

Appendix A

March 22, 2023

Infrastructure Renewal and Public Works Committee

I am pleased to write, in a personal capacity as a resident of Winnipeg and a safety advocate, in support of the motion to better sidewalk conditions.

As a world-leading winter city and the seventh largest city in Canada, Winnipeg is growing rapidly and its population is expected to exceed one million in the next decade or sooner. Unlike all other top-ten Cities in Canada and comparator cities in north America, Winnipeg transportation options are limited as they do not include a network of expressways or a light rail transit system. Existing transportation facilities in Winnipeg, consisting of roads, streets, bridges and bus rapid transit, struggle to meet the growing traffic demand, and to permit users to share the space in a safe and sustainable manner.

For these reasons, it is imperative that, where possible, the City strategically encourage more effective use of public transit and remove barriers for non-motorized transportation modes in all seasons.

Winnipeg has a responsive and effective snow clearing and winter maintenance policy for roads which continues to serve the needs of the community at an adequate level of service. The motion aims to study alternatives for removing snow and ice from sidewalks and pathways that are presently not being maintained to the same level of service of the road network. Inaccessible or slippery sidewalks create hazardous conditions for pedestrians, and may lead some to choose to walk in traffic lanes or to lose access to transit.

Such policy changes would have budget implications and possibly unforeseen disadvantages that will need to be mitigated. However, I support this motion because there is value in placing pedestrians at an equal if not higher priority than other road users, and significant benefits in learning from best practices of other cities, and introducing and validating new technologies on a trial basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Ahmed Shalaby, Ph.D., P.Eng
Professor of Civil Engineering,
University of Manitoba
and
Technical Director, Safer Roads Canada



March 22, 2023

For approximately half the year, every year, our city becomes dramatically less accessible due to ice and snowfall accumulation. This impacts everyone, but none more than citizens with disabilities and older adults, who already may face significant barriers to the community. Simply navigating a public sidewalk, even Portage Avenue, is not something that many can take for granted. Without mobility and access to transportation all measurable public health outcomes suffer. Improving access to sidewalks must be a priority, as it is integral to our overall transportation network.

The Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC) supports the motion to study improved sidewalk clearing methods to bare pavement, and sustainable construction standards. It has been very encouraging in recent years to see the City of Winnipeg invest in new snow clearing equipment, financial resources and revised priorities for sidewalk clearing, and this proposal supports that commitment.

An accessible transportation network is entirely possible, but it requires more than equipment or vehicles, it requires resources and policies, and especially in the case of snow clearing: accountability. A well cleared sidewalk, whether to the pavement or hard packed snow can be rendered entirely inaccessible when the clearing of a street or the dumping of cleared snow is done negligibly with no oversight or recourse. The nature of the beast is also that a totally cleared sidewalk remains so until the next weather event, demonstrating that accessibility is not a finish line but an attitude and a commitment.

The pilot project proposed is not only an opportunity to experiment with new snow clearing and construction techniques, but with accountability. How can our communities benefit from knowing that sidewalk access (notably to a transit stop) is reliable and can be counted on? Considering our climate, and that we know access to employment, education, the economy, health and well-being is not possible without mobility, it is vital that the City of Winnipeg remain committed to exploring new opportunities to improve access and remove barriers.

Sincerely,

Patrick Stewart
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Councilor Matt Allard
510 Main St.
Winnipeg, MB, R3B1B9

March 21, 2023

Dear Councilor Allard,

The CNIB is a 105-year-old organization that works to break down the barriers that are faced by individuals who are blind and partially sighted everyday. We strive to change what it means to be blind today.

There are many barriers that face the blind and partially sighted community and one of the biggest is right outside their doors. Sidewalks are not prioritized in the snow clearing plans for the City of Winnipeg. The roads are cleared to pavement as soon as possible because community members rely on them to get to work and live their daily lives.

For individuals who are blind and partially sighted they rely on the sidewalks to live their daily lives, raise their families, get to work, and school. With the condition of many of the sidewalks individuals who are blind are often very isolated in the winter months because it is not safe for them to go out, or they need to pay extra to get around because they are not able to access the bus system that they rely on. This is something that affects their ability to live the lives that they want.

Utilizing different methods and priorities I believe that the City of Winnipeg could strive to create an accessible and inclusive city that puts the sidewalk clearing at more of a priority than it currently is.

CNIB is committed to continue to educate and advocate to remove the barriers for the individuals who are blind and partially sighted in Winnipeg. We would welcome a meeting to discuss ways that this could be achieved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ashley Nemeth".

Ashley Nemeth,
Provincial Director CNIB