

4.7 (a)

To: All Members of City Council
Re: Sidewalk Snow Removal and Report PW19022(b)

Please accept this letter as correspondence for City Council's December 18, 2020 meeting. The LGBTQ Advisory Committee, at its November 17, 2020 meeting, carried a motion (8.4) to send correspondence to City Council based on the discussion it had at its meeting. The aim of this letter is to share the LGBTAQ's concerns and express support for sidewalk snow removal in the City of Hamilton.

The LGBTQAC had intended to send a letter to the General Issues Committee for its November 18, 2020 meeting or to the November 25, 2020 meeting of City Council but it was not able to meet those deadlines so asks that you receive it for the official record at this time.

Concerns

Committee members shared a number of concerns about snow on the City's sidewalks. Those concerns are as follows.

- Not clearing snow from the City's sidewalks is an issue of accessibility and disability justice. These issues adversely impact Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ Hamiltonians. The *Mapping the Void* needs assessment that was published by the School of Labour Studies at McMaster University revealed that a disproportionate number of 2SLGBTQIA+ Hamiltonians identify themselves as having a disability (39.3% of the 872 respondents). You can read *Mapping the Void* at <https://labourstudies.mcmaster.ca/documents/mappingthevoid.pdf> (the information referenced here is in section 3.6 on page 21).
- This issue affects every Hamiltonian. While there is a disproportionate impact on Hamiltonians with disabilities, as members of the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities has been saying for many years, those using strollers, carrying or walking children to school or daycare, or those walking pets are also placed in a precarious situation when using many of Hamilton's sidewalks.
- Everyone impacted by this safety issue takes their lives into their hands when they are forced to leave the sidewalk to use the roadway to get around. This risk is often compounded by trying to get over unplowed or unshovelled curb cuts and large mounds of piled up snow and ice that have been improperly stored.

- This issue also disproportionately impacts women (i.e. Personal Support Workers who are predominantly women of colour who are often walking to and from their clients' homes). We heard about injuries last year from women who fell pushing strollers or from people who, forced to wear heels to work, fell and hurt themselves because of poor sidewalk conditions. It is irresponsible of the City to subject its citizens and residents to the impacts of these injuries during a pandemic and flu season.

Support

The LGBTQAC supports sidewalk snow removal in the City of Hamilton and believes it's a matter not only of ensuring the health and safety of all Hamiltonians but an issue of disability justice.

Equity-seeking groups are not siloed from issues of disability justice. We encourage City Council to move forward quickly. Reporting indicates that sidewalk snow removal has been investigated 18 times by the City of Hamilton since 2003. As of the most recent survey, 2/3 of the 1,987 respondents directly indicated that they support a minimal tax increase to clear snow from sidewalks across the city.

We stand with organizations like the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, the Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion, and ACORN Hamilton who have been advocating for sidewalk snow removal for years.

This is more important than ever as members of our community continue to be isolated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical activity is harder to come by this year and many people have taken up walking outdoors not only as a means of exercise but also to relieve stress and anxiety.

Feelings of security and safety using the City's sidewalks will contribute to the mental health and wellness of those who have been isolated by this issue in the past.

We urge you to make this a priority and to remove snow from the city's sidewalks this winter so that every pedestrian in Hamilton can get around safely.

Sincerely,

Cameron Kroetsch, Chair
on behalf of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee