



Last updated on November 7, 2025

## **2025-2026 Winter Operations Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

### **Who decides when to send out the plows?**

Markham's Operations-Roads team makes this decision, based on Council approved service levels. Markham's winter service levels either meet or in many cases exceed the Province of Ontario's legislated service levels for clearing snow from roads and sidewalks.

### **How much snow has to fall before the City plows all streets?**

It has to snow at least 7.5 cm or 3 inches before a full plow is activated.

### **How many big storms does the City of Markham receive each year?**

The frequency of storms that meet or exceed 7.5 cm of snowfall can vary. Some years, like the 2023-2024 winter season, we only had two storms that met the threshold and required a full network plow. In the 2024-2025 winter season, we experienced 7 full network plow events. In previous years, we have seen as many as nine or more storms over 7.5 cm of snowfall.

### **How long is the City of Markham road network?**

Markham's road network (the area we control and plow) is approximately 2,100 km. That is the equivalent of travelling from Toronto to Montreal 4 times.

### **How long is the City of Markham sidewalk, multi-use pathway and cycle track network?**

We have approximately 1,175km of sidewalks, multi-use pathways and cycle tracks that we clear.

### **How long does it take to plow all City streets?**

That depends on how much snow falls and how fast. During a typical storm, it can take between 12-16 hours to completely plow all City streets inclusive of lane ways.

### **How many pieces of equipment does the City use to maintain its streets during a snow event?**

The City can mobilize over 200 pieces of equipment to manage a winter storm event.

### **How does the City manage so many pieces of equipment?**

The City has an Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) system in every piece of equipment. We can use the AVL to monitor compliance and performance. The City also has a number of supervisory field staff on call should a storm hit and require plowing.

Residents can see what the status of their plow is by downloading the City of Markham Mobile App, and using our Winter Maintenance App available at [www.markham.ca/neighbourhood-services/roads-sidewalks/winter-road-services](http://www.markham.ca/neighbourhood-services/roads-sidewalks/winter-road-services).

### **Does the City of Markham ever review their service levels?**

Yes, we do. Staff provide updates to Council approximately every two years, or as Council requests them. These updates can be general reports to Council or extensive workshops. The last report was provided to Council in May 2022, outlining the 2024/25 winter services standards. Council has approved the current service levels as presented.



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### **Does Markham plow all the roads in the City?**

No, the roads in Markham can be owned by a number of governing bodies: The City of Markham, York Region and the Province of Ontario. Markham only manages the services of Markham-owned roads – these are generally local roads and roads that do not cross over City boundaries.

### **What is the City's Level of Service for Roads?**

The City's road network is broken down into road classifications based on a few factors which include average daily traffic, speed limit and proximity to schools and emergency services.

#### **Arterial Roads**

Roads carry large volumes of traffic and include transit and emergency routes.

- Salted and/or plowed until pavement is bare/wet, 24 hours per day
- 7 days per week throughout the winter season.

#### **Primary Roads**

Roads which distribute traffic to City and Regional Arterial Roads.

- Salted and/or plowed until pavement is bare/wet, 24 hours per day
- 7 days per week throughout the winter season.

#### **Secondary Roads**

Roads which distribute traffic onto primary roads.

- Salted and/or plowed as required until the center width of pavement is bare/wet
- 7 AM to 6 PM, 7 days per week throughout the winter season.

#### **Local Roads & Laneways**

Roads carry very low volumes of traffic and are not intended to carry through traffic.

- Acceptable in a snow-packed condition.
- Plowing carried out once snow accumulations reach or exceed 7.5 cm.
- Salted as required if slippery conditions exist.

#### **Windrow Removal Service**

Qualified and approved seniors or residents with a disability only.

- One car width of driveway removed no matter how wide the driveway is.
- Completed within 4 hours after the fronting street is plowed.

### **Why doesn't the City do all windrows like the City of Toronto?**

The City of Toronto doesn't do all windrows. They provide this service only in Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke, and only on streets where it is mechanically possible. City of Markham staff undertook a comprehensive review and presented a report to Council in September 2022. A City-wide windrow clearing program would significantly impact the tax base and result in an increase in the residential tax rate.

Council supported the staff recommendation to only provide windrow clearing to approved residents - those who are either 60 years of age or older or have a disability.



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**Why don't they remove the entire windrow?**

The intent of the program is to assist in making your driveway passable, not to clear the entire windrow. Operators remove one single car width, no matter how wide the driveway is, and the level of service is to have that completed 4 hours after the fronting road has been plowed. All residents who are approved are responsible for clearing the remainder of their driveway.

**I often get a windrow from sidewalk plows, why doesn't the City remove that too?**

The windrow removal assistance program only removes one single car width of snow and only from the end of your driveway as a result of the road plows. The two operations are not connected.

**How many windrows does the City clear?**

Currently, approximately 8,000 homes are approved for driveway windrow snow removal service each storm.

**Why can't I have my rear lane way access included for windrow clearing?**

Rear laneways are cleared by front end loaders and not road plows, so the snow is removed from the laneway as opposed to being pushed to the side like the road plows do. This way, little-to-no snow is left behind.

**Why do I get more snow on my side of the street?**

Road plows are designed to push snow from the middle of the road, to the right side of the road, and just like any type of car, they are required to drive in the proper direction of traffic.

All operators are instructed to follow the rules of the road, and split the snow as evenly as possible to share the snow load. Often times on the plows' first pass on a road, the operator will clear slightly over the center of the road so that they can uncover and see the painted center line for their return pass. This means that there may be slightly more snow dispensed on one side of the road compared to the other.

It's also important to note that road plows with their wing blade down, are approximately 4 metres (13 feet) wide. This means that on some of the City's streets that can be as narrow as 6 metres wide, plows can sometimes clear 2/3 of the road in a single pass. Once again, this will result in more snow on one side of the street.

Sometimes parked cars create an uneven split in the snow due to a road plow having to drive around it. Residents are reminded that parked cars restrict snow clearing activities and owners are subject to a fine and/or tow. Please do your part, and do not park on the street during a winter storm event.

**I live on an inside corner. Why do I get so much snow in my driveway?**

Road plows are designed to push snow from the middle of the road, to the right side of the road. Snow is always plowed to the right and as a result, those that live on any type of corner will naturally receive a larger amount of snow due to the snow being carried around the corner before it has the opportunity to dispense off of the plow blade.

**The City plows the snow to the curb and creates a windrow. Why can't I push that snow back out onto the road?**

All municipalities are legislated by the Province of Ontario to ensure roads are maintained for the safety of all



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residents and road users. To meet the legislated requirements and maintain Council-approved service levels, a bylaw was enacted to prohibit snow dumping onto the roadway. As such, dumping snow on a City road can result in fines being issued.

In short, if a road has already been plowed, and a resident puts snow back onto the road, they are putting their neighbours and fellow residents at risk of slippery and potentially dangerous conditions. Also, if a road plow comes back, the snow will be pushed right back to side of the road again.

Best practice is to dump snow onto the boulevard and not onto the road.

**I see private contractors plowing driveways and they often push snow across the road, making a mess, and pushing more snow onto my frontage. Is this allowed?**

No, this is punishable under the same bylaw above, and subject to a fine. If this is happening, please contact the City and a Bylaw Officer will be dispatched to the home of the resident creating the mess.

**What happens if a sidewalk plow damages my property?**

A large portion of your boulevard is City property, roughly where your water supply valve is located in your driveway or front lawn. Residents are advised to remove all driveway borders, sprinklers, gardens or garden features near the road or sidewalks. The City is only responsible to repair sod damage. Sod repairs are completed in the spring once sod is available at sod farms.

**Who maintains bus stops?**

The proper transit authority does - the TTC, York Region Transit, VIVA and GO are all responsible for their stops including the shelters and the connection from the sidewalk to the shelter.

**Who maintains Canada Post boxes?**

Canada Post is responsible for all snow clearing in front of their community boxes. Residents should contact Canada Post Customer Service directly at 1.800.265.1177.

**Does the City of Markham let the transit authorities and Canada Post know when they're plowing?**

Yes. During every major snow storm the City notifies all agencies when we begin a full network plow. They are notified during snow storms where there is 7.5 cm (or 3 inches) or more of snowfall.