



## **MAINTENANCE OF SIDEWALKS**

By Beven Bentley, Community Peace Officer

Did you know that the Town of Hinton has approximately 85 km of sidewalks? In order to visualize that, imagine a sidewalk that stretches from here to Edson. Now imagine keeping it clean!

This brings me to this weeks' subject matter, which is the "maintenance of sidewalks". The Town of Hinton Nuisance Bylaw states that the property owner is responsible for cleaning of all sidewalks and boulevards adjacent to or abutting their property..

In most cases when a property owner is requested to clean their sidewalks, the response is favorable; however in some cases the property owner feels the responsibility should be that of the town's. This is further reinforced by the fact that they pay taxes and feel that the service should be included.

As a taxpayer this does sound reasonable, however when all is said and done the practical application would not be in the best interest of the property owner.

To begin there is not the space in this column to explain the extent of the costs which would be incurred for equipment and labor to complete 85 KM's of sidewalk cleaning. Additional costs which the tax payer would eventually take responsibility for.

In regards to public service, Municipalities have been challenged with the task of having sidewalks cleaned in a timely manner; the most cost effective and efficient way to do that is to have the property owner do the cleaning so that all sidewalks are maintained within a reasonable time. Without this system, property owners would be subject to poor service, which can be explained as follows.

There is approximately 48 kilometers of roadway in Hinton and for every roadway there is in most cases, double the distance in sidewalks. It takes the Town of Hinton Public Works crew approximately two weeks to complete snow removal of the roadways, so it would stand to reason that it would take even longer to clean the sidewalks. That means that some sidewalks would receive immediate attention while others would remain snow covered for possibly a couple of weeks. So as much as we would like to avoid the task of cleaning our sidewalks, the truth is. that it is the best method in regards to saving costs and keeping our sidewalks safe and usable at all times.

What if a property owner fails to clean the sidewalks?

As it stands today, if a property owner fails to clean the sidewalks, the Town's Bylaw Enforcement Officer attends and requests the cleaning to be done on a compliance basis as a first step. The request is initiated in most cases by a fellow citizen who has had to use the sidewalk and found it obstructive and unsafe. In many cases it is the elderly having to navigate the sidewalks, which increases the difficulty as well as risk of injury. If the property owner continues to fail following the initial request, an order is served with a timeline to have the sidewalk cleaned. If the cleaning is not done by the stated timeline the town will clean the sidewalk and the costs will be incurred by the property owner and added to the property taxes for collection. This is a course of action when all other attempts have been exhausted.

In conclusion, the Protective Services Bylaw Division would encourage all citizens to be pro-active in the cleaning of sidewalks to allow free and safe usage by all.

If you require any further information on the regulation of sidewalk cleaning you may contact the Town of Hinton Bylaw Services Department at 865-6009.