

Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

Ward 13, Toronto Centre
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West
2nd Floor, Suite A5
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Tel: 416-392-7903
Fax: 416-696-4300
councillor_wongtam@toronto.ca
www.kristynwongtam.ca



November 25, 2020

City Council
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Chair and Councillors,

Re: IE17.7 - Clearing the Path Towards a Safe and Accessible Winter

As Chair of the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), I am writing to share our advisory committee's overwhelming support for a robust winter maintenance strategy for sidewalk and pathway snow clearing across the downtown core. This should include the front of offices, multi-unit residential towers, commercial and retail establishments as well as the clearing of high pedestrian volume pathways through City of Toronto parks to provide improved access to washroom and other community facilities, in order to ensure safe access of critical services to persons living with disabilities.

As you will no doubt recognize, TAAC provides advice to City Council on the elimination of barriers faced by people with disabilities and acts as a liaison with external bodies on barriers to participation in public life and to the achievement of social, cultural and economic well-being of people with disabilities. We further provide advice to City Council about the requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation, implementation and effectiveness of accessibility reports as required by the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*.

Many of the emergency response programs initiated through the course of the pandemic have created additional external barriers for anyone living with a disability, a community disproportionately affected by COVID-19. These barriers create a further sense of isolation as navigating the public realm is challenging. While Toronto Public Health encourages folks to get outdoors, this disparity in access fosters further isolation.

 **Toronto** Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

Ward 13, Toronto Centre
City Hall, 100 Queen Street West
2nd Floor, Suite A5
Toronto, Ontario M5H 2N2

Tel: 416-392-7903
Fax: 416-696-4300
councillor_wongtam@toronto.ca
www.kristynwongtam.ca



Without a conscious effort by the City of Toronto to provide hazard-free and safe sidewalks, many people living with disabilities will not have equitable access to essential services, such as grocery stores and medical appointments.

The winter months create additional challenges as those with mobility devices, or low mobility, attempt to navigate our narrow downtown streets. There are piles of snow preventing access to intersections, and uneven terrain on the public right-of-way. This creates a series of hazardous obstacles while travelling the core or simply enjoying the outdoors. It is the City of Toronto's responsibility to ensure that our most vulnerable residents can safely travel across downtown, especially when group gathering poses health risk.

By providing clear sidewalks, and pathways through the downtown and other areas without adequate winter maintenance, the City of Toronto can provide safe, equitable access to necessary services as well as help improve mental health of those living with disabilities by removing some of the challenges in navigating the City's sidewalks.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristyn Wong-Tam
City Councillor
Ward 13, Toronto Centre
Chair, Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee