

# 10 WAYS

## To Ensure an Inclusive, Safe, Healthy, and Sustainable Winter City

### Main Findings from Sidewalk Snow-clearing Research Project

We have been researching winter sidewalk mobility in St. John's over the past decade. Our findings are summarized below.

Hear from some of the project participants by watching our film *Honk if You Want Me Off the Road* on Vimeo.

### Public Safety

Insufficient sidewalk snow clearing creates a major public safety risk in St. John's.

### Health Impacts

**Mental health** (e.g. anxiety, depression): Fear of injury or death affects people's experiences when they go out in winter. It also results in social isolation when they stay home.

**Physical health:** Injuries and reduced cardiovascular fitness are serious impacts. Reduced winter access to sidewalks can affect activity habits year-



### 1. Clear sidewalks sooner

The 2014 KPMG Review recommended commencing the plowing of sidewalks during snowfalls and removing the snow immediately afterwards (p. 53). People moving around the city via the sidewalks need to be able to get to work, to school, to stores, and to appointments.

### 2. Coordinate sidewalk and street plows

Cleared sidewalks are often blocked by snow left by street plows, forcing people onto the street. Ensure street plows do not create barriers at intersections and bus stops, or even





**“The movement towards more livable, walkable cities is increasing the emphasis on pedestrian facilities everywhere.”**

*- KPMG Review of Winter Maintenance Services*

## Equity, Inclusion, Discrimination

**Different abilities:** Individuals who use assistive devices, live with vision loss or have reduced balance are among those especially affected by inaccessible environments.

**Economic status:** Many people must rely on sidewalks and public transit for daily activities.

**New residents:** To attract and retain migrants, it is important to improve mobility options.

**Age:** Youth, seniors, and parents of young children often experience specific challenges and risks - for example, getting around with strollers or dealing with complications from injuries.

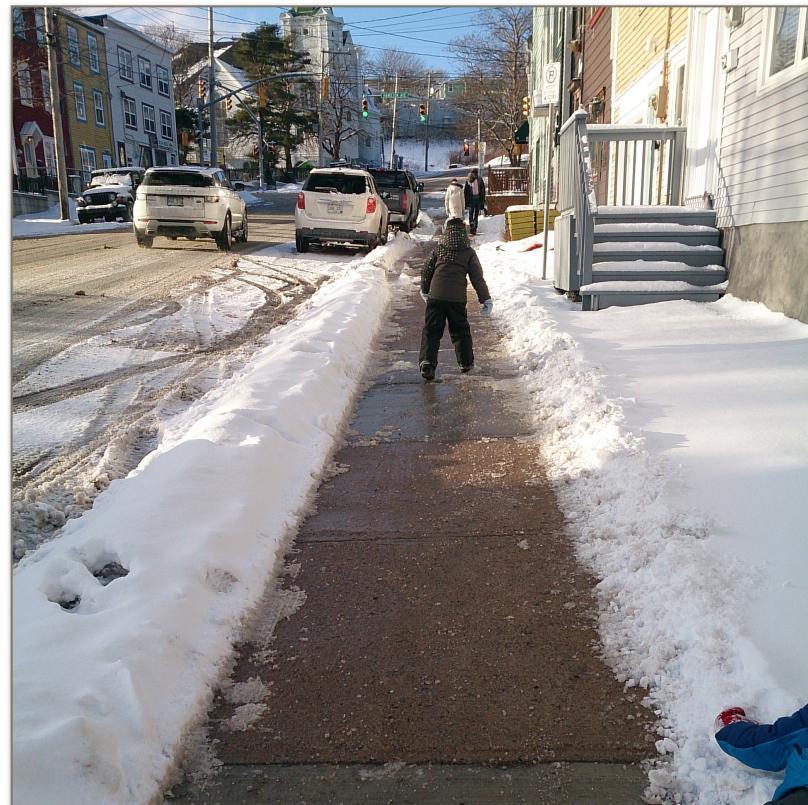
plow sidewalks back in. Residents also need to be educated to avoid filling in cleared sidewalks.

## 3. Improve sidewalk ice control

People often use the street alongside a cleared sidewalk because the sidewalk is icy and uneven. In these cases, the street may be the safer option. The KPMG Review recommends salting priority sidewalks before or early in freezing rain or snow events (p. 33). Ice control should be done on all sidewalks.

## 4. Clear islands and crossing points

Use shovels, smaller plows or snowblowers for tricky areas such as triangular islands at or near intersections. People are currently forced to leave the sidewalks at these areas, often on streets with heavy traffic. This is very dangerous. People also need safe access to buttons at lights and crosswalks.



## **5. Ensure access to public transit**

Co-ordinate with Metrobus to ensure access to bus stops and routes. Clear bus stops and surrounding sidewalks during and immediately after storms. All Metrobus users need a safe route to bus stops and a place to wait when they get there. They also need to be sure they can get on the bus when it comes. When sidewalk or street plows leave a ridge of snow between the bus stop and the bus, this blocks access. Not all riders can climb over these ridges safely. Similarly, lifts on buses cannot lower properly when obstructed by snow and ice.

## **6. Raise awareness about sidewalks and pedestrianism**

Highlight active transit on the city's website, publications, and other communications. Three examples of where this could occur immediately include: adding a Winter sidewalk phone line; rewording the snowclearing pages of the website to highlight sidewalks more; and redesigning the Where is my plow? feature to include sidewalk plows. A live map showing where it is safe to walk each day would help people plan routes. Active transit promotes fitness and reduces traffic, parking congestion, emissions, and noise. Enhanced visibility will play a key role in changing cultural expectations relating to active transit.

## **7. Monitor pedestrian routes**

Have city staff walk the routes to monitor and provide information. Collaborate with media and the public. Traffic reports should include pedestrian routes. Create a social media app for crowdsourcing information about the state of sidewalks. Regularly consult sidewalk users regarding concerns specific to different parts of the city.

## **8. Plow sidewalks along more routes**

There have been improvements since the KPMG review but there are still many areas that are only accessible by car. Prioritize sidewalks on all bus routes and both sides of arterial streets and other routes leading to schools, postsecondary institutions, and public libraries; hospitals, other health care locations, social service organizations, and seniors complexes; major shopping areas, recreational, and cultural facilities; and large employers. Establish a winter maximum speed limit of 30 km on streets where sidewalks are not yet plowed. Consider making a network of streets available only to pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized means of transportation; residents; and public transit, emergency, and delivery vehicles.

## 9. Set up a sidewalk and crosswalk advisory committee

This committee could include representatives of specific stakeholder groups and other members of the public. Such a committee could advise city staff and council about concerns that arise with respect to sidewalk accessibility and safety year-round.

## 10. Encourage winter activities

The challenges of our changeable weather and heavy snowfalls should not leave people stranded inside. Promote fitness and reduce traffic and parking congestion by supporting active transit. A great example is the city's collaboration with some schools on walk-to-school campaigns. Set up a walk-to-work campaign. Encourage residents and visitors to participate in activities such as the Department of Recreation's winter programs or the MUN Botanical Garden's Holiday Light Festival. Similarly promote people taking short daily walks to visit family, friends, libraries, or neighbourhood coffee shops. Make St. John's sidewalks accessible in all seasons for a more liveable city and a more viable winter tourism destination.

(All photos by Elizabeth Yeoman except photo of child on sidewalk by Andreae Callanan.)

