



CITY OF CALGARY  
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CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

June 6, 2018

Dear Mayor Nenshi and City Councillors,

The City of Calgary's laudable priorities are to foster a *City that moves, a prosperous City, a well-run City, a City of safe and inspiring neighbourhoods, and a healthy and green City.*

This winter especially, a City that moves, a well-run City, a City of safe neighbourhoods and a healthy city were all compromised by a harsh winter coupled with the City's lack of better policies for winters like this.

While the Roads department went to heroic lengths to try to keep up this winter, it was obvious to most Calgarians that walkability was often compromised despite Road's best efforts. Acknowledging the ongoing problem of challenging winter walkability due to snow and ice buildup is long overdue.

Small outdoor business districts like the BRZs/BIAs suffer especially during winters like this. My business owners rely on people wanting to walk and shop and spend time outside. When it is very cold, attracting people to our areas becomes even more challenging. When there is significant snow accumulation the challenge increases. When shoppers venture to our areas only to be confronted by high snowbanks and snowy/icy crosswalks who would blame them for driving to the mall instead! This past winter was probably the worst for snow accumulation in the 14 years I have been the ED. This was reflected in the bottom line of many of my small business owners.

In the Kensington BRZ/BIA this past winter we experienced four main issues regarding snow removal and walkability:

1. Property owners failing to clear sidewalks -In Kensington there were several stretches of sidewalk where building owners failed to clear sidewalks for weeks at a time. BRZ/BIA members are the tenant businesses not the landlords or property managers so we often have minimal relationships or leverage with these latter two groups. In some cases I resorted to visiting businesses in person to secure contact information so I could contact property management companies myself to try to encourage compliance. The current reporting process is time consuming for both the BRZ/BIA and for City staff. BRZ/BIA reports to bylaw, visits to the area and with tenant businesses to ascertain the situation result in many days of compromised walkability. In one case this winter I reported the same property owner three times for different snow storms for failure to clear the sidewalk and each time the situation only resolved itself through eventual chinook melting. A zero tolerance policy for failure by private property owners

OUTSIDE OF THE ORDINARY

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to clear their sidewalks within 24 hours in pedestrian-rich environments like Kensington would help.

2. Wheelchair ramps – Several times during this past winter I documented street and sidewalk conditions when for days at a time the wheelchair ramps throughout Kensington were not usable due to snow and ice and plowing accumulations. Given the extreme cold we often get in Calgary, my ongoing fear is someone in a wheelchair becoming stuck in snow and ice.
3. Transit stops — Many transit stops in Kensington were blocked for days by large snowbanks due to snow fall plus from road plowing that forced transit riders to walk into traffic in order to get on and off the bus. Transit users were going into traffic lanes while hurrying to catch a bus, scrambling over snowbanks onto slippery roads as buses pulled into the stop. Many transit benches were also buried in snow for much of the winter.
4. Windrows – Significant windrows at the sidewalk/road interface as a result of plowing cause ongoing problems in business districts like Kensington year after year. Visitors to Kensington who park their cars must walk in traffic to the nearest intersection to access the sidewalk or clamber over these snowbanks.

My job as the ED of a BRZ/BIA is, at the most basic definition, to provide a clean and safe area where people can walk without fear or difficulty. This job becomes especially difficult in the winter months. When pedestrians cannot easily get where they want to go without risk of falling or being struck in traffic something is wrong with our system.

The development of a walking focused snow and ice policy for Calgary is long overdue. I look forward to working with administration to help develop new and better policies that specifically address the problems experienced in pedestrian rich inner City business districts like the BRZs/BIAs.

Sincerely,

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