



July 22, 2025

RE: EX25.5 - Winter Maintenance Program Review

On behalf of The Eglinton Way BIA, I commend Mayor Chow and Council for digging into the failures associated with the City's winter maintenance program. The report before you is focused primarily on the systemic issues that were exposed by major snow events during a two-week period in February. While you consider those failures, I would like to highlight the fact that the report from the City Manager and the third-party reviewer claim that the City's winter maintenance process and procedures tend to work *reasonably well* for routine snowfalls.

From my perspective, Council should carefully consider what *reasonably well* means during routine snow events – because I would suggest that it is a low bar to either aspire to or be satisfied with. For far too long, routine snow clearing practices often result in snowbanks that can persist for weeks at a time. These snowbanks act as unsafe barriers to pedestrians and the mobility-impaired by deterring or even preventing access to customers/clients and patients that want to support our businesses or access them for important appointments. We have numerous medical offices in our BIA and rescheduling appointments due to access issues is more than just an inconvenience. The livelihoods of our small businesses also suffer when access is impeded for any length of time.

'Main Street' BIA's like ours (characterized by mostly small businesses) have complained for some time about City plows pushing snow onto sidewalks, into parking spaces and into side street intersections because they made our streets less accessible for pedestrians to access our businesses – whether they walked from home, got off a bus or a parked car, it could often be a perilous journey to walk even a short distance. These barriers to access have been compounded in BIAs like ours that have been reconfigured by the City's 'Complete Streets' program. By adding bike lanes and associated infrastructure to make our street 'complete', new barriers to access have been added that push more snow onto sidewalks and create another snowbank between the roadway and the bike lane. When snow accumulates because of one or two major events or a series of smaller ones over a time, snowbanks that remain as barriers to access need to be removed.

As you review this program, I urge Council and staff to consider the City's own objectives as described in your Complete Streets and Vision Zero Road Safety Plan against the winter maintenance practices and Council approved guidelines that staff so eagerly reference in response to complaints. I suggest that there is a disconnect between your policy objectives and implementation. The Eglinton Way recently worked with City Transportation Services staff to implement the Complete Streets program, but it should be more than just putting in bike lanes and making sure those lanes are safe for those cyclists that brave the cold. The practice of clearing those bike lanes should not make access for others even worse than before they existed because the plows clearing them push the snow aside to create yet another barrier between the roadway and the cleared part of the sidewalk in front of the buildings.



For these reasons, I strongly urge Council to consider creating a new, lower threshold for the removal of accumulated snow in Complete Street segments of the City where local businesses and service providers and their customers and clients depend on safe and reliable access.

Thank you in advance for your attention and for your efforts to improve the operations of this vital service to our city.

Sincerely,

Maureen Sirois

Chair, The Eglinton Way BIA