



## Sustainable Calgary

June 7, 2018

201, 1225A Kensington Road  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2N 3P8

Dear Councillor Farrell,

On behalf of Sustainable Calgary, I would like to support the Notice of Motion on “Improving Accessibility and Reducing Injuries Through Snow and Ice Control Reform”, rooted in the knowledge and perspectives we’ve compiled in our Active Neighbourhoods Canada program.

Snow removal and snow removal budgeting is challenging, and we certainly don’t hold all the answers. We can, however, relay support from the citizens and communities we’ve worked with for the need to do things differently. We can share what we’ve learned about city design and health and equity. We advance the idea that there’s an opportunity to spend differently, and to consider not just the cost of spending on snow removal, but the cost of *not* spending on snow removal - recognizing that there are two columns in a balance sheet. Finally, we encourage investigation into designing for winter, towards long-term, proactive approaches to snow removal.

I am the Program Lead for Active Neighbourhoods Canada (ANC) in Alberta. ANC is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada with the recognition that how we build and maintain our cities impacts public health. We work with communities who are interested in making their neighbourhoods more walkable, bikeable, scootable, and vibrant. We also focus on communities who may be underserved when it comes to walking infrastructure, which often includes communities with higher proportions of people on low incomes and higher proportions of new Canadians. It also includes those of us with mobility challenges.

We’ve worked in Marlborough, Acadia and Bridgeland, and snow removal has emerged as one of the top issues in each of these communities. In Bridgeland, it has been critical for seniors, who make up 33% of the population, and many of whom reside in the southeast quadrant of the neighbourhood in seniors’ housing complexes. We heard and saw that some pathways become impassable in the winter; that scooters can drain their batteries trying to navigate the snow; and that crossing at some intersections can necessitate deaking into on-coming traffic to avoid windrows.

In Acadia, we heard about snow removal from the general population, with acknowledgement that poor snow removal practices affected new parents and seniors disproportionately. This is significant, because it makes Calgaryans more likely to stay indoors and participate less in their communities; and seniors isolation in particular is associated with higher rates of depression and dementia. Given the reality of an aging population – and that we’re all “seniors in training” – this needs addressing.

In Marlborough, we heard about snow removal from the perspective of engineered walkways (termed catwalks in Marlborough). Catwalks provide safe walking spaces for children to get to schools and parks. Currently, neighbouring home-owners are tasked with upkeep of the catwalks, including snow removal. Some residents fulfill these responsibilities; some are unaware that they hold the responsibility; and some are unable to fulfill these responsibilities.

Why is this important to us, from the perspective of Active Neighbourhoods Canada? The evidence tells us that it's important to keep Calgarians moving. It's important in order to combat rising obesity, diabetes, heart disease, to combat mental illness, improve educational outcomes for children and to increase sense of connection, particularly for those who have mobility constraints, and who are more likely to feel isolated. This means making the city accessible in all seasons.

While our focus is to improve our city for better health and equity outcomes, these outcomes also have budgetary implications. Healthy and accessible cities are more economically productive cities, and they produce more economic opportunities for more people. 16% of injuries are related to snow and ice in Canada, costing us approximately \$288 million per year in Alberta. Increasing healthy behaviours can decrease health spending. A dollar value can be attributed to decreased mortality, when we implement and use walking and cycling infrastructure. This can be captured by the World Health Organization's HEAT tool, and is particularly interesting because it is based on Canadians' willingness to pay to live longer. Finally, seniors provide 1 billion in volunteer hours nationally, which we've estimated at a value of approximately \$23 billion annually. If our cities are less accessible, our volunteers are less available.

The above indicates just some of the losses we might experience if we don't take more action to make Calgary accessible in the winter – and we haven't touched on tourism or retail, in a city that captures 25% of Alberta's overnight hotel stays.

We support the recommendations put forward by the East Village seniors, and would add one key recommendation: ***to consider designing our cities for winter***. We have a choice to pursue a proactive approach in the design of our cities, aimed at decreasing the labour and cost involved in snow removal. Precedents exist to these ends. For example, raised intersections that bring vehicular traffic at grade with sidewalks can enable regular snow plows to shovel pedestrian and vehicular spaces at once, and avoid shoveling snow into curb cuts. These raised intersections can simultaneously act as traffic-calming devices in strategic areas - such as near schools and seniors' housing. These kinds of interventions are certainly worth further investigation.

To summarize: We need to keep Calgarians moving. Calgarians we've spoken with are calling for change. Health agencies are calling for built environments that promote healthy behaviours. The reality of an aging population calls for changes in our snow clearing practices. Our City strategy calls for keeping Calgary moving, healthy and green. We should consider the costs of *not* taking more action, acknowledging that there are two sides to the balance sheet. We should experiment with designing for winter and pre-empt the inevitable: it's probably going to snow next year. And this, I believe, will help us embrace and celebrate being a winter city.

Thank you so much for your time and attention, and for bringing forward this Notice of Motion. Do not hesitate to be in touch for any questions or additional information.

Sincerely,



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