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# The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake Information Report to Council

**SUBJECT:** Winter Weather Event Policy  
**DATE:** 2026-04-21  
**REPORT #:** OPS-26-012  
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**DEPARTMENT:** Public Works & Infrastructure Services Department

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the proposed Significant Weather Event (SWE) Policy for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The policy establishes a framework for declaring, managing, communicating, and rescinding Significant Weather Events in accordance with Ontario Regulation 239/02 under the Municipal Act, 2001.

The policy supports public safety, operational clarity, and regulatory compliance during severe weather conditions that may temporarily prevent the Town from meeting the minimum maintenance standards prescribed by the Province.

Ontario Regulation 239/02 establishes minimum maintenance standards for municipal highways, including requirements related to snow accumulation, ice control, roadway and sidewalk conditions.

Amendments to the regulation in 2018 introduced provisions allowing municipalities to declare a **Significant Weather Event** when severe or unusual weather conditions make it impractical or unsafe to meet the prescribed maintenance timelines.

A Significant Weather Event is defined as an approaching or occurring weather hazard with the potential to pose a significant danger to users of municipal highways.

Examples of weather hazards that may trigger a declaration include:

- Major snowstorms or blizzards
- Freezing rain or ice storms
- Snow squalls or flash freeze conditions
- Extreme rainfall or flooding
- High wind events

During a declared Significant Weather Event, municipal roads and sidewalks are considered to be in a **state of repair** under the regulation while the municipality monitors conditions and deploys resources as circumstances permit.

## **NEXT STEP / CONCLUSION**

When a Significant Weather Event is declared:

- Public Works staff will continue to monitor weather and roadway conditions;
- Resources will be deployed when it is safe and practical to do so;
- Minimum Maintenance Standard timelines are temporarily suspended while the event remains in effect;
- All operational actions and decisions will be documented for accountability and legal purposes.

The policy does not relieve the Town of its responsibility to make reasonable efforts to maintain municipal infrastructure and ensure public safety.

When a Significant Weather Event is declared or rescinded, the Town will communicate the information through one or more of the following channels:

- Town website
- Official Town social media platforms
- News releases where appropriate

Public communication helps ensure residents understand that severe weather conditions may temporarily impact maintenance operations.

The Significant Weather Event Policy establishes a clear and consistent framework for responding to extreme weather conditions in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Adopting the policy will support regulatory compliance, enhance operational efficiency, and strengthen the Town's ability to manage risk during severe weather events.

The Region of Niagara has issued a number of Significant Weather Events during this winter, and it was noted during a review of current Public Works policies that the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake did not have a policy in place to allow for the same declaration. This new internal policy rectifies this situation.

This policy will be finalized with a number and draft watermark removed, and will come into effect on May 1, 2026.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix I – Significant Weather Event Policy - DRAFT