

Factsheet # 1

Maintenance of pedestrian infrastructures in winter

PIÉTONS
QUÉBEC

From a budgetary perspective, far too frequently pedestrians are believed to disappear entirely during the winter months. As it is false to assume that winter conditions inhibit walking, Piétons Québec believes that municipalities should facilitate pedestrian movement year-round.

The issue

In winter, numerous Quebec municipalities fail to clear sidewalks and bicycle paths either fully or partially, effectively restricting access to these areas. This situation forces pedestrians onto the street to move alongside vehicle traffic, with no evidence that this practice is safe. A further issue is that of pedestrian vulnerability in winter conditions due to reduced visibility caused by fewer daylight hours and by snow accumulation. Finally, it should be noted that high-risk pedestrians such as seniors, people with limited mobility, and young families are also negatively impacted by reduced wintertime access to urban infrastructures.

Predicating the issue of pedestrian safety on widespread reductions in municipal snow-clearing budgets is a false debate. This tendency is further clouded by the erroneous belief that the concept of “sharing the road” applies only in the summer months, which ignores the pedestrian experience in northern cities.

The consequences of restricting access to pedestrian infrastructures include:

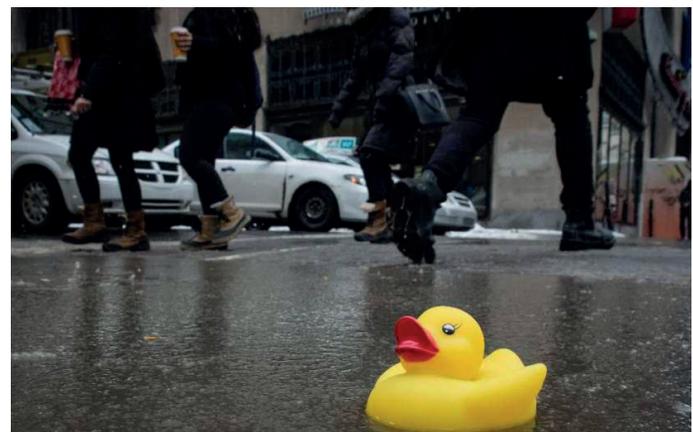
- Exposing pedestrians to dangerous situations liable to cause injury or death;
- A greater likelihood of legal action against the municipality following an accident;
- Encouraging motor vehicle transportation and its associated greenhouse gas emissions;
- Generating accessibility issues for pedestrians;
- A failure to encourage physical activity (walking, jogging) among other healthy lifestyle habits.



Saguenay, 2016 • Crédit : Lynda Youde



Québec, 2016 • Crédit : Valérie Marcon



Crédit : Gazette photographer and local Montrealer, Dario Ayala

The solutions

The design and maintenance of transportation infrastructures should target the fair representation of all of its diverse users. To do so, municipalities must consider pedestrians and ensure they given their just due - as a priority.

Piétons Québec believes the following guidelines regarding pedestrian infrastructures in winter conditions are crucial:

- 1. Design:** a fundamental improvement in road layout to favour pedestrians while removing any element likely to cause injury during the winter months. Best practices in this regard may include:
 - Reducing curb ramp heights
 - Building broad sidewalks
 - Ensuring adequate street lighting
 - Enforcing parking restrictions within five metres of an intersection
 - Installing pedestrian shelters along main boulevards and arteries
- 2. Access:** ensure year-round access to all developed pedestrian infrastructures, without exception, including those for persons with reduced mobility or disabilities.
- 3. Maintenance:** prioritize snow removal for pedestrian infrastructures. These initiatives may include:
 - Identifying pedestrian convergence points (schools, commercial arteries, transportation hubs, etc.);
 - Ensuring adequate subsequent maintenance and encouraging the continuous improvement of maintenance practices;
 - Applying abrasives on icy sidewalks;
 - The use of high-quality paint, snow removal and signage to ensure pedestrian crossings are appropriately visible.

Driveways

A driveway (or boat) is a lowered sidewalk that allows access to a parking for a vehicle. This inequality in the height of the sidewalk creates icy slopes and complicates the practice of walking for the elderly or disabled.

A few success stories

Clearing snow from the entire sidewalk is doable! The cities of Montreal, Laval and Longueuil successfully do so, among others.

- **Montreal:** schools, Metro stations and commercial arteries – virtually all pedestrian convergence points are prioritized. One significant detail: although these areas are prioritized, they are often cleared at night to ensure pedestrian through flow is not impeded.
- **Laval:** all 1,100 kilometres of sidewalks in this city are regularly cleared.
- **Longueuil:** this city has announced that sidewalks and pedestrian crossings are “nearly all” cleared of snow, except “*in specific circumstances where the movement of emergency vehicles may be impeded*”.

What to do as a citizen?

Wish your municipality would do more to maintain pedestrian infrastructure in winter? Report a fall, accident or improper management, or, submit this information to your elected officials. Find more resources on www.pietons.quebec and connect with the engaged Pedestrians community on Facebook!



Intersection of St. Hubert and Jean Talon Street, Montréal, 2016 • Credit: Montreal Urban Ecology Centre