

Good evening, Your Worship, and City Councillors. My name is Wanda Schmöckel. I'm a resident of this fine city – and I like to walk.

I'm in support of this amendment because I am continually frustrated by the dangerous state of the vast majority of winter sidewalks I encounter walking around the city.

I also live very close to the Davis Mews, which is a Regina Housing Authority property, and home to a significant number of residents who employ the use of paratransit, walkers, canes, and scooters to get around. In the time that I've lived in Regina, I've done more than my fair share of complaining about the state of Regina's sidewalks, particularly in winter. I've wiped out on ice, and hard packed snow more times that I care to recall. But what makes me almost as mad is the regular sighting one can behold in my neighbourhood – 70 and 80-plus-year-old people walking down the middle of the street because they feel it's safer to do that than it is to use the sidewalks. Indeed, the Davis Mews itself hasn't shoveled its walks on either Cameron or Garnet streets all winter long.

If a Regina Housing Authority property – which, by the way is a multiunit dwelling, and is therefore required under the current bylaw to clear its walks – doesn't take this responsibility seriously, is it any wonder so few others do?

I wonder if the general impression that snowy sidewalks need not be addressed has anything to do with some misinformation that has been generated by the City of Regina itself.

In 2015, as the City of Regina launched its snowbusters campaign, City officials were asked by local media if the City would consider implementing a bylaw requiring property owners to remove snow and ice from their sidewalks. At that time, the City indicated that it would not make this a requirement, because, according to them, Regina residents were already exemplary snow shovelers. They then referred to data collected by bylaw enforcement officers, which suggested that 75% of Regina property owners were compliant when it came to shoveling their sidewalks. Given this data, the City argued, what purpose would a bylaw serve?

For anyone who has struggled across Regina's endless lengths of lumpy, ice-slicked sidewalks, that cited 75% compliance rate may beg the question: where did the City get that number?

Surveys of snow removal around single-family dwellings were done by Regina bylaw officers between 2011 and 2014. Data was collected every time an officer was sent to follow up on a bylaw complaint. The officer would then choose 10 properties near the property in question and assessed those properties' levels of snow removal compliance.

Ernie Polsom, the City of Regina's Fire Chief and Director of Protective Services at the time, was interviewed by local media in January 2015, and confirmed there wasn't any data collected on how thoroughly these walkways were cleared (i.e., how many walkways were cleared to the pavement or just reduced to two inches). Nor was there data collected regarding long-term winter maintenance of these surveyed walkways: Bylaw officers did not go back to check up on how those stretches of sidewalk were holding up over the winter, unless another complaint happened to be filed against a property in that area. In short, this data was arbitrarily collected, and should not have been cited as a hard number.

We've heard City officials say that they don't want to use punitive means – or a fine in this case – to encourage sidewalk snow removal. At the same time, we currently have a bylaw that requires property owners mow their lawns and remove graffiti tags from garage doors under threat of fine. As far as I'm aware, no one has ever fallen and broken a hip due to an un-mowed lawn.

Including snow shoveling in the Clean Property Bylaw is good for Regina. Yes, some residents will receive fines, and they will most certainly complain about it. But this type of bylaw is the most reliable and effective way to get people to do something they clearly don't want to do.

We don't dissuade people from parking their cars in unauthorized spots. We *tell* them not to park there. And if they park in such a spot anyway, they run the risk of getting a ticket.

We don't gently cajole people to pay their taxes. We're required to pay them or else.

These measures are taken for the common good.  
Sidewalk snow removal is for the common good and safety of all Regina's – not to mention visitors to our city – and it shouldn't be treated any differently.

This amendment to the Clean Property Bylaw may not result in an immediate change, but it will certainly result in cleaner sidewalks over time because it will change our collective understanding of what is acceptable to us.

For those who use walkers, scooters, or wheelchairs, being unable to navigate your way from your home to a bus stop is unacceptable.

For those who get around on foot, the inability to walk with confidence to commute to work or run errands is unacceptable.

Allowing businesses and other organizations to let snow and ice build up on their abutting sidewalks all winter long so that, by the time the annual pre-spring melt/freeze cycle happens, long stretches of city walkways are virtually impassable is completely

unacceptable.

We can do much better and owe it ourselves to do so.

In closing, I'd like to say that I trust the members of City Council have the best interest of Regina at heart. And this is why I'm hopeful that this amendment will pass – because what's best for Regina is the provision of safe and accessible sidewalks to everyone, year around.

The residents of our fabulous city deserve nothing less.

Thank you!

Wanda Schmockel