



# Snow Mole Report 2022:

## How Safe is 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  
ville - amie  
des aînés

## Acknowledgements

The Snow Mole Campaign is realized through the cooperation of the following volunteers, City representatives, and COA staff to develop and organize the 2022 Snow Mole Campaign.

The volunteer members of PS&W participated in the Campaign as Snow Moles, Snow Mole Leaders in their own communities, and as committee support. Thank you to: Min Ku (Chair), Dianne Breton, Mary Gick, Linda Paul, Carole Larose, Miriam Fry, Alton Legault, Nancy Edwards, Bonnie Schroeder (staff), and Michelle Bezanson.

Special thanks to Alton Legault for French translation of Snow Mole documents; to Dianne Breton and Mary Gick for revising the questionnaire; and to Nancy Edwards (CARP, Ottawa Chapter, Falls Prevention Working Group) for partnership support and contributing questions on the safety of outside steps and stairs. Special recognition given to Mary Gick for writing (and singing) an original Snow Mole song to launch the 2022 Campaign.

Important contributions have been made by representatives from the following City departments: Bryden Denyes, Public Works-Environmental Services; Wyatt Lang, Safer Roads Ottawa; Anna Valliant, Sandra Majkic, Harry Alvey, Infrastructure & Water Services (IWS); Joanne Veldman, Ottawa Public Health; and support from the City's Older Adult Plan.

The Snow Mole audit data analysis and monthly reports were expertly completed by volunteer Carleton graduate student, Michelle Bezanson. Monthly reports were shared with members of the sub-committee, community Snow Mole Leaders and the city departments represented on PS&W. Thank you Michelle.

Thank you to the 21 dedicated Snow Mole Leaders in the 2022 Campaign from neighbourhoods across the city. Many of the community leaders have returned year after year to encourage their friends and neighbours to become Snow Moles and report on their winter walks. This year, three special Community Snow Mole Audits with City Road Operation Supervisors were carried out in Kinburn (West Carleton), in the Glebe and in Orléans. The audits in the Glebe and Orléans communities were filmed by videographer Ben Bergeron with Hot Shoe Productions.

Special thanks to the following participants in the audits: Snow Mole leaders, Mary Porritt, Mary Gick, and Alton Legault with Jim Halpenny; City Road Operations staff in Kinburn and Orléans; Bryden Denyes, Area Manager, Core Roads, Public Works Department (Glebe audit); Councillor Laura Dudas (Orléans audit), and Erin McCarthy from Councillor Eli El-Chantiry's office.

A shout out and appreciation to the Mayor of Ottawa and City Councillors who promoted the campaign, encouraged their constituents to participate, and raised awareness through their web sites and social media.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is the Snow Mole Campaign? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Background .....	4
City of Ottawa Snow Clearing Policies & Practices .....	5
Snow Moles 2022 .....	5
<b>2022 Snow Mole Findings.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Demographics .....	9
Does fear of falling in winter sometimes keep you from going out to walk? .....	10
On your walk today, was the surface safe to walk on? .....	10
If you are walking on a street or road, is it because .....	11
As part of your walk, are you using a crosswalk or intersection to cross the street? ..	11
Were there high snow banks that made your walk more difficult today? .....	13
Was bench seating available to rest on your route and cleared of snow? .....	13
Did you use stairs or steps (excluding at your residence) on your route today? .....	13
Did you use a ramp (excluding at your residence) on your route today? .....	14
Do you have any other safety concerns not mentioned already, or any other comments?	
<b>Top Ten Recommendations.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix A: 2022 Snow Mole Questionnaire</b>	
<b>Appendix B: Winter Walking Tip Sheet</b>	



## What is the Snow Mole Campaign?

The Snow Mole Campaign is an Age-Friendly winter project of the Pedestrian Safety & Walkability (PS&W) Sub-committee of the Ottawa Seniors Transportation Committee (OSTC) of the Council on Aging of Ottawa (COA).

The PS&W Sub-committee collaborates with the City of Ottawa and neighbourhood volunteers (mostly older adults) across the city to organize a unique annual winter walking project. The Snow Mole Campaign is the only annual winter-walking audit project in Canada – and possibly in the world!

The ***Snow Mole Campaign*** now in its fifth year, continues to ask pedestrians to answer the question: How safe and walkable is Ottawa in the winter?

The answers come from volunteer pedestrian Snow Moles in rural, suburban, and central neighbourhoods during the January to March campaign. Their answers to a short online questionnaire give a clear description of winter walkability in Ottawa and raise awareness of pedestrian safety issues. The analysis of audit answers leads to recommendations for positive improvements to city infrastructure and changes to city operations and policies.

**The Snow Mole Report 2022: How Safe is Winter Walking in Ottawa?** gives an update to previous reports with data analysis, trends, findings, and photos; adds prioritized recommendations for public safety as well as improvements to snow and ice clearing policies and practices; and predicts some new challenges for the 2023 Campaign.

### Background

Neighbourhood walkability and pedestrian safety have been studied at the COA since 2016, when several successful age-friendly all-seasons “pedestrian safety” audits were carried out across the city by the PS&W Sub-committee in partnership with local community associations. (Published reports are available on the COA website at <https://coaottawa.ca/transportation/>).

Pedestrian safety and accessibility issues were so different in the winter months with snow, ice, and infrastructure challenges that it was decided to create a separate audit questionnaire focusing on how residents were getting around in winter.

In 2018, the Snow Mole Campaign was launched. 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 important evidence.

The goal has been to advocate for improved snow clearing policies and practices and to promote a ‘Pedestrians First’ approach by the city. The top priority is safety for pedestrians, especially older adults and people using mobility devices.

## City of Ottawa Snow Clearing Policies & Practices

The City's policies governing snow clearing standards, The Winter Maintenance Quality Standards (WMQS), were last approved by City Council in 2003 and are long overdue for change.

A review of the 2003 WMQS policies with proposed changes has now been completed by the Public Works-Environmental Services Department and is proceeding for presentation to the Transportation Committee for approval, before going to City Council for budget approval before the 2023 winter.

Snow Moles are known to be patient and persistent and have continued to advocate in 2022 for positive changes to the WMQS. Snow Moles utilize a winter-boots-on-the-ground kind of advocacy recommending a Pedestrians First approach to the city's policies and practices as well as practical and doable solutions to common winter barriers.

## Snow Moles 2022

The 2022 Campaign was launched with a Zoom webinar on January 7<sup>th</sup>. Presentations were made on the history of the Snow Mole Campaign and its goals; and encouragement to the community to become a Snow Mole and to be aware of the 2022 tag line, *If you See Something – Say Something*. The annual volunteer project gives a voice to Ottawa pedestrians (particularly older adults) struggling with winter snow and ice barriers to get where they need to go. It is an important reminder that raising awareness and making recommendations to improve the safety and accessibility of pedestrians during the winter is everyone's business.

A descriptive slide presentation showing operational plans for winter snow clearing this year was given by Bryden Denyes, PS&W member from the City Public Works Department. The webinar ended on a high note with an original Snow Mole song, written and sung by PS&W member Mary Gick, accompanied on her banjo.

The Snow Mole Campaign received further virtual promotion with a well-attended webinar presentation titled: [Snow Moles on Patrol: Age-Friendly Volunteers Root Out Winter Walking Problems](#), by COA staff Bonnie Schroeder, to the Ontario Age-Friendly Community Outreach Program on February 2. The presentation was recorded and is available to the wider community.

The Campaign has continued to operate with a short audit questionnaire available online or on paper. The 2022 questionnaire was modified to include new public safety questions about steps, stairs, ramps, and additional questions about benches (see Appendix A).

As in past campaigns, completed audits as well as photos were forwarded to the COA for analysis and sharing with Snow Mole community leaders, and City departments responsible for snow clearing and public safety. This ***Snow Mole Report 2022*** summarizes the findings and lists priority recommendations.

Thank you to the 21 dedicated **Snow Mole Leaders** in the 2022 Campaign from neighbourhoods across the city. Many of the community leaders have returned year after year to encourage their friends and neighbours to become Snow Moles and report on their winter walks.

Alta Vista	Bonnie Schroeder
Carlington Community Health Centre	Hilary Rose
Crystal Bay	Kathy Riley
Cumberland	Ardyth Elliott
Dow's Lake	Lisa Hollingshead (KDS Village)
Fisher Heights	Jayne Belanger
Glebe	Mary Gick
Hintonburg	Cheryl Parrott
Kanata North (Beaverbrook)	Julie Gourley
Kanata South (Bridlewood)	Annette Keough
Kinburn (West Carleton)	Mary Porritt
Lowertown	John Woodhouse
New Edinburgh	Ann Moore
Old Ottawa East	Dianne Breton
Old Ottawa South	Anna Cuylits
Orléans	Alton Legault
Ottawa West	Min Ku
Overbrook / Vanier	Carole Larose
South Keys	Jennifer Brooks
Westboro	Sally Scott

The most important part of every campaign has always been the Snow Moles themselves. They are the many volunteer winter walkers who complete the audits, add comments, take photos, and tell the story of their experience getting around on a winter day. This year 270 snow mole audits were forwarded to the COA from every part of the city.

The Snow Mole audit data has been shared with the City during and at the end of the campaign. This information leads to better understanding of the importance of putting pedestrian's needs at the forefront of city planning for safe and active winter walking.

This year, the COA was interviewed in the Ottawa Citizen, December 7, 2021: [Make clearing sidewalks a priority, city urged.](#)

---

**"But what might be just an inconvenience for some can be a serious issue for seniors and those with mobility issues. Some might be afraid to even step out the door," said Min Ku of the Ottawa Council on Aging.**

**"There are so many different reasons that people should be able to get outside, whether it's to get groceries, go to the doctor, meet up with friends or just to go for a walk," Ku said.**

**"All of us realize, especially with the pandemic, that being isolated for long periods during the winter is really terrible for everyone's physical and mental health. It has devastating consequences, for people of all ages, but especially for people with mobility issues or who are afraid of falling because of the snow and the ice."**

---

In addition, several city councillors published the Snow Mole announcement notice in their newsletters or on social media. Our community leaders also submitted articles and announcements in community association papers including:

[Snow Mole Volunteers, We Need Your Surveys! - Old Ottawa South Community Association](#)

[GCA tackles full agenda | Glebe Report](#)

[Snow Moles 2022 - Riverview Park, Ottawa, Ontario \(riverviewparkca.com\)](#)

[SNOW MOLES – CentrepoinTE Community Association](#)

[Kinburn Community Association – Posts | Facebook](#)

In the French-speaking community, the Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans (MIFO) and the Rendez-vous des Aînés d'Ottawa (RAFO) once again supported the Snow Moles campaign on their websites, as did several community associations in the Orléans sector.

## 2022 Snow Mole Findings

*“Most side streets were also not cleared. I spoke to a woman in an electric wheel [chair] and she was crying because she couldn't move.”*

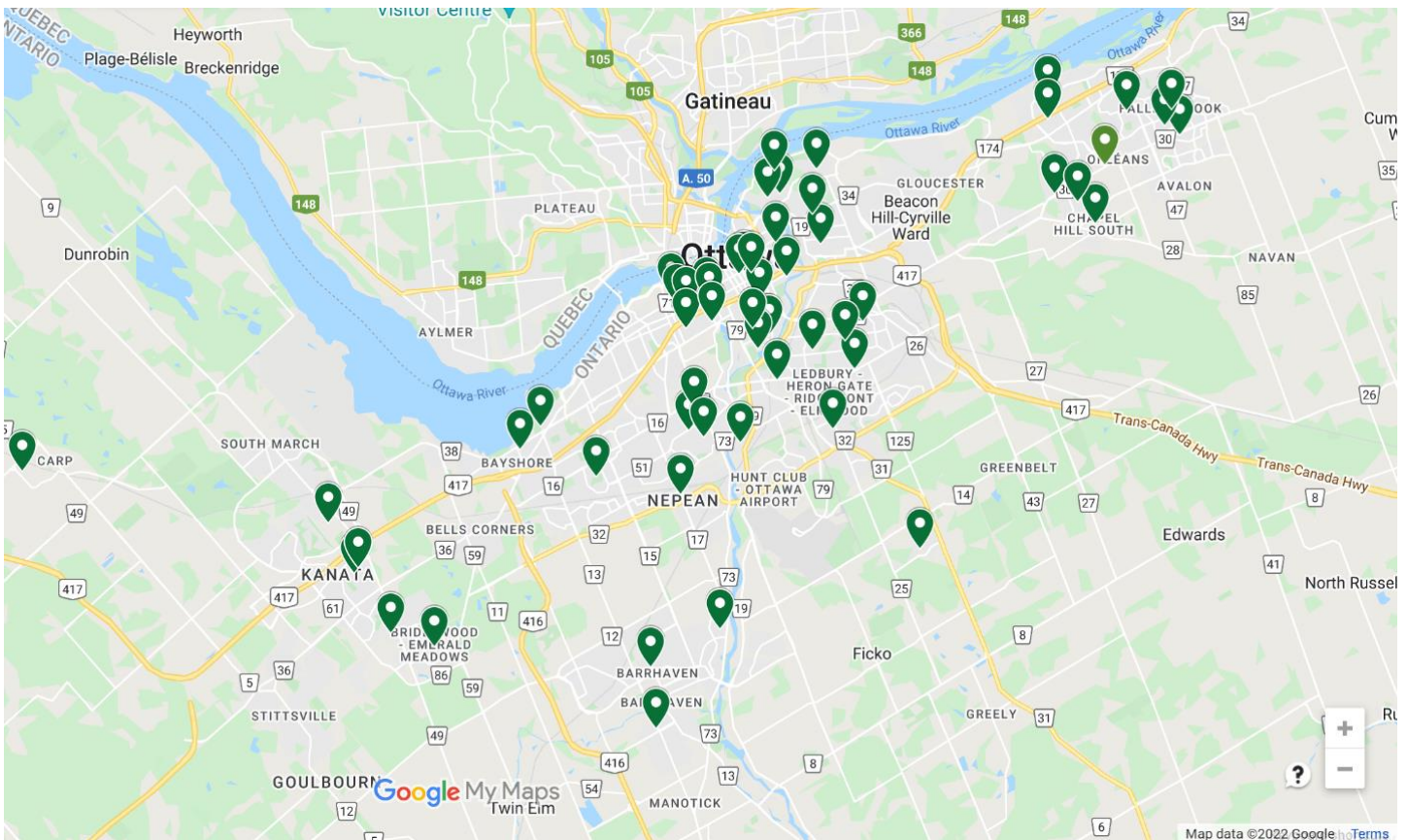
### 2022 Snow Mole

This section outlines the data analysis and key barriers and safety hazards identified during the 2022 Campaign. The results, pictures, and quotes in this report underscore that pedestrians continue to experience barriers and safety hazards while walking in winter. Between January 1 and March 30, 2022, the Snow Mole campaign saw 270 audits completed by motivated volunteers and citizens across the city.

**270**  
Snow Mole audits submitted

**101**  
open-ended comments

**130**  
photos submitted

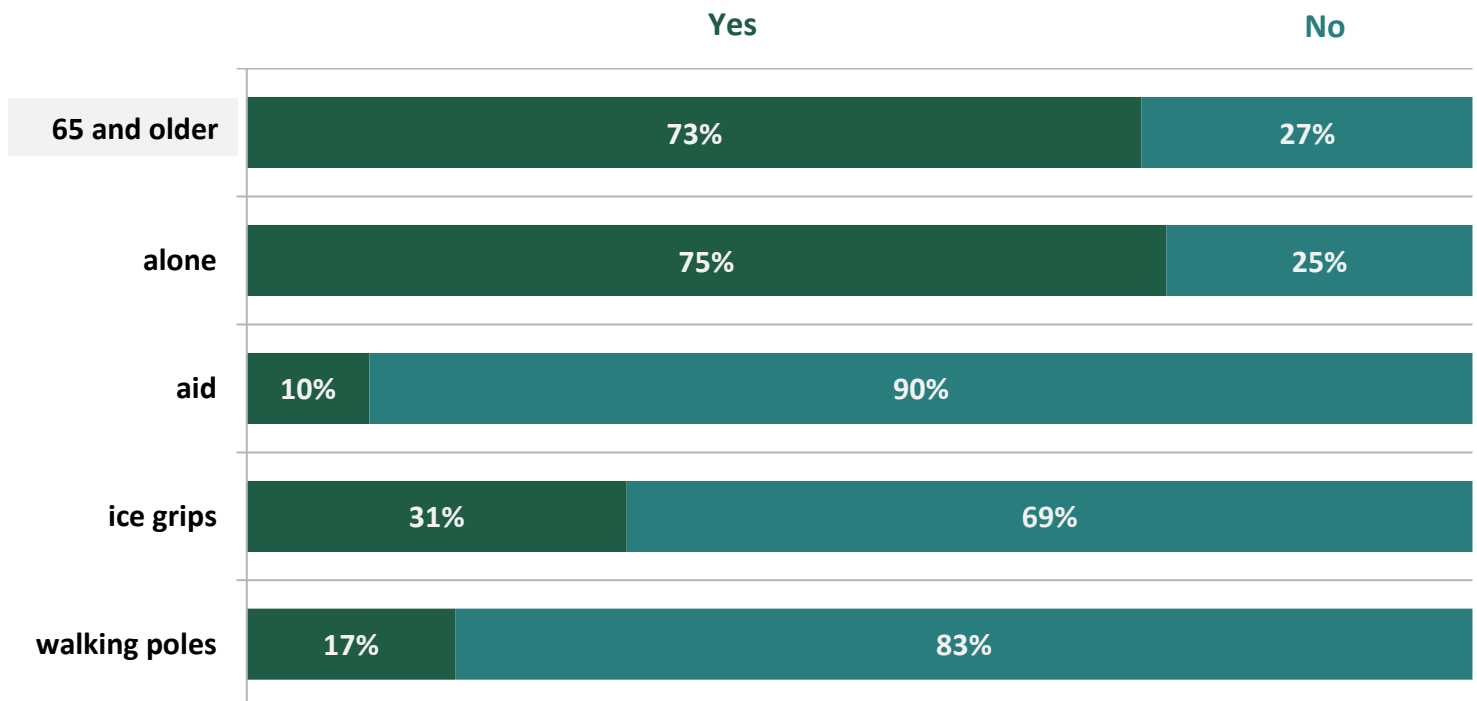




<b>Barrhaven (4)</b> Rosetta Park Half Moon Bay	<b>Ottawa West (54)</b> Hintonburg Fairmont Westboro Mechanicsville	<b>Kanata (35)</b> Beaverbrook Bridlewood Kanata North Katimavik
<b>Nepean (12)</b> Civic Hospital Bayshore Fisher Heights Parkwood Carleton Heights Centreponte	<b>Ottawa East (25)</b> New Edinburgh Vanier Lindenlea Rockcliffe Park Sandy Hill Manor Park	<b>Ottawa Centre (57)</b> Centretown Old Ottawa South Old Ottawa East Little Italy Glebe
<b>Ottawa South (18)</b> Alta Vista Walkley Road Heron/Bank South Keys Findlay Creek	<b>Orléans (36)</b> Grey Nuns Jeanne D’Arc Frank Bender Belcourt Chapel Hill South Centrum	<b>West Carleton (9)</b>

## Demographics

- 73% of respondents were 65 or older
- 75% of respondents walked alone
- 10% respondents used a walking or mobility aid
- 31% of respondents used ice grips; 17% of respondents used walking poles



Does fear of falling in winter sometimes keep you from going out to walk?

**87%**  
*reported yes  
fear of falling  
sometimes keeps them  
from going out*

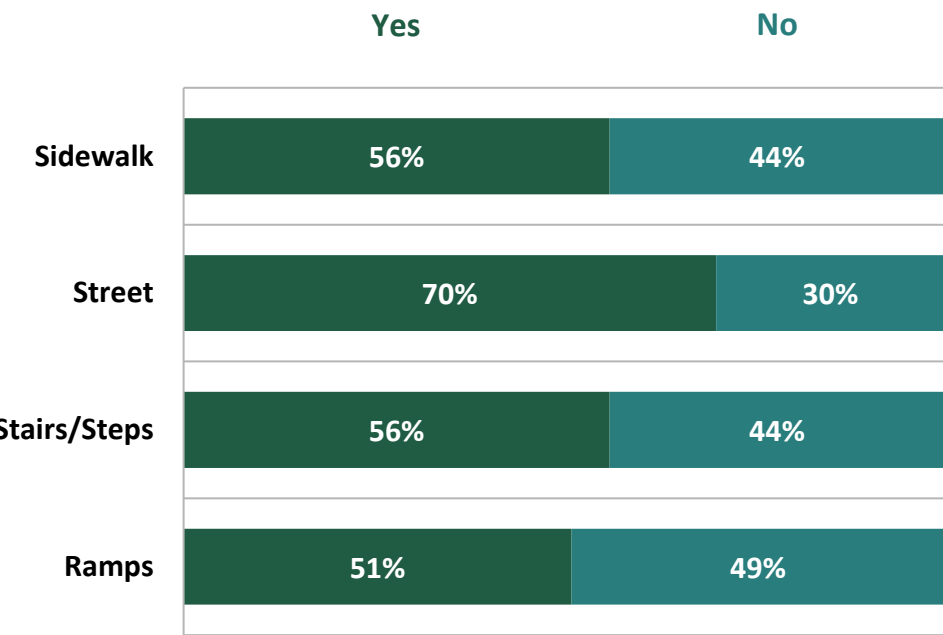
- 5 respondents noted a fall on their walk
- Reasons for falls:  
“Fall because of black ice on Irving Ave.”  
“Trying to climb over the snowbank to access my condo!”  
“Sidewalk icy and no abrasive.”

*The small hill on the street was not plowed last week when the plow went through, that left more snow there. It is difficult to walk because it is kind of greasy and you need to take care not to slip. The machine that puts out salt does not put enough down. So, I almost fell twice today!*

2022 Snow Mole

On your walk today, was the surface safe to walk on?

Although many people reported surfaces were safe, streets (70%) for cars were cleared more often and safer to walk on than sidewalks (56%), stairs/steps (56%), and ramps (51%).



Snowy sidewalk in Westboro  
March 5



Ice in Orléans  
February 13

---

*Sidewalks not plowed. You have to try to walk on the road.*

*And then climb over the snow to access my condo.*

---

## 2022 Snow Mole

If you are walking on a street or road, is it because...

For those who reported walking on streets during the audit, they consistently reported having no sidewalks or path (73%), too much snow and/or ice (71%), or the street were plowed and safer (72%).

**no sidewalk**

**Yes**

**No**

**73%**

**27%**

**too much snow/ice**

**71%**

**29%**

**road/street plowed**

**72%**

**28%**



Kinburn sidewalk  
January 22



Old Ottawa South  
February 18

*Pedestrian crosswalk area had not been plowed, could not reach to press button, large snow plow ridge to go over and this was at a busy pedestrian crossing.*

## 2022 Snow Mole

As part of your walk, are you using a crosswalk or intersection to cross the street?

82% respondents used a crosswalk or intersection, and of those **61% noted the curbs and street were clear enough to cross safely**. Another 32% were unable to reach the pedestrian walk button and another 8% did not have enough time to cross the street safely.

	Yes	No
Crosswalk used	82%	18%
Ped walk button	68%	32%
time to cross	92%	8%
clear of ice and snow	61%	39%



High snow ridges (measured mid-calf on pedestrian) in crosswalk on Richmond Road March 8



Partially cleared cross walk at Wellington and Melrose February 2



Crosswalk in Orléans blocked by snow February 12



---

*“The sidewalk was plowed but was left with snowpack. Snow banks are so high that they're collapsing onto sidewalks and blocking them. I had to scramble over them.”*

---

2022 Snow Mole

Were there high snow banks that made your walk more difficult today?

*Only  
35%  
reported  
high snow banks*



While few noted high snow banks that made their walk more difficult, respondents commented that high snow banks were the main reason for their fall during the walk. In areas where snow banks are cleared regularly, people reported few barriers.

---

High snowbanks on Third Avenue (Glebe) February 18

---

*Snow not cleared on bench at bus stop (Brian Coburn and Strasberg).*

---

2022 Snow Mole

Was bench seating available to rest on your route and cleared of snow?

Of the 43% respondents who noted available bench seating to rest on their route, only half (48%) of the benches were cleared. Benches are one of the key features of an age-friendly community allowing pedestrians to sit and rest along their routes. There are over 2,600 benches in Ottawa, of which 24 benches have been installed through the Older Adult Plan since 2012. Yet, many of them are not accessible during winter months.

Yes, cleared of snow

No

48%

52%



Bench at bus stop in Orléans  
January 25

## Did you use stairs or steps (excluding at your residence) on your route today?

- 10% of respondents used stairs on their route
  - Of those respondents, 43 % noted a handrail present

Yes, handrails present



## Did you use a ramp (excluding at your residence) on your route today?

- 4% of respondents used a ramp on their route
  - Of those respondents, 12% noted a handrail present

Yes, handrails present



Partially cleared stairway with handrails in Orléans  
March 8



Intersection in Centretown  
January 27



## Do you have any other safety concerns not mentioned already, or any other comments?

Three other themes emerged from the general comments received: bus stops, ice, and sidewalk conditions and infrastructure issues, as noted by the quotes and images below.

### Bus Stops

---

*Bus stop on south side of the street is not accessible from the sidewalk forcing you to walk 12 meters on the road to reach it.*

---

2022 Snow Mole



Orléans  
January 24



CentrepoinTE  
February 21

### Ice

---

*There were patches of dry sidewalk, but because of the ice on the sidewalk and the thick section of ice at the curb, it was safer to walk on the road instead of weaving on and off the sidewalk to the road. The ice at the curb was wide and that is why I stayed on the road.*

---

2022 Snow Mole



Old Ottawa East  
February 12



Orléans  
February 13



Sidewalk in disrepair,  
Orléans  
January 10



Watery walking conditions, Third and O'Connor, Glebe  
February 24



Watery walking  
conditions, Frank Bender  
March 5

## Sidewalk Conditions and Infrastructure Issues

---

***Terrible job clearing snow from streets in Old Ottawa South. The streets are not straight, but have a terrible slope and uneven, with many cracks.***

***There are really huge potholes on Gladstone between Parkdale and Rosemount that fill up with water and make walking risky for being drenched by passing cars.***

***Sidewalks finished in pavement not concrete are really uneven and had large pools of water causing pedestrians to have to walk on icy snowbanks that surrounded it.***

***Some sidewalks in Centretown are not even, sloping and so dangerous for falls when covered in snow and ice.***

---

Safe winter walking depends on having good infrastructure, regular maintenance and repairs, and appropriate snow clearing policies. Pedestrians also need to have safe access to public transportation, and this includes having accessible bus shelters, especially in the depths of winter. Snow-covered or icy sidewalks are a fall hazard, and dangerous to navigate with mobility aids, especially if the sidewalks are too sloped or uneven. Right now, there are too many Ottawa residents who feel that if they have been fortunate enough to be able to go outside and safely complete a winter walk, they have won a major victory against snow, ice, and infrastructure. Accessible winter walking and safe pedestrian pathways should be widely and easily available for everyone, including older adults and people using mobility aids.

We look forward to the day when completing a safe winter walk is an ordinary and mundane task for all Ottawa pedestrians!



## Top Ten Recommendations

The following recommendations, with identified leads to implement the recommendation in brackets, are based on the 2022 Campaign data, comments, and photos as well as information from past Snow Mole reports.

1. **Prioritize Pedestrian Safety First in policies and practices** to clear snow to bare pavement on high density residential sidewalks. (City: 2022 WMQS, Public Works-Environmental Services Department)
2. **Ensure awareness and safety training for sidewalk plow operators**, to highlight the importance of key issues for senior pedestrians, those using mobility aids and children. (City: Public Works-Environmental Services Department)
3. **Plow for complete pedestrian trips**; connect sidewalks to transit stops, connect corners and curbs to pedestrian crossings, and connect residential streets & roads to pathways and parks. (City: Public Works-Environmental Services Department).
4. **Remove high snowbanks on residential streets before they become hazardous to pedestrians**; and before thawing and freezing into ice buildup that is dangerous to walk on and difficult to remove. (City: Public Works-Environmental Services Department).
5. **Increase frequency of applying salt, grit and sand to roads and sidewalks**, especially during freeze-thaw cycles. (City: Public Works-Environmental Services Department).
6. **Implement solutions to ice buildup problems due to plowing and freeze-thaw cycles.** (i.e.: Ensure street drains are kept clear. Educate residents to know locations of their local drains and how to keep clear). (City: Older Adult Plan; Infrastructure and Water Services (IWS); Community)
7. **Improve safe access to parks and community amenities** through the winter months (including connections to senior's residences, medical facilities, and schools). (City: Public Works-Environmental Services Department).
8. **Improve city data collection** (age & gender disaggregated) on the incidence and location (e.g., steps, stairs, ramps, sidewalks) of outdoor winter falls and injuries and share with the community. (City: Ottawa Public Health).
9. **Improve safety and accessibility by clearing snow and ice from benches** beside sidewalks and pathways. (Council on Aging: Snow Mole 2023 community project)
10. **Improve sidewalk infrastructure** to a new wider and flat "Ottawa model", without curb cuts for cars, to encourage safe age-friendly walking in all seasons. (City: Infrastructure & Water Services (IWS) Department)

## Conclusion

Snow Moles recognize the persistence of the barriers and hazards faced by pedestrians, especially those most vulnerable, during the harsh winter months. Mother Nature and climate change are responsible for Ottawa's winter weather with snow, ice, freezing rain and increasing freeze-thaw cycles. This report identifies the most prevalent and recurring problems for pedestrians with clear data, and gives a prioritized list of ten actionable recommendations to the city and the community to make our winter city safer and more accessible

With the city's new WMQS snow clearing policies ready for action in the 2023 winter, Snow Moles will once again be ready to pull on their boots and audit their neighbourhoods to test the new standards in Ottawa neighbourhoods.

The safety of Ottawa pedestrians on sidewalks, pathways, and roads where there are no sidewalks is the clear priority. With continued collaboration with the city, and positive actions and awareness, winter walking can be safe and enjoyable for everyone.



Richmond Road bus stop, narrow uncleared sidewalk  
March 5



Kinburn  
February 28





Orléans  
February 21

## Appendix A: Snow Mole Questionnaire



# SNOW MOLE Questionnaire 2022

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

**SNOW MOLES** are volunteers who report on what it is like to walk outside on a winter day.

You are invited to ensure healthy, accessible, and safe winter walking conditions in Ottawa, by becoming a **SNOW MOLE** and completing a Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audit. Your answers will be part of a **2022 Winter Walking in Ottawa: Snow Mole Report** shared with the City of Ottawa for better understanding of the safety of winter walking in Ottawa.

### Instructions for Age-Friendly Ottawa SNOW MOLES

1. When you go out for an errand or a walk, **please use the Snow Mole Questionnaire** to note features and conditions that are “safe” (e.g., a bench cleared of snow) as well as “unsafe” (e.g., snow piled up in intersections).
2. We encourage you to **take and submit photos** of both safe and unsafe features and conditions. Send photos to [snowmoles@coaottawa.ca](mailto:snowmoles@coaottawa.ca)
3. **Complete** the questionnaire online ([coaottawa.ca/snowmoles](https://coaottawa.ca/snowmoles)) or drop off/mail it to: The Council on Aging of Ottawa (815 St. Laurent Blvd #217, Ottawa, ON K1K 3A7).

### A. Questions about your winter walk and conditions

Date (day/month/year): \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbourhood of walk audit (e.g., Glebe, Kanata, Orléans): \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Snow Mole Checklist:** Please complete as appropriate. Feel free to leave questions blank that don't apply to your walk.

1. On your walk today, was the **surface** safe to walk on?

a) sidewalk/pathway	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
b) street	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
c) stairs/steps	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
d) ramps	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
2. If you are **walking on a street or road**, is it because (please circle all that apply):

a) there is no sidewalk or pedestrian path	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
b) there is too much snow and/or ice on the sidewalk to safely walk, or to push my stroller, walker, or wheelchair	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
c) the road/street has been plowed and is safer to walk on	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
3. As part of your walk, are you using a **crosswalk or intersection** to cross the street? **Yes** **No**  
If **Yes**, please answer the following questions:

a) if there is a pedestrian walk button, can you reach it easily?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
b) do you have enough time to cross the street safely?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>



c) are the curb and street clear enough of snow and ice

that you can cross the street safely?

Yes No

4. Were there high **snow banks** that made your walk more difficult today? Yes No

5. Was **bench seating** available to rest on your route? Yes No

If Yes, is it clear of ice/snow?

Yes No

6. Did you use **stairs or steps** (excluding at your residence) on your route today? Yes No

If Yes, were there handrails for the stairs/steps? Yes No

7. Did you use a **ramp** (excluding at your residence) on your route today? Yes No

If Yes, were there handrails for the ramp? Yes No

8. Did you **fall** during your Snow Mole walk audit today? Yes No

If Yes,

did you fall on stairs, steps, or a ramp? Yes No

did you injure yourself in any way? Yes No

did you go to the hospital emergency? Yes No

what was the reason for your fall? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

---

---

---

### C. Important Questions about You: Please complete as appropriate.

Are you over 65? Yes No

Are you walking alone? Yes No

Do you use a mobility aid (e.g., cane, walker, wheelchair)? Yes No

Do you use ice grips/cleats on your boots? Yes No

Do you use walking poles? Yes No

Photos are encouraged. Please send to: [snowmoles@coaottawa.ca](mailto:snowmoles@coaottawa.ca)

**"If you see something, say something."** Karen Scott, Ottawa Disability Coalition

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

**Thank you for being a Snow Mole  
and returning this completed Winter Walkability and Pedestrian Safety Audit!**

## Appendix B: Winter Walking Tip Sheet

### TIPS SHEETS

The Council  
on Aging  
of Ottawa



Le Conseil sur  
le vieillissement  
d'Ottawa

# 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: point 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](http://www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles) for full information and the snow mole audit questionnaire.

 [www.coaottawa.ca](http://www.coaottawa.ca)  [/COA\\_Ottawa](https://twitter.com/COA_Ottawa)  
 [/coaottawa](https://www.facebook.com/coaottawa)  613-789-3577  
 [snowmoles@coaottawa.ca](mailto:snowmoles@coaottawa.ca)





For additional copies of the *Snow Mole Report 2022* or further information contact:

**The Council  
on Aging  
of Ottawa**



**Le Conseil sur  
le vieillissement  
d'Ottawa**

613.789.3577

[coa@coaottawa.ca](mailto:coa@coaottawa.ca)

[www.coaottawa.ca](http://www.coaottawa.ca)