



Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing



Association of Municipalities of Ontario

ONTARIO CENTRE FOR MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

393 University Ave., Suite 1701, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1E6

BEST PRACTICES SUMMARY REPORT

RO – WC – 04 – 06

Roads – Winter Control – Voluntary Night Shift

Practice Identification: Roads Winter Control – Voluntary Night Shift

Case Study Municipality: Peterborough County

Key Word: Operational Procedures

Benefits that resulted from adoption of the Practice;

- Improved winter event response times resulting from night shift deployment of three units (no callout lag time)
 - Overtime avoidance and cost reduction resulting from the “straight time” salary and wage structure associated with the voluntary second shift
 - Compliance with relevant “hours of work” legislation and improved operator safety
 - Liability control by exceeding Minimum Maintenance Standards
 - Cooperative management-union relationship
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1. Description of the Practice in the Case-study Municipality

Peterborough County delivers winter control services across a primary road system consisting of 1,470 paved kilometers. Peterborough’s 2002 winter event response capacity features 16 units in total. The County’s response is composed of a mix of direct (14 units) and contracted service providers. An event response is initiated at 5cm of accumulation. An initial system-wide

plowing response is completed within 4 hours, on average. Bare pavement service levels are the norm. Patrol is 24/7.

Peterborough County's night shift consists of three units deployed from 7pm to 5am (Monday-Friday) during the entire winter season. This schedule allows for overlap with the day shift during particularly heavy winter events. Weekend events are handled on a call-out basis at overtime rates.

The three combined units deployed during the night shift can focus on a particular affected area or extend their service across the entire system. The night shift provides a "running start" in managing overnight winter events and returning roads to a navigable condition for morning traffic.

The "voluntary" nature of the night shift is the result of a cooperative labour relations model that has developed within the County. In 2002, on a trial basis, County employees agreed to staff the night shift at the same straight time compensation rates paid to the County's day shift. The practice continues into 2004. The practice suited the personal schedules of several existing County employees, who volunteered for the night shift.

The cooperative labour relations model allows the County to continue to "in-source" the bulk of its winter control program, and avoids the need to expand the amount of work allocated to the contracted service provider – a win/win situation for the County and its staff.

The County of Peterborough had among the lowest 2002 winter control costs per kilometer within its category of road system.

2. Evaluation of Practice

The voluntary nature of the Peterborough County night shift is the key to the practice.

The financial benefits of this cooperative staffing model to the County are significant – avoidance of overtime costs equivalent to 50% of the straight time hourly wage rate for the second shift. The County has not yet fully quantified the precise overtime cost avoidance savings, but staff categorize the savings as "ultimately measurable and very significant".

From a safety perspective, County employees avoid burnout from excessive overtime hours, reduce safety risk, and contribute towards compliance with hours-of-work legislation.

County event response times have improved significantly, and now consistently exceed winter control Minimum Maintenance Standards. Staff report that service

level improvements were necessary across the system because the LSR transfer of Provincial highways to the County (with their inherited high service levels) created a new service level “benchmark” in terms of public expectations. The voluntary night shift model contributed to the “upwards averaging” of service levels without associated cost increases.

3. Replication of Practice

Replicating Peterborough County’s voluntary night shift deployment model would require the following:

- 1) A management-union relationship founded on constructive dialogue and a recognition of shared economic interests around service delivery efficiency and work in-sourcing
- 2) The existence of a contracted service delivery alternative that focuses management and unions on the need for cost control as a pre-condition for continuing direct delivery and work in-sourcing

Developing a mix of direct and contracted service delivery capacity may not be possible in remote or very small municipalities. However, most Ontario municipalities can duplicate the type direct/contracted service mix present in Peterborough County. Other examples of voluntary shift deployment models can be found in Belleville, Dufferin County, and the Town of Mono.

4. Contact

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