

November 20, 2020

Dear Mayor John Tory and Toronto City Council,

The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association (SLNA) represents the interests of over 30,000 people who live in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood. The Association is also a member of the West Don Lands Committee and an immediate neighbour to Corktown, the Distillery District and the Financial District. We are writing to encourage the City to ensure safe and accessible streets, sidewalks, bike lanes and park pathways in all Toronto neighbourhoods this winter.

We note that for some time now, residents in some areas of the city have received snow clearing from the City – resulting in safer access to public spaces – while other residents, particularly those in the downtown core, have not. We would encourage you, Mr. Mayor, and City Council to redress this inequity this coming winter.

The absence of winter maintenance of downtown streets, sidewalks, bike lanes and park pathways presents barriers for many residents, commuters and visitors alike: people who are elderly; people with disabilities; people with mobility challenges; families with young children – to name several. In our St. Lawrence neighbourhood in particular, there is a higher proportion of elderly residents who will experience more significant accessibility issues this winter if the City does not ensure snow clearance.

While sidewalk clearing is a safety and accessibility issue in any year, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need for the City's support in winter sidewalk maintenance for a number of reasons:

1. **Closed Businesses** – The economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected businesses in Toronto, and in particular, those in central Toronto. Many small retailers and restaurants have closed, and their premises remain vacant; others remain operational, but with reduced capacity and/or reduced hours. Office buildings have far fewer people working on site on any given day. As a result, a number of businesses that have typically provided regular snow clearing services on public sidewalks in previous years will not be in a position to provide that same service this year.

2. **Closed Gyms, Pools, Recreational Facilities** - With gyms and most other indoor physical activity options restricted across Toronto for the foreseeable future, and with few individuals in central Toronto having the luxury of a personal home gym, by far the most popular outlet for physical activity this winter will be out of doors. The mental and physical benefits of physical activity are well established, and it is important that outdoor activities, including simply walking on the sidewalks, be made as safe and as fully accessible as possible – for all.

3. **Reducing COVID-19 transmission** - It is acknowledged that COVID-19 transmission is significantly reduced outdoors. Toronto’s medical officer of health has consistently encouraged outdoor activity as an effective method of reducing the spread of COVID-19. In October, you and Council approved a recommendation from the Toronto Office of Recovery & Rebuild report to consider developing a Winter City Plan to expand winter use of public parks, expand the CaféTO plan and pursue winter solutions for ActiveTO to increase resilience on a year-round basis. A corollary benefit of the success of these initiatives will be to bring additional visitors to the St. Lawrence and surrounding neighbourhoods. We would hope Council would agree that ensuring accessible public spaces would be a critical component of these initiatives.

Snow removal greatly contributes to the safety of residents, commuters and visitors, particularly in the downtown area. The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association encourages Council to make it a city-wide service in 2020-21, and not one that remains available in only some parts of the city. This winter, more than ever, it is important to help to create a Toronto for all, by ensuring access for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors

St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association

cc: Mayor John Tory

City Councillors:

Councillor Ainslie

Councillor Bailão

Councillor Bradford

Councillor Carroll

Councillor Colle

Councillor Crawford

Councillor Cressy

Councillor Fillion

Councillor Fletcher

Councillor Ford

Councillor Grimes

Councillor Holyday

Councillor Lai

Councillor Layton

Councillor Matlow

Councillor McKelvie

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Councillor Nunziata

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Ms. Becky Katz, Manager, Pedestrian and Cycling Unit, Transportation Services

Ms. Janie Romoff, General Manager, Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division.

St. Lawrence Market

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Mr. Al Smith, St. Lawrence Market BIA

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