



March 19, 2023

To: Chair McKelvie and Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee

Re: **Item IE2.8 - Request for First Year Review of Winter Maintenance Contracts and Addressing Obstructed Sidewalks with Snow and Ice**

From: Walk Toronto

Walk Toronto strongly supports the recommendations of Councillors Saxe and Carroll to review winter maintenance services, to report to the public on the full range of complaints, and to assess the efficacy of the reporting system.

The lack of coordination between road and sidewalk clearance creates significant windrow barriers to safe walking conditions for pedestrians. It is especially difficult for those with accessibility needs and those employing assistive devices (wheelchairs; walkers; canes; strollers; carts). The current City program fails to deal with snow windrows and fails to communicate and engage with frontage owners and proprietors on responsibilities.

Unfortunately, sidewalks appear to be a lower priority than roads and bicycle lanes, especially at the point of sidewalk connection with pedestrian rights-of-way at intersections. Windrows of snow and ice piled across intersections create very real barriers and safety risks for all pedestrians and especially for those with assistive devices. This condition must be addressed.

We are also concerned about the timing of City snow clearance (only for snowfalls > 2 cm) which can take 72 hours or more for full implementation. This flies in the face of the legal framework that "slip and fall" insurance claims are allowable 24 hours after the end of snowfall. Who is responsible in the interim before full clearance, or for snowfalls less than 2 cm? A much stronger communication and coordination program must be put into place with private sidewalk frontage owners and proprietors. We are concerned that the City program has created a vacuum and confusion over responsibilities especially when "slip and fall" responsibility most frequently names both public and private stakeholders.

Mid-block windrows also need to be broken at official TTC stops, delivery lay-bays and in front of certain commercial and residential building lobbies frequently used by patrons of Wheel Trans and other accessibility support vehicles.

Walk Toronto supports the consideration of alternatives that would rectify these pedestrian safety issues. The City of Toronto should consider a coordinated, team approach to winter maintenance developed in Montreal, where roadway plows are followed by sidewalk plows in order that problematic windrows created by the former can immediately be cleared by the latter in one clean sweep. Such as coordinating the timing of road and sidewalk clearance, restricting vehicle parking, or engaging local services to execute a windrow clearance program developed on a community block or multi-block basis.

We urge Infrastructure and Environment Committee to approve the First Year Review of Winter Maintenance Contracts. Walk Toronto is willing to actively consult during this review.

Thank you,

Doug Vallery

On behalf of Walk Toronto

Walk Toronto is a grassroots pedestrian advocacy group that works with various levels of government, community groups and citizens to improve walking conditions and safety in Toronto.