



Snow Mole Report 2024: The Winter that Wasn't

Why Snow Moles?

The goal of the Snow Mole Campaign has been to advocate for improved snow clearing policies and practices to improve the walkability and safety of pedestrians in winter in Ottawa.

Winter brings safety and accessibility issues related to snow, ice and infrastructure challenges and so our top priority is safety for pedestrians, especially older adults, people with mobility concerns and those who use mobility devices.

Snow Mole Campaign

It was launched in 2018 by the Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA) after several years of all-season audits. It was named to identify with winter moles who burrow under the snow for safety as well as 'mole' agents who work undercover to collect information.



BIG Win! Para Bus Stops to be cleared in 2025!

In January 2024, Ottawa West Community Support raised the issue of the uncleared Para Bus Stop outside their building. The COA sent a letter to the City asking to clarify their snow clearing policy for Para stops. For the 2024-25 winter season, we have secured a promise from OC Transpo that all 15 Para Transpo Bus Stops will be cleared. We will continue to monitor!

2024 Snow Mole Findings

Winter 2024 was milder than usual with extended periods of bare sidewalk giving some pedestrians the experience of nearly perfect short-term winter walking conditions. Despite this, we had fewer audits but sadly more reported falls.

Demographics

Of the **108**

Snow Mole audits:

49% were over age 65

9% used a walking or mobility aid

16% reported low vision

19% used ice grips

9% used walking poles





Positive Takeaways

66% reported streets were plowed and safe to walk on

54% were able to reach the pedestrian crosswalk button

86% were able to cross the street in time allotted



Things to Improve

80% reported walking on street due to too much snow on sidewalk

Five people reported falls; **two** went to the emergency room

57% reported high snowbanks made walking difficult

55% noted curb and street were not clear enough at crosswalks

16% noted benches were available on their route; only **63%** were clear of ice and snow

While older adults use walking poles and ice grips, **56% still report fear of falling** that sometimes keeps them from going out for a walk

Why must the city take so long to figure out that **clearing snow in the winter is a good idea?**

[Ottawa Citizen](#), Bruce Deachman, May 3, 2024

Recommendations

1. **Prioritize** pedestrians in City's snow clearing policies for sidewalks, path, and roads without sidewalks.
2. **Ensure** ongoing awareness and safety training for sidewalk plow operators.
3. **Plow** for complete pedestrian trips.
4. **Remove** high snowbanks on residential streets.
5. **Increase** frequency of applying salt, grit, and sand to roads and sidewalks.
6. **Improve** sidewalk infrastructure to improve safer walking for all.
7. **Implement** solutions to solve ice buildup problems.
8. **Improve** data collection and reporting of outdoor winter falls, conditions, and fall related injuries.
9. **Improve** safe winter access to parks and community amenities.

Financial support received from



coaottawa.ca



/coaottawa



/COA_Ottawa



coa@coaottawa.ca