

Good Day

My Name is Shawn Connolly.

I live in the Orchard Park /Sherwood Forest Neighbourhoods.

I'm proud to say I'm the stepfather to Noah Romer, a 21-year-old lad who is in a wheelchair.

Noah is a very outgoing/social individual who enjoys long walks and talking to everyone he meets.

I'm opposed to sidewalks because from my experience they reduce Noah's accessibility. And they are a potential safety hazard for Noah and others.

In the winter the sidewalks are not maintained for a wheelchair. If the plow has been out, the amount of sand used provides little to no traction for his wheels. Also, there is risk of a slip or fall from the family member or caregiver accompanying Noah. Therefore, the roadway is the safest option.

When the nice weather finally comes, we are on constant lookout for hazards that will cause damage to Noah's chair.

The transition from the road to the sidewalk, cracks, uneven pads, water valves and interlocking bricks etc. etc. have many times damaged the chair.

The adjustment bolts for his castors break, causing us to do a nosedive towards that broken wheel.

We have been very lucky that Noah hasn't been injured yet.

Noah is in his chair all day. It is his primary means of getting around.

It takes a few days to get a serviceperson out to repair a broken wheel.

This means Noah must sit at home. He has no choice.

He can't even go out in his accessible van because we can't balance the chair on three wheels.

Again, the road is the safer choice to sidewalks. In all weather conditions.

Consider the fact that the roads are better maintained all year around than sidewalks. The roads have a smoother surface for wheels. It is mostly local traffic on the roads in a quiet residential area.

We have never experienced any issues or problems using the roadways.

I feel strongly that it's just a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt from a trip or fall on the sidewalk. Just because we have no sidewalks doesn't mean the neighbourhood is not accessible to all.

In our neighbourhood, the opposite is true. The quiet roads without sidewalks are more accessible.

We must make all neighbourhoods inclusive. We want to promote mobility and independence.

But that does not mean the answer to this challenge is inputting sidewalks in every neighbourhood.

What I would like to see instead is the speed limit dropped down to 40 kms/hr and yield signs replaced with stop signs throughout the whole neighbourhood.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email or cell.

Thank you for your time.