

INFORMATION NOTE

Title:	January 17th Snowmagedon Event Debrief
Date Prepared:	November 25, 2020
Report To:	Committee of the Whole
Councilor and Role:	Members of Council
Ward:	N/A

Issue: Debrief results of January 17, 2020 Snowmagedon event

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

January 17, 2020, saw one of the most significant snowfalls in the history of St. John's. By the morning of January 18, 2020, approximately 75cm of snow had fallen. The long duration and intensity of the blizzard during the 17th resulted in the City of St. John's declaring a State of Emergency (SOE), the first in over 35 years.

A significant challenge to achieving the level of necessary snow clearing is the ability to recover completely from an event before the next event begins. The impacts of the storm were complicated by the 130cm of snow that fell between December 24th to January 16th and a weather system on January 19, 2020 that provided an additional 20 cm of snow accumulation.

The 90+ cm of accumulated snow proved difficult to clear from the over 1400 lane km of roadways. To ensure the safety of operators and to allow clear access for emergency responders, the SOE remained in effect in varying degrees until the morning of Saturday, January 25th.

As part of any major incident, the Emergency and Safety Services Division conducts a "Incident Debrief" to determine what went well during the event and what requires further investigation. The resulting gap analysis is then used to update policies and procedures and aid in developing best practices for future incidents.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:

- Financial cost of snow clearing for the January 17th event has been estimated at \$7 million.
- Application has been made to the Disaster Financial Assistance Fund to recover \$6.2 million of allowable expenses.

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2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:

- Public Works
- City Manager's Office
- St. John's Regional Fire Service
- Eastern Health
- Royal Newfoundland Constabulary
- Province of NL – Fire and Emergency Services
- Emergency related non-governmental organizations (i.e. Red Cross and Salvation Army)
- Canadian Armed Forces

3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:

N/A

4. Legal or Policy Implications:

Declaration of a State of Emergency is enabled by the City of St. John's Act.

5. Privacy Implications:

N/A

6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:

Communications with the public and industry was paramount during this event. Future incidents/events will continue to rely on clear a concise information from a single source.

7. Human Resource Implications:

N/A

8. Procurement Implications:

N/A

9. Information Technology Implications:

N/A

10. Other Implications:

N/A

Conclusion/Next Steps:

The debrief completed by the Emergency and Safety Services Division identified four actionable items to be reviewed and followed up.

1. Crisis Communication Plan – review of current document to include but not limited to.
 - a. Media briefings – method of delivery including use of technology.
 - b. Define roles and responsibilities of other emergency partners during a SOE.
 - c. Investigate assignment of Communications/PR Officer to Public Works during major events and/or winter season.
2. Establish process to acquire engineering subject matter experts during emergency events such as the avalanche in the Battery.
3. Declaration of State of Emergency – review to include but not limited to
 - a. Process of declaration and process for granting exemptions.
 - b. Enforcement of the State of Emergency.
 - c. Process to coordinate with neighboring municipalities.
4. Emergency Coordination Center Operational Guideline – review to include but not limited to.
 - a. Awareness of planning cycle and communication of coordination center activation level to staff/departments.
 - b. Virtual operation of the Emergency Coordination Center.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Debrief of January 17th Snowmagedon Event.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Feb 4, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Sherry Colford - Jan 14, 2021 - 8:54 AM

No Signature - Task assigned to Kevin Breen was completed by workflow administrator Karen Chafe

Kevin Breen - Feb 4, 2021 - 3:52 PM