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November 5, 2020

Dear Councillor Matlow

Please accept this letter of support for your motion IE17.7 'Clearing the Path Towards a Safe and Accessible Winter'

At 8 80 Cities we have been working with cities around the world over the last 13 years on improving the way they design, plan and manage their streets and public spaces. We challenge them by asking a simple but powerful question: what if everything we do in our cities is great for an 8 year old and an 80 year old? We believe if you do, you can create a better city for all people.

Creating a safe and equitable environment during the winter for people of all ages walking, riding bicycles, and using mobility devices is essential now more than ever.

Toronto Public Health has advised that being outside is a benefit that we should all taking advantage of for our physical and mental health. Toronto is lucky to have an existing network of fantastic public space assets. Our neighbourhood parks, ravines, and signature green spaces are the envy of many cities around the world, yet if these assets are not accessible year round, we are missing out on a big opportunity to facilitate improved health and well being of residents.

If #ActiveTO has proven anything during COVID-19, Torontonians are looking for safer access to their sidewalks, streets and trails.

880 Cities has worked with several winter cities in Canada and the US working on strategies that invite more public life into public spaces to address social isolation, which is exacerbated in the winter months, especially for our most vulnerable residents. By far, one of the consistent messages we hear from community members is the need for better clearing and maintenance of snow and ice. This is especially true for older adults, children and youth, and people living on low income who are more likely to use active and sustainable modes of transportation.

Walking or riding to school, to work ,or for the enjoyment of physical activity can happen in the winter. With an eye to continue maintenance throughout the winter months, we give everyone the chance to fulfill the need to be outside, for their mental and physical health.

The City of Toronto works, when it can work for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amanda O'Rourke'.

Amanda O'Rourke  
Executive Director, 8 80 Cities