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Vancouver snow-clearing rules might get tougher

By CBC News

The City of Vancouver is considering forcing all homeowners in the city to remove snow from their sidewalks.

The City of Vancouver is considering a proposal to force all homeowners in the city to remove snow from their sidewalks.

Already, owners of properties in the downtown core and multi-unit residential properties outside the downtown ? such as condominium and apartment buildings ? are required to keep their sidewalks snow-free.

"What we're proposing is that council consider expanding that bylaw to include all properties," said assistant city engineer Neal Carley. "So even single-family residences and duplexes would then be required to shovel their sidewalks."

The city is reviewing snow- and ice-clearing procedures in the wake of unusually severe winter conditions in December 2008 and January 2009.

The city also has been examining its own snow-clearing performance after complaints about laneways and side streets remaining unplowed for weeks.

Hundreds of warnings

Last winter's record snowfalls resulted in a large number of snow-clearing bylaw violations. The city says it issued 702 warnings to Vancouver businesses and multi-unit building owners for not shovelling their sidewalks in 2008.

The city took some of them to court. So far, six convictions have resulted in nearly \$25,000 in fines.

Enforcement of the bylaw ? or the threat of it ? appears to have gotten people's attention.

"Toward the end of summer, we started getting calls from existing clients and new clients that had actually got fines from the city," said Manny Kursan, owner of Vancouver Snow Removal.

The bylaw is expected to come up for discussion and possibly a vote at Vancouver city council on Dec. 3.

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