

Town may take on winter roads

By Nate Smelle

During his presentation to Bancroft council at its Sept. 12 meeting, public works manager Perry Kelly proposed a cost-saving measure that could save the town approximately \$10,000 each year. To bring about these savings, Kelly recommended that the town start handling the winter maintenance of the approximately 11.1 kilometres of highways leading in and out of Bancroft ? known as the connecting links. The physical boundaries of the connecting link extend from Hwy 62 near Rona/Cashway in L'Amable, north to Victoria Drive in Maynooth, east to the Moose FM radio station on Hwy 28 and south to the Faraday Township office on Hwy 28. Kelly states in his report that ?the cost of 150 days service for winter maintenance as provided by a contractor has become a financial burden to the Town of Bancroft.?

Currently winter maintenance operations for the connecting links is contracted out to Carillion Canada Inc. The cost of the existing contract with Carillion is \$99,308, whereas the total cost of in-house operations is estimated at \$90,532. The overall cost to maintain these highways also includes an additional \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year for road salt.

By bringing the winter maintenance of the connecting links in-house, Kelly believes it could create more savings because it ?would allow staff to regulate appropriate salt usages depending on weather conditions.? Pointing out that the town does not have a salt storage facility, Councillor Charles Mullett suggested that the timing may not be right for the town. Kelly responded that management is currently working towards securing an approved site for salts and storage.

If the town decides to take responsibility for the winter roads work, Kelly said it would need to lease a roll-off truck at an annual cost of \$55,200. It would also need to hire seasonal staff to maintain the highways from Nov. 1 until April 15.

As well as gaining control of how and when the winter maintenance is completed, another advantage of taking it on in-house would be that the vehicle could be used to move bins at the landfill site throughout the rest of the year.

Highlighting the time sensitivity of the acquisition, Kelly reminded council that they needed to make a decision sooner than later if they wanted to take advantage of the savings for the winter of 2017-'18. Council is expected to make a decision on the matter at their next meeting.