

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS & SIDEWALK SAFETY ARE IMPORTANT YEAR ROUND!

Kitchener ON. The wonderful weather we are having this first week of November is delightful and rare for this time of year. However, even with the warm temperatures and sunny days, the Disabilities and Human Rights Group of the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo reminds everyone that fall is the time of year to pay particular attention to sidewalk safety.



Sidewalk leaves can be a hazard.

Sidewalks can be dangerous places for those who experience any degree or type of mobility challenge, be it balance or strength, using a walker or other mobility device or a having a sensory limitation such as a visual impairment.

Pedestrian access and sidewalk safety are important year round but even more so in the fall and winter. To keep access open for everyone requires attention to the conditions of our public and private walkways to be sure these are not blocked by leaves, snow or other debris or by overgrown foliage from the adjoining property.



King St Construction

There is significant construction happening right now across Waterloo Region, especially in the central areas of Kitchener and Waterloo. The amount of construction and number of detours are making it a much greater challenge than usual at this time for anyone who travels by car but especially for those who must get around on foot, cycle or public transit. Any form of mobility challenge in this mix can result in significant barriers to daily living that limit people's ability to participate in the community.

For property owners/managers:

- Check your sidewalks on a daily basis, more often during poor weather such as rain or high wind.
- Remove leaves, snow or debris – keep a clear pathway at all times.
- If there is no sidewalk, is the walkway flat and even – this is especially important during any construction.
- Trim bushes and branches so these don't hang out over the walkway.

For those with any type of mobility challenge:

- Know your routes and anticipate changes so you can plan ahead.
- Get the most up to date information you can about road closures and detours.
- Have a cell phone with you at all times and make sure it is fully charged before you leave home so you can call for help if you need it.
- Set up a network of support so you can call on friends, family or neighbours if you need help.
- If you are going to an appointment or out shopping, contact these places ahead of time to see if they are providing rides or assistance in any way.
- Find out about support services that may be available to you and make plans to get this help – e.g. do you qualify for Mobility Plus?

For service providers, caregivers and supporters:

- Understand the travelling needs and patterns of those in your care and be alert to changes in these patterns as these may reflect barriers they have encountered.
- Ask those in your care to tell you if they have encountered any challenges when out in the community – they may need an advocate.
- Offer assistance to provide a ride or help if they encounter barriers when they are out in the community – provide your phone number and then be available.
- Be informed about the rights of those with disabilities under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and *Standards* in particular for build environment, communication, transportation and customer service.

For the community as a whole:

There is no community wide response to year round sidewalk access issues. Some discussions have been started in response to the proliferation of the construction in the community and how this is affecting those with mobility challenges. Church groups, service clubs, community associations or other volunteer groups that are interested in exploring how they can help, can contact the Social Planning Council at spckw@waterlooregion.org or by phone at 519-579-1096 Ext *3006.

Some contacts that may be of assistance:

- In an emergency contact call: 911
- For problems with walkways or sidewalks, call your local municipal councillor
- For questions or issues Light Rail Transit construction contact GrandLinq 1-844-625-1010
- To access the Grand River Transit trip planner go to <http://web.grt.ca/hastinfoweb/>
- Some services that may be helpful:
 - Mobility Plus 519-585-7555
 - Community Support Connections, Meals on Wheels and More 519-772-8787
 - K-W Access-Ability 519-885-6640
 - Independent Living Centre 519-571-6788
 - Stroke Recovery Canada (KW)1-800-263-3463 Ext 7702; (Cambridge) 519-742-3226
 - Canadian National Institute for the Blind 519-742-3536
 - Canadian Hearing Society 519-744-6811 or 1-800-668-5815
- For more information about these or other services, call Community Information Centre Waterloo Region Help Line 519-579-3800

Started in 2007, the Disabilities and Human Rights Group includes those who have direct lived experience with a disability and disability service organizations and supportive community members. The Group works to ensure everyone is included in the life of the community.

For inquiries about this notice contact: Trudy Beaulne, Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
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