosswalks, steps, snowblower locations
Parking lots	16 designated parking lots downtown
Bike lanes	190 km of designated roadway bike lanes 20 km of protected roadway bike lanes
Recreational trails	70 km

Operations Inventory and Equipment (2025 Stats)

Vehicles and Quantity	
Combination Units (Plow and Spreader)	15
Brine Tanks	3
Trackless Sidewalk Machines (<i>4 with brine capabilities</i>)	14
Sidewalk Small Tractors	6
Residential Street Large Tractors	12
Kubota Mowers with Plows	6
Toolcat with Plow	1

Loader	1
Large Tractor	1
Pickup Trucks with Plows	5

Number of staff and hours of service

- There are 119 Public Works staff assigned to Winter Control and divided between three 8-hour shifts for Roadway, Sidewalk and Residential Street response. Temporary staff are hired seasonally to complement existing full-time staff and, due to the nature of and timing of the work, these temporary employees are not always available or willing to come in when called.

Staff	
TOTAL Public Works Staff dedicated to Winter Control	119
Breakdown	
Roads Winter Control - Full Time	35
Roads Winter Control – Seasonal Temps	3
Roads Winter Control – Inspectors Full Time	3
Sidewalk Winter Control - Full Time	11
Sidewalk Winter Control – Seasonal Temps	27
Sidewalk Winter Control - Drainage Full Time	3
Residential Street Winter Control - Traffic Full Time	4
Residential Street Winter Control - Traffic Temp	14
Residential Street Winter Control - Traffic Signal Full Time	3
Downtown Winter Control – Full time	9
Downtown Winter Control – Temp	7
ADDITIONAL NOTE	
During Significant Weather Events additional Parks full time staff are reassigned to Public Works to assist with Sidewalks and Hand shoveling	35

NOTE: On average Public Works has 10 staff members absent from the workplace daily for various reasons, including: banked overtime, floater days, personal days, sick days, and vacation days taken.

There will always be gaps in employee complement when trying to replace vacancies due to employee movement within the union positions.

Additionally, there currently are staff on Short Term Disability leave, or staff on return to work/modified work programs which will impact the numbers above.

How staff hours of service are calculated (2025)

- Winter fleet vehicles are commercial motor vehicles (CMV) and subject to the Hours-of-Service regulation (HTA 555/06).
- Driving time is electronically recorded and monitored to adhere to the Highway Traffic Act.
- Vehicle driving time is limited to both daily & weekly maximums of 13 hours/day and 70 hours/week.

Budget information

The budgeted amount year over year for winter maintenance operations is \$4.6 million, and considerations on adjusting this line item for the next Multi-Year-Budget will be made based on the factors listed above.

The budget for winter season 2024-2025 October to April including labour, materials and equipment:

- Budget \$ 4,664,976.40
- Actuals \$ 5,152,121.40
- Resulting in a \$ 487, 145 deficit

To provide comment on costs so far for the 2025-2026 season would not accurately portray the season we're faced with as we are only part way through the season. Accounting staff need to break down complex labour hours for winter operations, as many staff serve dual roles not just as winter maintenance operators.

We will know the updated budget vs. actuals for the 2025-2026 season following the conclusion of this winter season.

Key Messages

The following key messages are routinely used on the City's website (Guelph.ca/snow), in public notices, on social media, and in other communications materials during the winter season.

General winter control

- When temperatures drop or poor weather arrives, City crews get to work:
 - Plowing roads, sidewalks, paid parking lots, bus stops, arenas and trails, along with City facilities including transit, fire stations, Guelph paramedic stations to clear heavy snow and treat ice.
 - Spreading salt and/or sand to melt ice and prevent slipping
- City crews are out working before, during and after it snows.
- To prepare for the winter weather, please:
 - Plan your travel accordingly
 - Move your car off city streets
 - If you're able, pitch in by helping clear sidewalks, the ends of driveways, and around fire hydrants
 - Leave space for plows. Crews will be clearing snow as quickly as possible to keep the city moving.
- Visit guelph.ca/snow for information, to view the plow tracker, and to report a concern or problem area.
- Follow @CityofGuelph on Facebook, Instagram, X, Bluesky and Threads for updates.
- Download the VoyentAlert! Mobile app from the Apple or Google Play store to receive alerts from the City.
- To report a concern with powerlines and outages, including a tree on a powerline, please contact Alectra Utilities at 519-822-3014.
- If needed, you can contact the City's winter operations department at operations@guelph.ca or 519-837-5628.

How we prioritize snow removal (during normal operations)

- Roads: The City clears main arterial roads first, followed by secondary roads and then residential roads.
- Sidewalks: High priority sidewalks (sidewalks with high volume of pedestrian traffic): plowed after 4 centimetres of snow accumulates.
- Residential sidewalks: plowed after 8 centimetres of snow accumulates.
- Trails: Guelph maintains sections of our most popular trails during the winter. Please [refer to this map](#) for more information.

- We may need more time to finish our scheduled routes due to heavy snow and ongoing winter weather. Please wait at least 48 hours after the snow stops to report a problem. After that, you can [report a problem online](#)

Significant Weather Events (SWE)

- The City of Guelph has declared a Significant Weather Event (SWE). Complete information about plow-outs and impacts to City services is available here: *(link to public notice)*
- There is a City-wide parking ban in effect. Please move parked vehicles off City streets.
- Staff and equipment resources from other departments are reassigned to the Operations Department
- All staff work on a corporate winter control priority list. This list, which is reviewed regularly and updated, prioritizes all winter control tasks based on public safety. The corporate priority lists guide staff to which tasks should be completed or maintained first to those that are to be completed last. For example, primary roads, access to fire stations, accessibility priorities such as access to bus stops and the Evergreen Seniors Centre take priority over recreational trails and City parks. During a significant weather event, it is not uncommon for staff to focus on high priority areas for a period of time until moving into lower priority tasks. As well, if weather conditions deteriorate while completing lower priority tasks, staff may be directed to return to higher priority tasks
- Due to the amount of snow that may need to be plowed or removed during a significant weather event, the event may last days after the snow stops falling. Therefore, when a significant weather event is called, please wait until the event has been cancelled to report a problem. After that, you can [report a problem online](#).
- Visit Guelph.ca/snow for more information, to track the plows, or to report a problem online.
- The City will communicate when the SWE has lifted via:
 - social media across @CityofGuelph Facebook, Instagram, X, Bluesky, and Threads
 - Update to the public notice and "latest updates" section to guelph.ca/snow where a link to the public notice can be found
 - A broadcast VoyentAlert! To all subscribers of the notifications service.

Parking

- Starting December 1, 2025 all vehicles must be off City streets between the hours of 2 - 6 a.m. until March 31, 2026.
- When a SWE is declared, parked cars must be moved off all roads to allow the plows to pass and to ensure emergency vehicles can get through. If needed, please move your vehicle to a City parkade or paid parking lot.
- During a Significant Weather Event, parking fines are doubled to a maximum of \$90.00. Vehicles left on the street may be towed if needed.
- Follow along the City's social channels, website (Guelph.ca/snow), or VoyentAlert! for updates.

Salt and sand use (updated for 2026)

- The City has limited storage capabilities for salt and sand for all its winter control tasks and therefore must restock materials throughout the winter seasons as they become depleted.
- To protect the environment and our drinking water supply, the City employs various initiatives and practices to reduce road salt usage.
- Due to sustained winter conditions across Ontario since November 2025, salt suppliers are experiencing delivery delays caused by higher-than-normal demand.
- The mixed precipitation and temperature fluctuations have resulted in ice build-up on residential streets and sidewalks, which is difficult to adequately plow. Until salt reserves are replenished, crews will continue applying sand to improve safety in icy areas.
- The City uses a mixture of salt and sand to ensure traction on main roadways, transit routes, school zones and sidewalks.
- Once salt reserves are restored and we have confidence in the ability to restock salt when depleted, staff will apply salt as needed based on weather and surface conditions.
- All available equipment works around the clock to restore service to all passages during a break in freezing rain and snow.
- During rain events staff work to clear catch basins and deal with ponding issues.
- [Learn more about Guelph's salt supply management strategy.](#)

Contracted services

- The City employs contractors to assist with the winter control activities. These contractors are responsible for assisting with the maintenance of our downtown parking lots, fire stations and transit facility at 170 Watson. While City resources are used to ensure access

for fire trucks and buses, our contractors provide assistance by clearing areas such as staff parking lots.

- In the past, the City employed contractors to plow residential streets after storms ended. Unfortunately, due to rising costs and insurance concerns, there were no reasonable bidders willing to complete this work for the 2025/2026 season. Therefore, the City has to complete this work in-house. To do so, tractors are rented annually, and casual staff are hired to operate them when required. While this allows us flexibility to begin plowing at the start of a storm rather than the end, the tractors can have limitations compared to heavier equipment.

Equipment

- Over the past few years, the City has updated its larger plows to maximize their usage. Previously, plows were only useful for plowing operations and were parked during the summer months. The new plows are also convertible and can be used year-round, reducing our overall fleet size.
- We have begun the same process for our mid-size plows, allowing them to be utilized year-round for various tasks and during the winter months these mid-size plows can be used on primary, secondary, and residential streets.
- We are participating in a project with the University of Guelph and a private company to create “smart” plows that may one day dispense materials based on immediate road conditions. This would assist with our environmental protection efforts while reducing materials costs.

Catch basins

- If you’re able, please check catch basins near your home to ensure there are no loose leaves or debris in the way of melting snow.
- Clogged catch basins can result in flooding if not cleared.

Winter control budget (updated for 2026)

- The past two winter seasons have seen significant snow accumulation and a higher need for material usage, a factor contributing to higher than usual costs.
- Budgets are set on a January to December fiscal year and variances are reported on that basis, as well. We are in the process of closing off the 2025 year-end costs, and budget variances will be reported in May, 2026.
- At this time, the City is tracking at a higher trend rate than normal for significant weather events again in 2026. Should this trend continue,

winter control costs may exceed the amount budgeted, but it is too early to tell and will also depend on the winter weather later this year.

- The winter maintenance operating budget was originally approved as part of the City's 2024-2027 Multi-Year-Budget. Annually, budgets are reviewed, updated, and confirmed. During the 2025 and 2026 budget update processes, minor adjustments were made to reflect changes in staffing and diesel costs. However, during the next Multi-Year-Budget planning process, a more comprehensive budget review for winter operations will be completed and adjustments will be made based on historical precipitation averages, overall identified needs, Council or mayoral direction related to service levels, and city growth resulting in more operators and equipment for new roadways.
- The City also maintains the Environment and Utility reserve (198) to help manage budget fluctuations from year to year. We put away funds in light snow winters when there is a budget surplus for winter control and withdraw funds from the reserve in heavy winters that push us over budget.