

February 1, 2022

Subject: Councilor Hamilton's Motion re: Improving Sidewalk Snow Removal Services for Cambridge Older Adults and Other Residents with Disabilities (Item 11.1 on February 1, 2022 Special Council Agenda)

Dear Mayor Kathryn McGarry and City of Cambridge Council:

I am writing on behalf of GroundUpWR, a group of Waterloo Region residents focusing on grassroots organizing to improve our community with real, meaningful and on-the-ground action. We are aware of Councillor Hamilton's proposed motion on the February 1, 2022 Special Council Agenda regarding improving sidewalk snow removal services for Cambridge older adults and other residents with disabilities. **The only option is for the City of Cambridge to provide full city-wide city-led winter sidewalk maintenance. Anything less is ableism, violates Human Rights, strands pedestrians and, frankly, is bad for business.**

Access to cleared sidewalks is a right, and plowing should be publicly funded by the City of Cambridge. Winter sidewalk maintenance is the only essential public infrastructure service that has been downloaded to property owners. The current piecemeal approach to sidewalk clearing only works for drivers; those who can drive on the roads that are prioritized for snow clearing. Cambridge's current approach to winter sidewalk maintenance does not align with the plans and policies that are meant to guide the City's decisions:

- **Region of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2019-2023:** Common themes are to increase active transportation and improve pedestrian safety (Objectives 2.3, 2.4). Winter sidewalk clearing is required to increase participation and safety on sidewalks. Otherwise, people continue to put themselves at risk walking on roads or walking over uncleared, uneven sidewalks risking injury (that is, if they even have the ability to leave their home).
- **Region of Waterloo Moving Forward 2018 Transportation Master Plan:** This Plan promotes travel choice focusing on transportation equity without having to drive a car. It also makes the connection between active transportation and fostering a strong economy (pg. 2-1). Residents' ability to walk throughout the City should not only apply for seven months of the year without snow. It needs to include year-round accessibility for residents, which requires consistent, timely and quality snow clearing of sidewalks that only the City can provide.
- **Region of Waterloo Active Transportation Master Plan (2014):** Encourages Cities to enhance winter maintenance practices (pg. 6-5). Improving Cambridge's winter sidewalk maintenance to provide full city-wide city-led winter sidewalk maintenance is an opportunity to enhance its maintenance practices and improve predictability of service and the probability of routes to be clear for peak pedestrian travel.
- **Region of Waterloo Official Plan (2015):** Promotes and supports enhancing pedestrian and cycling environments so people have opportunity to walk or cycle. Developing the infrastructure only works if it's accessible, cleared, and reliable 12 months of the year, not just when it's convenient.

- **Cambridge Official Plan (2018):** Promotes active transportation and the construction of pedestrian infrastructure. However, this infrastructure is no good if it cannot be used during winter months because of inconsistent, piecemeal or negligent sidewalk clearing.

In addition, the City also has a legal obligation to provide full city-wide city-led sidewalk clearance. The Supreme Court of Canada has now ruled that cities can be held liable for negligence by residents who sustain injuries related to municipal snow removal. This decision puts the onus on municipalities and its snow removal policies (Nelson (City) v. Marchi, 2021 SCC 41).

Nearby Hamilton and Toronto are some of the most recent Ontario cities who have adopted full sidewalk snow clearing. This is an opportunity for Cambridge to follow the lead of other cities and assert itself as a place where people of all abilities, whether they own a vehicle or not, can *prosper*. After all, Cambridge's slogan is People, Place, Prosperity.

We urge the City of Cambridge to enact full city-wide city-led sidewalk snow clearing. Your residents depend on it; and so does your economy.

Please include this letter in the February 1, 2022 agenda package for Council.

Regards,

[Insert Name of Sender]

List of emails to send to:

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