



OLIVIA CHOW
MAYOR

March 3, 2026

To: The Executive Committee

Re: Winter Surge Capacity Snow Shovellers

In 2021, City Council voted to expand sidewalk snow plowing to include all sidewalks in the City of Toronto. Prior to this change, property owners were responsible for shovelling their own sidewalks in much of the old city of Toronto.

During significant snowfalls, the City has encountered challenges with our sidewalk plows, and clearing sidewalks has continued to be a point of frustration. Last year, I brought a motion to direct staff to buy new, better sidewalk plows capable of moving larger quantities of snow without getting bogged down or breaking down. While this is an improvement, there is still more we can do to get Toronto moving after extreme storms.

At our regular snow operations meetings throughout January and February, I asked City staff to explore options to pay Torontonians to help our city dig out from the snow. Staff identified challenges with legal liability and operational considerations at the time. Instead, we pursued other creative avenues we could implement more quickly, like securing the Province's highway snow removal crews to allow our crews to focus on local streets.

Cities do best when we learn from each other and adopt best practices from other cities. We now have the opportunity to engage our counterparts in New York City on their recent success with a paid relief snow shovelling program, and implement lessons learned right here in Toronto.

I have had several productive conversations with the City Manager and our winter operations team about continuing to improve winter service operations and I am confident City staff will work to get it done.

Recommendations:

- 1) City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Infrastructure Services, in coordination with the General Manager Transportation Services, Chief People Officer and the City Solicitor, to develop a paid surge capacity sidewalk shovelling program modelled on the successful approach in New York City, for implementation as soon as possible and no later than the 2026-2027 winter season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Chow", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Olivia Chow