

To PWIC
April 9 2014
Good Morning

My name is Mark Earley, I am a senior, retired, and 70. I do a lot of walking in the city. I am here to advocate for thorough and quick clearing of all downtown sidewalks.

Sidewalk Clearing of Snow and Ice

- Downtown Sidewalks need to be cleared of snow and ice, thoroughly and quickly.
- Clearing must be to concrete. Clearing that leaves an inch or two is not clearing.
- Clearing that takes an awful long time does not serve the purpose.

Observations this past winter

- Downtown sidewalks remained uncleared (or partially cleared) days after snowfall.
- Rarely was there a time when all Downtown sidewalks were bare concrete.
- Property owner clearing is hugely inconsistent, from nothing to perfect.

Walking is Transit

- Walking is the most basic form of transit there is.
- Everyone needs to walk, to get to the store, work, the doctor, the bus, the theatre, the car, and soon the mail box. Kids walk to school.
- Sidewalks are intended to afford that basic need, and in fact do so, except in winter.
- Walking relieves other forms of transit, principally busses and streetcars, and is worth encouraging on that basis alone.

Walking is Health

- Walking is the most basic form of exercise. It is recommended by health professionals far and wide.
- 'Poor Walkability' was sited just yesterday (Toronto Star) as contributing to Brampton's high diabetes rate.
- Obesity treatment requires diet and exercise, walking being the principal exercise.
- Walking enhances social interaction, looking after one's self.
- Walking enhances mental health.

Walking in Winter

- Walking on any depth of snow or slush, irrespective of salting, is more difficult than walking on bare pavement, for all of us.
- Walking on any depth of snow and ice risks slips and falls, hospital visits, head injuries and more.
- As one ages, both the fear of and consequences of a fall increases.
- Sidewalks 'cleared' but leaving an inch or two in place are only marginally improved, leaving all the risks intact.
- If one street is walkable, is the next?
- Many choose to not walk. They will stay home, drive, take a taxi, get a ride instead, all impacting transit and traffic.
- Inadequately cleared sidewalks deny many of primary transit, of exercise, of social contact since they will not walk.

QUALITY of clearing.

- Sidewalks, transit stops and crossings need to be cleared of snow down to the concrete and then salted, and maintained that way.
- To commence clearing at 2cm implies 1 1/2cm is acceptable. It is not. Ice has no minimum thickness.
- No exceptions. Not even due to width, obstacles, vehicles.

TIME to clear.

- Sidewalks clearing should commence at start of snowfall, not at end of it.
- All Downtown sidewalks should be cleared 4hrs after the end of snowfall.
- At end of snowfall, Works Dept to announce a 'Sidewalks Clear' time (4 hrs from end of snowfall).

NOTICE of clearance.

- For the many who are hesitant to walk, and who need confidence that all downtown sidewalks are clear, some form of notice should be issued by Public Works, not unlike a Wind Chill, or Air Quality Index issued by the weather forecaster.
- Such notice should be a time of day, issued immediately it stops snowing, when all sidewalks will be cleared. For instance, if it starts snowing at 4am, and clearing starts then, and then snowfall stops at 7am, notice is then issued stating all sidewalks within Downtown will be cleared by 11am. If snowfall starts again during these hours then the notice is cancelled and procedure starts over.

Costs

- Yes indeed there are costs involved, but both positive and negative costs.
- Clearing snow costs.
- Non existant slip and fall legal and medical bills save those costs.
- Walking benefits to health save healthcare costs.
- Seniors able to walk to service themselves saves Home Care costs.

Equipment

- Limiting sidewalk clearing because of equipment shortcomings is not acceptable. Equipment appropriate to the task needs to be developed, and quickly.
- Scraping with a steel plow blade will not of itself leave the sidewalk consistently clean. It needs to be done in conjuncton with a brush or other tools.
- Equipping plows with flexible rubber blade edges is more likely to follow sidewalk contours than steel blades.

Next Winter

Today is the start of the 6 months preparation time leading up to next winter. Use it productively. Walking is TRANSIT, walking is HEALTH.