April 24, 2020

Dr. Eileen de Villa

Medical Officer of Health

City of Toronto Health Unit

277 Victoria Street, 5thFloor

Toronto, Ontario M5B 1W2

Dear Dr. de Villa,

Walk Toronto is a volunteer, grassroots advocacy group that works to make Toronto a better city for walking.

We were pleased to observe that Toronto Public Health, Toronto Police Services, and Transportation Services blocked off a curb lane to vehicle traffic when a significant and persistent lineup developed along the sidewalk for Vesuvio Pizzeria and Spaghetti House, located at 3010 Dundas Street West. The closed curb lane enabled pedestrians to walk past the lineup while keeping a safe physical distance, as recommended to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We also observed that, in your reply to a letter from Ryerson professors Dr. Anne Harris and Dr. Linda Rothman regarding the idea of curb lane closures, you noted, “We would also welcome any specific information you have as to locations where sidewalk congestion has been an issue in the present circumstances.”

In that spirit, Walk Toronto has recently put out a request to the public for specific locations where long and persistent lineups are forming, which could mean that a similar action to widen the space available for pedestrians would be justified.

We have attached the results received so far (in just two days) in a spreadsheet, which indicates the location, the reason for the request, and the number of people who wrote in with that particular location. The spreadsheet also includes some locations where construction or other sidewalk obstructions mean that the sidewalk is severely constricted and it is impossible for pedestrians to proceed safely at any distance at all from each other. We have also developed an online map, which we may continue to update with additional locations and with photographs: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1VEhgc6iQdjR-bafkXXIuxpydx7oZK9Z9&usp=sharing>

It is our hope that you will have these locations investigated and, where appropriate, have a curb lane closed off so that pedestrians can pass safely, as you did with Vesuvio Pizzeria and Spaghetti House. We note that a simple deployment of flexible drums (TC-54 barrels), such as those used at construction sites, along with a temporary sign, should be enough to create the necessary space, without requiring any significant deployment of resources. We also note that closures of a single block or less, in locations that are for the most part not scenic, should not draw any additional visitors to these sites.

We hope that this initiative will be helpful for you in identifying locations where sidewalk congestion is an issue.

Thank you,

Dylan Reid and Sean Marshall

On behalf of Walk Toronto

cc. Barbara Gray

Jacquelyn Hayward Gulati

John Tory