

# White Christmas comes with high snow removal cost

By JENNIFER SMITH

STAFF REPORTER

They may be fluffy white flakes, but this month's perpetual snowfall has city bookkeepers seeing red.

Snow crews blew the snow clearing budget mid-December this year and have been out on the streets virtually every day since, according to Dale Beaudry, roads and equipment superintendent.

"We don't adjust our level of service because we run out of money," Beaudry said, noting he can't remember a day they haven't had a crew on the street this month.

"We even went out at 6 p.m. on Christmas Day," he added.

The city set aside \$950,000 to cover road clearing in 2007, but just as in 2006, it wasn't enough.

The numbers are still being tallied, but it appears they cleared somewhere in the vicinity of \$1.3 million worth of snow, with the shortfall to be drawn from reserves.

"The good news is, we have a new budget come tomorrow," Beaudry said Monday.

This is the third season Kelowna used more money than originally planned to clear the roads—a relatively uncommon predicament up until two years ago.

Prior to the string of bad weather, crews saw five years of paltry snowfalls, leaving surpluses in the coffers.



SEAN CONNOR/CAPITAL NEWS

**A SNOW PLOW** works the snow on McCurdy Road. Snow removal cost the City of Kelowna \$1.3 million in 2007.

This year, the amount of snow in each snowfall left little on the ground, but even an inch of snow requires a truck to clear the road.

"It'll just pack it down and then it will be ice," said Beau-

dry.

He was expecting to see his crews out for much of the early New Year.

Keeping those crews out requires some crafty scheduling.

A driver's maximum shift is 16 hours before a mandatory eight-hour rest break kicks in and another driver must take over.

Asked how many men Beaudry has at his disposal, he

said there is really too many to count.

In addition to his regular crew, he can draw from drivers in the regular utilities yard and the parks department.

Next year's snow plow-

ing budget will be \$975,000. It was expected crews would be out clearing roads again on New Year's Day, earning twice the pay for their efforts because of the holiday.

[jsmith@kelownacapnews.com](mailto:jsmith@kelownacapnews.com)