Appendix B

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,

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