

The Council
on Aging
of Ottawa



Le Conseil sur
le vieillissement
d'Ottawa



Snow Mole Report 2020

Winter Walking in Ottawa



Produced by:

Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Committee

A sub-committee of the Ottawa Seniors Transportation Committee

Age
Friendly
Ottawa



Ottawa
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des aînés

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Introduction

“When the snow isn’t removed from sidewalks it forces cyclists and pedestrians to walk dangerously near high speed traffic. Essentially, I am trapped in my house all winter. Walking in this area is impossible.”

~ Snow Mole, February 29, 2020

About This Report

This report describes a unique winter walking audit program in Ottawa that encourages seniors and other residents to walk in winter and report on the safety and accessibility of the conditions in their neighbourhoods.

Snow Moles are active volunteers who audit their winter walking routes to regular destinations such as grocery stores, recreation facilities and libraries, or when walking for exercise or with a dog. They use a bilingual Snow Mole questionnaire available online, and accessible on a smart phone or downloadable as a paper copy (see Appendix A). The Snow Mole Campaign is planned and implemented by the Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Committee at The Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA).

This report contains background information about the Snow Mole project, a summary of the collected data and an analysis of common trends. It summarizes what we have learned over three years and gives a list of recommendations to improve winter walking in Ottawa.

The findings in the 2020 Report reinforce the recommendations from previous Snow Mole Reports and provides some new information related to the onset of the Covid-19 social distancing requirements.

There is a real and urgent need to recognize the challenges and serious impacts of changing winter weather on Ottawa pedestrians, especially on older populations and those using mobility aids. The time to act on recommendations to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in winter conditions has arrived.

The Appendices include the 2020 Snow Mole Questionnaire and the Tips for Winter Walking sheet developed in 2019.

Walking in a Winter City

Ottawa is a beautiful city that enjoys four seasons, with winter being the longest and the most challenging for pedestrians. Navigating across, over and around snow, ice, slush, snow windrows and puddles can be difficult or impossible. Swings in temperatures cause freeze-thaw cycles and create ice buildup on sidewalks, pathways and roads.

Winter conditions can make winter walking dangerous – particularly for older people and those using mobility aids.

We know that older adults can become housebound and socially isolated in the winter months, fearful of falling on ice and unable to climb over high snowbanks. People using wheelchairs and walkers as well as mothers pushing strollers are challenged by narrow sloping sidewalks, snow windrows and curb cuts covered by ice.

In an average year, there may be as many as 500 to 600 emergency department visits per month due to falls on ice and snow. Older people are most likely to be hospitalized after a fall, with broken bones and other injuries that can lead to a loss of independence, increasing frailty, a fear of walking outside, moving to an assisted living facility and even death.

High snowbanks that limit visibility at street crossings are a danger for all pedestrians, especially those in wheelchairs, and school children who can't see oncoming cars. They are also a danger to drivers especially at street corners when visibility is limited.

It is these real effects of a winter climate on the infrastructures of a winter city, as well as the aging demographics in Ottawa, that create the value of this project where pedestrians themselves alert the city and community to the real need for safer and more accessible pedestrian routes.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the volunteer Snow Moles in Ottawa who participated and taken the time to answer questions about their experiences. This year we had 18 volunteer Community Team Leaders from across urban, suburban, and rural areas of Ottawa who promoted the Campaign and organized group audits. A special thank you to all the Snow Mole Leaders, listed with their neighbourhoods on page 10.

Thank you to the volunteer members of the Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Committee for their continued enthusiasm for this project: Dianne Breton (Co-Chair), Miriam Levitt (Co-Chair), Peggy Edwards, Karen Scott, John Woodhouse, Les Whitney, Alton Legault, Mary Gick, Bonnie Schroeder (Director, Age-Friendly Ottawa), and representatives from the City of Ottawa, Bryden Denyes (Public Works – Environmental Services), Anna Valliant and Sandra Majic (Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development), Joanne Veldman (Ottawa Public Health), Paula Bernal (Safer Roads Ottawa).

Special mention and thank you to Alton Legault, for the translation of this report, as well as translating all Snow Mole documents for the Project.

Thank you to Ali Rezayee, Health Sciences student at Carleton University, who volunteered to work with the committee, recording and analyzing collected data. He sent out weekly reports that included innovative mapping that showed the location of completed audits on page 13. He also produced an excellent summary report at the end of the Campaign.

The Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Committee is a sub-committee of the COA Ottawa Seniors Transportation Committee. Its purpose is to raise awareness and promote improvements in walkability, pedestrian safety and accessibility for all ages, and especially for vulnerable pedestrians including older adults, mothers with strollers, children and those using mobility aids (walkers, wheelchairs and canes). The Committee is one of the first groups in Canada (and perhaps the world) to conduct age-friendly walkability audits in winter.

The Snow Mole Campaign

Background

In 2015, the Committee developed an All-Season Age-Friendly Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audit questionnaire, and carried out all-seasons audits in several Ottawa communities in partnership with local groups and their community associations (see www.coaottawa.ca/transportation for the audit questionnaire and reports). It became clear that walking in winter was especially problematic for older people and others and that further investigation was needed to find out how Ottawa pedestrians were coping with winter conditions. This was the start of the Snow Mole Campaign.

Why Snow Moles?

Winter moles (snow moles) are burrowing animals that survive under the snow in winter, and an apt name for volunteers who are looking for safety and accessibility in the cold winter months. Wikipedia describes a mole in police work as an undercover law-enforcement agent who joins an organization to collect incriminating evidence about its operations and so brings its members to justice. COA pedestrian Snow Moles report on what they see to alert the city and community to the need for change in snow and ice clearance.



Snow Moles in Old Ottawa South

The Snow Mole Campaign: Project Goals

- Encourage pedestrians, especially seniors, children, and people with mobility problems to audit and report on their experience of winter walking in their own community in Ottawa.
- Raise awareness and identify common themes and concerns, as well as the effects of hazardous winter walking on the well-being of older residents.
- Use the collected information to provide recommendations to the City and the community on how to make walking in winter safer and more accessible for seniors and all other vulnerable, valuable pedestrians.

“In a big storm, the road plow comes by again after the sidewalk plows have been by and make huge mounds at the pedestrian intersections that have to be jumped over.”

~ Snow Mole, January 25, 2020

The First Two Years

Year One: 2016 - 2017

A short questionnaire/survey tool was developed in the fall of 2016. Age-Friendly questions using plain language were included that related to pedestrian safety and accessibility on local sidewalks, pathways, and roads where there are no sidewalks.

The winter walking audit tool was piloted during the 2017 winter. Ottawa residents were invited to become Snow Moles and report on their experiences. The project had a late start and the outreach and uptake was limited. However, a lot was learned about winter walking and the urgent need for changes to the city’s snow and ice removal policies governed by the 2003 Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (WMQS). The collected Snow Mole data was used for awareness advocacy and included in the report titled: *Walkability and Safe Streets for Seniors and Other Valuable Pedestrians – Progress Report 2017*.

What we learned:

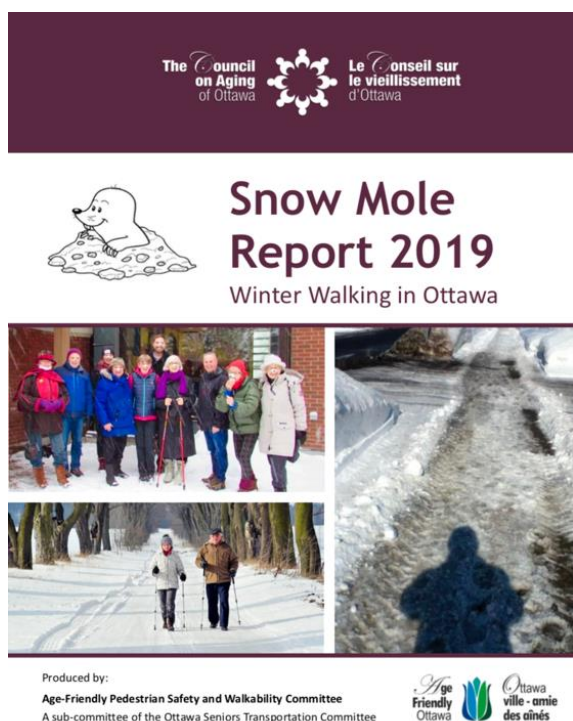
- Snow Moles gathered important data about winter walking in their own neighbourhoods.
- While cars travelled on roads cleared to bare pavement, pedestrian Snow Moles reported unsafe and icy sidewalks, which were often impassable especially for people using mobility aids.

- Many bus stops were inaccessible due to ice and snowbanks.
- Snow Mole data and recommendations was important information for the city in the early review of the 2003 Winter Maintenance Quality Standards.

Year Two – 2018 - 2019

The 2018-19 Snow Mole Campaign was launched at a well-attended community event at the Council on Aging (COA) in late November 2018, with presentations and a panel discussion. Bilingual information sheets as well as a colourful 10-point bilingual “Tips for Winter Walking” were available at the event and on the COA web site. Information tables provided brochures.

The revised bilingual questionnaire was also available on the COA web site, and downloadable to a smart phone using Survey Monkey for data entry, or to print a paper copy. Outreach was expanded with local media stories, collaboration with several community associations and local groups, presentations to local walking groups, and invitations to city councillors and their staff to participate. Older adults, children and those using mobility aids were especially encouraged to become Snow Moles.



The Campaign ran from January 1 to March 31, 2019. Data was sent directly to the COA Age-Friendly office where it was collected and analyzed weekly by a volunteer social work student from Carleton University. An analysis completed by the end of March showed common trends, numerical data, photos and personal experiences demonstrating the impact of winter weather – and snow clearing on pedestrians from all across the city. The Snow Mole Report 2019 – Winter Walking in Ottawa was published and made available in print and online at the COA website:

www.coaottawa.ca.

2019 Snow Mole Report Cover


What we learned:

- Snow Mole audit data gives a clear picture of the difficulties and dangers encountered by Ottawa pedestrians throughout the winter, and across the city.
- Most 2018-19 Snow Moles were seniors and female
- 80% said that their sidewalks were unsafe
- Many sidewalks were “solid ice, deeply rutted and very thick”
- Most older residents needed to wear ice grips on their boots and use poles to walk in residential areas and on pathways. They called them “necessary mobility aids”
- A “Hot Spot Map” developed with the city illustrated locations in the city in need of increased snow/ice removal, including bus stops, school zones, community centres, seniors’ homes etc.
- Twelve clear recommendations in the 2019 Snow Mole Report requested action.

The priorities were:

- To review and update the city’s Winter Maintenance Standards
- To separate winter street maintenance and winter sidewalk maintenance.
- To develop a Pedestrian First approach to snow clearance from Class B (snow packed) to Class A (bare pavement) on high density residential sidewalks, as well as priority areas in Hot Spot areas.

The 2019 winter was especially long and brutal with snow lasting from mid-November until late April. Many freeze-thaw cycles caused deep ice build-up that sidewalk plows were unable to remove. Climate change impacted winter weather creating a new-normal of unreliable and extreme winter conditions. The weather challenges magnified serious problems with the city’s Winter Maintenance operations related to pedestrian safety.



Snow Moles on Patrol

Age-Friendly Volunteers Root Out Winter Walking Problems

Snow Mole Project

A bilingual winter walkability audit program led by the Age-Friendly Pedestrian Safety and Walkability Committee of the Council on Aging of Ottawa in the winter of 2019.

Program objectives:

- Encourage seniors, people with mobility challenges and others to audit and report on their experience of winter walking in Ottawa, Ontario
- Identify common themes and concerns as well as the effects of hazardous winter walking on the well-being of older residents
- Use this information to provide recommendations to the City and the community.

I cannot see past snowbanks at intersections with my wheelchair. Ottawa Snow Mole

Methods

1. Developed audit survey questionnaire (paper and online)
2. Partnered with Community Associations
3. Completed walking audits (individually and in neighbourhood groups) with volunteer snow moles
4. Met with City officials and Coordinators to raise awareness of the issues and promote the Snow Moles
5. Developed tip sheet on winter walking
6. Earned extensive media coverage
7. Analyzed survey returns
8. Made recommendations to City of Ottawa

Results

Completed audits	191 Individuals	59 in groups	255 total
Snow Moles	65% Seniors	65% female	18% used mobility aids
Reports from Snow Moles	81% unsafe sidewalks and pathways	54% could NOT safely get to their destination or bus stop	67% snow banks, snow and ice interfered with walking

Common Trends

- Forced to walk on road due to unsafe pathways and sidewalks (ice is the worst)
- Inconsistent crosswalks, crosswalk buttons, bus stops and rail boxes
- Impassable intersections and routes to parks and community centres
- Ice required use of ice grips on boots, walking poles and other mobility aids
- Many reported falls and fear of falling
- Increased social isolation of people who use mobility aids and vulnerable seniors when they were unable to get out and walk

In January, I fell on Sparks Street, which was snow cleared but very slippery. I broke my arm in 3 places, which resulted in 2 days in hospital and 3 hours of surgery. I lost my independence for several months, had to cancel a winter trip, and felt my health and mobility were compromised. Ottawa Snow Mole

Recommendations

- Prioritize safety and put pedestrians first
- Review and improve Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (with an increased budget)
- Align snow and ice clearing with changing weather patterns (e.g. freeze/thaw/snow cycles) and pedestrian needs
- Improve snow clearing priorities on all sidewalks and pathways. Plough to bare pavement on high-density residential streets and in “hot spot” zones
- Be a Snow Mole and advocate for safe winter walking

An age-friendly city must make walking in winter safe and accessible for seniors and other vulnerable, valuable pedestrians.

For more information

Snow Mole Report 2019 /
Rapport du projet: Les lapins des neiges 2019
Tips for Winter Walking /
Pistes conseils pour la marche sécuritaire en hiver
cooottawa.ca/transportation

The Council on Aging of Ottawa / Le conseil sur le vieillissement d'Ottawa

613-789-3577

cooottawa

/COA_Ottawa


coa@cooottawa.ca

Age-Friendly Ottawa / Ottawa amie des aînés

2019 Poster Presentation

Year Three: 2019 – 2020

This year's Snow Mole Campaign was again planned to run from the beginning of January to the end of March. The bilingual questionnaire/survey was reviewed and updated, and the ability to access it on smart phones or download for a paper copy was confirmed. The information flyer was updated and posted online.



SNOW MOLES 2020
Age-Friendly Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audits
for Seniors and Other Valuable Pedestrians

An initiative of
The Council on Aging of Ottawa
Le Conseil sur le vieillissement d'Ottawa

Snow Moles are volunteers who report on what it's like to walk outside on a winter day in Ottawa. The information they gather will be used by The Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA) to inform the City and others of ways that winter walkability can and should be improved. Anyone can be a snow mole, but we are particularly looking for seniors and children to participate, as well as people who use mobility devices (e.g. canes, walkers and wheelchairs).


There are two ways you can be a snow mole:

- 1. On your own (as an individual)**
Pick a time of day when you need to go out (best after some winter weather such as a snowfall or freezing rain), and a destination (e.g. bus stop, store, school, bank, seniors centre, library).
Use the Snow Mole questionnaire to audit your walk. Do as many audits as you like on different days between **January 1 and March 31**.
Fill in the questionnaire online (www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles) or mail/drop off a completed paper copy to the COA, 1247 Kilborn Place, Ottawa, ON, K1H 6K9
- 2. With a neighbourhood group**
In 2020, several community associations and groups from across the city will participate.
Go to www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles to find the names of the **Snow Mole Community Leaders**. Contact the leader in your area for dates, times and locations of Snow Mole walk audits in your community.
We hope you will take out family and friends on **February 2, 2020** for the **Ground Hog Day Snow Mole Audit** one day blitz.

To access the questionnaire, go to:
www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles
to download a paper copy or use it on your mobile device.

For more information:
www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles
snowmoles@coaottawa.ca or 613-789-3577 ext. 103

2020 Snow Mole Flyer



A successful community event launched the 2020 campaign. “Walk On! with the Snow Moles – Let’s talk about walking in our winter city” was held on December 4th, 2019, at the Council on Aging. Powerpoint presentations were given about the goals of the Snow Mole Campaign, and City of Ottawa snow clearing plans for 2020. Interactive discussions with event participants in both English and French were facilitated by Committee members. Information tables organized by Safer Roads Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health and the COA offered information, hand-out brochures and copies of **the Snow Mole Report 2019 – Winter Walking in Ottawa**.

2020 Snow Mole Community Team Leaders

A request for community volunteers to support the Campaign by encouraging friends, family members and contacts to become Snow Moles and carry out audits either in groups or as individuals in neighbourhoods across the city was successful and 18 Community Team Leaders signed up.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Old Ottawa South: Anna Cuyllits | 10. Alta Vista: Bonnie Schroeder |
| 2. Old Ottawa East: Dianne Breton | 11. New Edinburgh: Anne Moore |
| 3. Orléans: Alton Legault | 12. Fisher Heights: Jayne Belanger |
| 4. Centretown: Miriam Levitt | 13. Kanata North: Julie Gourley |
| 5. Lowertown: John Woodhouse | 14. Kanata South: Annette Keough |
| 6. Nepean: Les Whitney | 15. Westboro: Sally Scott |
| 7. Hintonburg: Cheryl Parrott | 16. Elmvale: Rose Hunt |
| 8. Carp: Margaret Dunn | 17. Hunt Club: Gerry Green |
| 9. Alta Vista: Nicole Vanderveen | 18. Hunt Club: Rosemary Campbell |

Thanks to the efforts of the volunteer Team Leaders, 199 Snow Mole audits were received from 195 locations from across Ottawa during the Campaign.

This year snow mole audits from rural West Carleton (Carp), through central Ottawa, to the outer edge of Orléans in the east, were registered at the COA. Completed audits sent electronically as well as by mail were analyzed weekly. The collected data demonstrates that pedestrian reporting is important in highlighting problem areas and gives voice to citizens from all parts of the city who speak up when they see something that needs attention.

The 2020 winter had less challenging weather than the year before, but it did have its share of snowstorms, freeze-thaw cycles and many icy sidewalks. There were complaints about lack of sanding or salting – and sometimes salt being clumped in the centre of sidewalks, or on street corners.



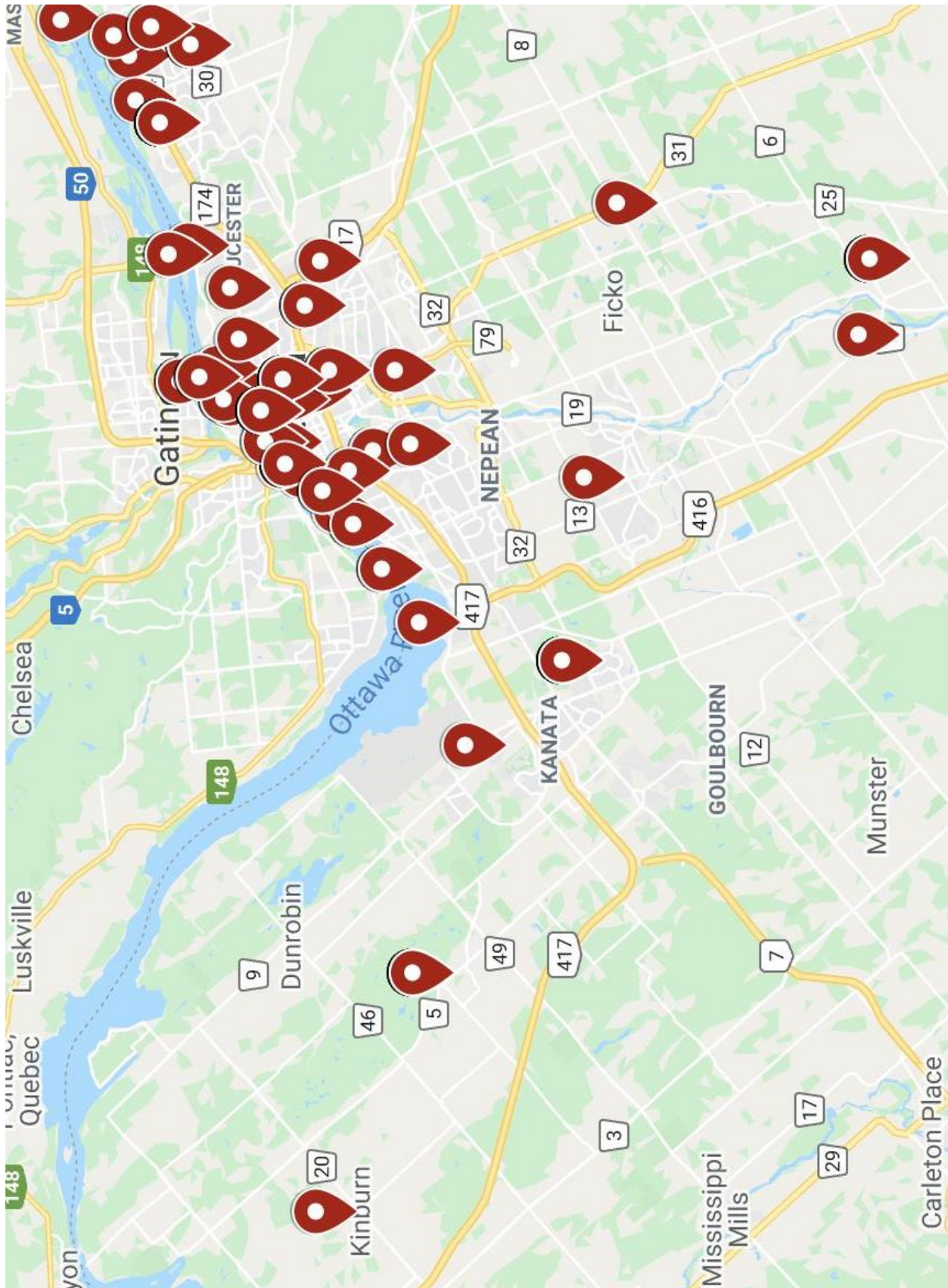
Poorly plowed sidewalk

As the winter came to an end in March, the Campaign was interrupted with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the requirement for social isolation. Walking became the major form of exercise as well as active transportation, as citizens stayed home. Pedestrians had ice and puddles on their residential routes and found that sidewalks – especially in older residential neighbourhoods, were too narrow to be able to walk with the required social/physical distancing. Wider sidewalks may become a necessity in the future and could become an infrastructure challenge.

The locations of audits were recorded and divided into 11 greater regions: Central Ottawa, Cumberland, Gloucester, Kanata, Nepean, Osgood Township, Ottawa East, Ottawa South, Ottawa West, Rideau Township and West Carleton Township. There was a total of 195 reported locations, a detailed list of reported locations can be found on the next page.

<p>Kanata (Total: 13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverbrook (1) • Bridlewood (12) 	<p>Nepean (Total: 5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrhaven (1) • Bayshore (1) • Fisher Glen (1) • Fisher Heights (2) 	<p>Osgood Township (Total: 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greely (1) • Osgoode (9)
<p>Ottawa East (Total: 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lindenlea (4) • Overbrook (1) • Rockcliffe Park (4) • Vanier (1) 	<p>Ottawa South (Total: 9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alta Vista (4) • Elmvale Acres (4) • Hunt Club East (1) 	<p>Ottawa West (Total: 24)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Britannia (3) • Carlington (2) • Carlingwood (3) • Highland Park (1) • Hintonburg (10) • Mechanicsville (1) • Wellington Village (1) • Westboro (3)
<p>Rideau Township (Total: 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kars (1) 	<p>West Carleton Township (Total: 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carp (9) • Kinburn (1) 	
<p>Central Ottawa (Total: 75)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ByWard Market (2) • Centretown (31) • Glebe (2) • LeBreton Flats (2) • Little Italy (1) • Lowertown (4) • Old Ottawa East (9) • Old Ottawa South (23) • Sandy Hill (1) 	<p>Cumberland Township (Total: 10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avalon (4) • Fallingbrook (2) • Martins Corners (1) • Notting Hill (2) • Queenswood Heights (1) 	<p>Gloucester (Total: 28)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beacon Hill (3) • Carson Grove (1) • Orléans Village (23) • Ramsayville (1)

Map of 195 Snow Mole audit locations across the city of Ottawa



Communications

Snow Mole 2020 received media interest and coverage in local newspapers and community papers. City staff and local councillors participated in snow mole audits.

Snow Moles was promoted through the COA's INFO-FLASH newsletter with six bi-monthly articles between January 4 and March 31, 2020 and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/coaottawa).



Four community newspapers printed stories submitted by community leaders:

The Mainstreeter, Old Ottawa East, April 28, 2020, [The 2020 Snow Mole Campaign Aims For Safe Winter Walking](#)

The OSCAR, Old Ottawa South, March 2020, [The February 11 Snow Mole Audit](#), page 5
Centretown Buzz, February 14, 2020, [Be a Snow Mole: help us root out winter walking problems in Centretown](#)

Convent Glen-Orléans Wood Community Association, December 1, 2019, [Are you a walker? Join SNOW MOLES!](#)

In Orléans, the participation of Councillor Luloff (Orléans, #1) in a community audit was appreciated. Councillor Laura Dudas (Innes, #2) also provided support but was unable to participate in an outing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local associations also posted the information on their websites and social media networks, like MIFO who informed and invited their members to participate via their newsletter. The local French

newspaper, l'Orléanais published a comprehensive article and put out the invitation to participate.

The COA Snow Mole campaign was presented at two professional development events:

- Canadian Association of Gerontology Conference, October 2019
- Regional Geriatric Program of Eastern Ontario Showcase Poster Presentation, November 2019

What we Learned: Key Findings from the 2020 Audits:

- Number of Snow Moles: 195 (84 % individual audits - 16 % group audits)

Demographics of Snow Moles:

- 64% were seniors, over age 65; 22% were over age 45 and 13% were over age 21
- 76% were female
- 36% used ice grips on their boots and 10% used walking poles
- 9% used a mobility aid
- Over 80% were able to get to their destinations and home safely.

Conditions:

- 69% said their sidewalks were slippery/icy – 48% said sidewalks weren't adequately plowed and 62% said sidewalks were not well sanded or salted.
- 56% walked on roads because there was no sidewalk or pathway
- 15% said that their closest bus stop was not accessible.

"I believe the city needs to focus on providing better sidewalk maintenance, especially during this time of year."

~ Snow Mole, March 8, 2020

Falls:

- 68% stated that fear of falling kept them from going out to walk
- 51% have fallen while walking in the past 2 years.

"Snow isn't the only thing that falls in Winter!"

~ Snow Mole, 2020

Snow Mole 2020: Top Six Recommendations

1. **Prioritize** safety and put pedestrians first in city snow clearance from Class B (snow packed) to Class A (bare pavement) on high density residential sidewalks.
2. **Ensure** that annual training of sidewalk plow operators includes awareness of the high importance of key issues related to safety (especially for senior pedestrians, those using mobility aids, and children).
3. **Remove** snowbanks on residential streets before they become hazardous to pedestrians; and before thawing and freezing into ice buildup that is difficult to remove and dangerous to walk on.
4. **Plow** to connect sidewalks to transit stops, corners and curbs to pedestrian crossings and residential streets to pathways.
5. **Implement** solutions to ice build-up problems due to plowing and freeze-thaw cycles (i.e.: mapping of residential street drain locations by Ward and ensure that drains are kept clear).
6. **Improve** safe access to city parks through the winter months.



Icy and unsafe sidewalk

Moving Forward

City of Ottawa Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (WMQS)

The City's Public Works – Environmental Services Department is responsible for winter operations and carrying out the policy directions outlined in the Council approved 2003 policy document, Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (WMQS).

Public Works - Winter Maintenance Operations (WMO), is aware of the need to review and update the 2003 policy, and have already responded to the need for improved snow and ice removal on sidewalks over the last three years by tweaking the current criteria and giving more attention to clearing residential sidewalks.

The City's Transportation Committee responded to increasing Snow Mole and citizen demand and approved a motion for staff to carry out an operational review of snow clearing operations for the 2019-20 winter. COA Snow Moles have noted an improvement in the number of sidewalk plows, the coordination of street and sidewalk clearing, and attention to local sidewalks.

The COA Snow Moles, and other citizen advocacy groups have spoken out with presentations at Transportation Committee meetings and have made budget request presentations linked to clear data-based recommendations requesting a Council approved update to the WMQS.



Uncleared pedestrian walkway

Capital Ward Councillor Shawn Menard included “Getting Around in Winter: Winter Operation & Snow Clearing Report” in the February issue of the Capital Ward Bulletin. He describes the important changes needed to the WMQS, as well as listing the most important snow clearing priorities as: accessibility, equity, sustainability, and climate change resiliency to have a “healthy and liveable city”. We agree and would add an “age-friendly city” to that goal. The report proposes that the city give “serious consideration to resident proposals.”

The long process of reviewing the WMQS is now underway and will be ready for budget approval by City Council in 2021. According to city staff, the implementation would begin in the winter of 2022-23. In the meantime, COA-Snow Moles in collaboration with Public Works-Environmental Services will continue to gather data from Ottawa pedestrians demonstrating the urgency of ensuring safe walkability in winter.



An uncleared snow-covered walkway

Conclusion

The COA-Snow Mole Project and the 2020 Campaign have given a clear voice to Ottawa pedestrians, mostly seniors, who are seldom heard about the challenges they face in getting around in the winter. The collected data from across Ottawa, clearly shows that specific changes are needed to the current snow clearing standards. The climate is changing more quickly than expected, with unknown consequences for extremes in winter weather patterns, resulting in increasing difficulties for pedestrians.

Ottawa is a winter city, and clear recognition must be given to the safety of pedestrians, particularly the most vulnerable, who are often fearful of leaving their homes and falling on icy streets. Safety on the sidewalks and pathways and roads where there are no sidewalks must be an urgent priority.

There is work to be done for Ottawa to truly be an age-friendly city that makes winter walking safe and enjoyable for all ages. Action on the prioritized recommendations in this report would ensure positive changes that will make our winter city both safe and accessible for pedestrians in all seasons.

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THANK YOU!
SNOW MOLES 2020

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Appendix A: Snow Mole Questionnaire



SNOW MOLE Questionnaire 2020

Age-Friendly Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audits for
Seniors and Other Valuable Vulnerable Pedestrians

You are invited to be a **SNOW MOLE** and complete a Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audit. **SNOW MOLES** are volunteers who report on what it is like to walk outside on a winter day.

A. Instructions for Age-Friendly Ottawa SNOW MOLES

1. **Pick a time of day** when you are going out for an errand, or for exercise or enjoyment, preferably a day or two after winter weather (e.g., snow, freezing rain).
2. **Pick a destination** (e.g. school, grocery or drug store, bank, bus stop), **or route for exercise or enjoyment**.
3. **Use** the Snow Mole questionnaire to audit your walk. Feel free to take and submit photos!
4. **Complete** the questionnaire online (www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles) or drop off/mail it to: The Council on Aging of Ottawa, 1247 Kilborn Pl, Ottawa, 1H 6K9.

B. Questions about your winter walk (Please check and complete as appropriate)

Date (day/month/year): _____ Time of day: ____ a.m. ____ p.m.

Type of audit: Individual _____ Group _____

Are there children with you? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, do you have a stroller? Yes ____ No ____

Specify the timing of the most recent winter weather event (e.g., snow, freezing rain):

A) Now _____ B) Earlier today _____ C) Yesterday _____ D) 2 days ago _____ E) More than 2 days ago _____

Comments: _____

City/Town and Neighbourhood of walk audit (e.g., Ottawa, Glebe) _____

and Ward if you know it (e.g., Ottawa Centre) _____

Names of any main streets on your route: _____

Names of any residential/side streets on your route: _____

C. Questions about you (Please check and complete as appropriate)

Age: 75 and over ____ 65-74 ____ 45-64 ____ 21-44 ____ 13-20 ____ 1-12 ____

Gender: Female ____ Male ____

I use a mobility aid (e.g. cane, walker, wheelchair): Yes ____ No ____

I use ice grips on my boots: Yes ____ No ____ Walking poles: Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

Appendix A: Snow Mole Questionnaire

D. Snow Mole Checklist: (Please check as appropriate and feel free to add comments)

1. Are there any **sidewalks** on your route? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, are they

a) Safe to walk on? Yes ____ No ____

b) Icy and slippery? Yes ____ No ____

c) Adequately plowed? Yes ____ No ____

d) Adequately sanded or salted? Yes ____ No ____

e) Does snow thrown onto the sidewalk from snowplows or people's snow blowers interfere with walking?

Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

2. Are there **paths, walkways, or footbridges** on or near your route? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, are they:

a) Safe to walk on? Yes ____ No ____

b) Icy and slippery? Yes ____ No ____

c) Adequately plowed? Yes ____ No ____

d) Adequately sanded or salted? Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

3. Do you **walk on the road** (no sidewalks or pathways)? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, are they:

a) Safe to walk on? Yes ____ No ____

b) Icy and slippery? Yes ____ No ____

c) Adequately plowed? Yes ____ No ____

d) Adequately sanded or salted? Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

4. Are there **crosswalks** on your route: Yes ____ No ____

If yes, are they:

a) Safe to walk on? Yes ____ No ____

b) Icy and slippery? Yes ____ No ____

c) Adequately plowed? Yes ____ No ____

d) Adequately sanded or salted? Yes ____ No ____

Appendix A: Snow Mole Questionnaire

5. Are any **snowbanks** higher than your waist? Yes ____ No ____ N/A ____

Comments: _____

6. If there are **intersections** on your route, are they safe and easy to get across? Can you reach the pedestrian walk buttons?

Yes ____ No ____ N/A ____

Comments: _____

7. Is the closest **transit/bus stop** area accessible (i.e., mostly clear of snow and ice, no snow blocking the stop or the ability of the bus to lower the ramp for people with mobility aids)?

Yes ____ No ____ I do not know ____ I did not encounter a bus stop on my route ____

Comments: _____

8. Is any **seating** on your route, or near a bus stop, kept clear of ice and snow?

Yes ____ No ____ There was no seating on my route: ____

Comments: _____

9. Are you able to get to your destination and **back home safely**?

Yes ____ No ____ If no, please specify why not - what happened?

Comments: _____

10. Have you **fallen walking outside** in the winter in the last 2 years? Yes ____ No ____

(Please skip question if you have already completed an audit this year.)

If yes, did you go to hospital emergency? Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

11. Does **fear of falling in winter** sometimes keep you from going out to walk? Yes ____ No ____

Comments: _____

12. Do you have any **other safety concerns** not mentioned already, or any other comments?

If you have taken photos, please submit them to snowmoles@coaottawa.ca or upload at www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles/

Please report any hazards or problems needing immediate attention to 311.

**Thank you for being a snow mole and completing and returning
this Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audit!**

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Appendix B: Winter Walking Tip Sheet

TIPS SHEETS

The Council
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Tips for Winter Walking

There is nothing like taking a walk to enjoy the beauty of the season — and walking is one of the best ways to keep healthy. On the other hand, winter can be a challenging time of year to get out and about. Icy surfaces and snow can pose a hazard for pedestrians, especially for seniors and people using a mobility device. A fall can mean a painful injury and sometimes long-term consequences, including chronic pain or a disabling condition that may mean loss of independence. Fear of another fall discourages an active lifestyle and can lead to isolation and a fear of going out.

Whether you are walking for pleasure or with a dog or to get to a needed destination, here are some tips for safer walking outdoors in winter.

1 Plan ahead.

Check the weather before you go. Give yourself extra travel time so you can walk without being rushed.



2 Choose a good pair of winter boots.

For warmth and stability look for these features: well-insulated, waterproof, thick non-slip tread sole made of natural rubber, wide low heels, light-weight.



3 Consider wearing ice grippers when walking on packed snow and ice. Before buying the grippers, be sure that you can easily attach and remove them from your boots (or keep them on a pair you only use for outdoor walking). Most grippers become dangerously slippery when you step indoors and must be removed before walking on smooth surfaces such as stone, tile and ceramic.



Appendix B: Winter Walking Tip Sheet

- 4 Use supports to increase stability.** Use handrails when available and steady yourself on the door frame of a vehicle when getting in and out. Nordic (urban) walking poles with tips that dig in on icy surfaces can also help. Take some instruction on how to use these poles.



- 5 Be cautious in all temperatures.** In cold temperatures, assume that all wet, dark areas on pavements are slippery and icy.

- 6 Look for good traction.** If you encounter a snow- or ice-covered sidewalk or driveway, especially on a hill, travel along its edge for traction.

- 7 Increase your centre of gravity and stability.** Do the Penguin Shuffle. Plant your feet out slightly like a penguin and take small steps while walking on slippery surfaces. Keep your knees loose — let them bend a bit. Place your whole foot down at once—this breaks through a crusty surface and also slows your walking speed.

- 8 Keep your balance.** Walk with your arms swinging at your sides. Keep your hands out of your pockets (remember your gloves).



- 9 Stay on maintained routes.** Walk on walkways, paths and sidewalks that receive winter maintenance. Taking shortcuts over snow piles and other frozen areas can be hazardous.



- 10 Salt or sand** your stairs, driveway or walkway. Make use of grit boxes in public places.

Call 3-1-1 to report hazardous pedestrian conditions.

Be a snow mole and help us report on winter walking conditions.



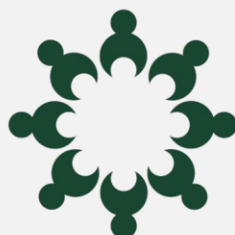
Go to www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles for full information and the snow mole audit questionnaire.



For additional copies of the ***Snow Mole Report 2020: Winter Walking in Ottawa***

or further information contact:

**The Council
on Aging
of Ottawa**



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