

November 18, 2016

Public Works and Infrastructure Committee

**Re: Preventing Injuries from Wintertime Slips and Falls in Toronto (PW17.14)**

Dear Chair Jaye Robinson and Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee,

I'm the Director of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of the registered charity Clean Air Partnership. TCAT's mission is to advance knowledge and evidence to build support for safe and inclusive streets for walking and cycling.

On behalf of TCAT, I would like to express support for the recommendations made by Toronto Public Health, particularly to clear all sidewalks in all parts of the city. This is common practice in other Canadian cities such as Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec. We are also in support of changing the snowfall threshold to 2 cm for all sidewalks. Especially in Toronto's climate, if snow is not cleared until 8 cm is accumulated it can become compacted and icy and make it very difficult to walk.

TCAT has presented to the Committee on different occasions on this topic over the past few years. We feel that the current level of service for clearing walkways is unacceptable. Walking is a healthy mode of transportation and can be an all-year activity but the slippery road conditions and poor snow clearing quality are significant barriers.

The Toronto Public Health report "Preventing Injuries from Wintertime Slips and Falls in Toronto" shows that each year Toronto is found negligent in slip-and-fall lawsuits for its failure to remove snow and ice and pays out about \$6.7 million annually of taxpayers money to resolve these claims. These costs, as well as the human and health care costs of injuries sustained by Torontonians, could be dramatically reduced by improving sidewalk clearing. The main shortcoming of the current winter maintenance program is the piecemeal approach to winter clearing for sidewalks.

Improved snowclearing has multiple benefits:

- Reduced injuries
- Reduced costs to taxpayers
- Improved physical and mental by enabling people to walk regularly year-round
- Increased independence particularly of seniors and people with disabilities. Many become prisoners in their own homes over the winter months because sidewalks are sufficiently plowed and due to their fragile state they risk serious injury if they fall.

We would like to commend Toronto Public Health for its evidence-based report on the impact of wintertime slips and falls and would urge the committee to adopt the recommendations to improve Toronto's sidewalk maintenance practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Nancy Smith Lea, Director  
Toronto Centre for Active Transportation,



*A Project of Clean Air Partnership*

75 Elizabeth Street, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1P4 • 416-392-0290 • [www.tcat.ca](http://www.tcat.ca)