

Dump snow away from our rivers



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I love winter — especially after a fresh snowfall. The air is crisp and invigorating. Everything looks clean and bright.

I am less fond of the early spring when melting snowbanks reveal a winter's worth of debris. Throughout the winter, giant plows scrape the hard-packed snow and ice from the city streets and dump it onto boulevards — including the one in front of my house. These snow piles contain more than just snow. They contain sand, salt, litter, and countless invisible pollutants from car engines and tailpipes.

Back in the 1980s, the city routinely plowed the material from city streets into the nearest river. Andrew Lockery at the University of Winnipeg studied the impact of these massive snow dumps on water quality and the under-ice flow of the rivers. By the 1990s, the city discontinued this harmful practice. It established several large land-based snow dumps to store snow until spring. This prevents some harmful pollutants from entering the city's rivers and streams.

Unfortunately, some snow and ice is still being dumped, pushed over river banks, or stored beside Winnipeg waterways. Save Our Seine recently received several inquiries about snow dumping activities along the Seine River. People are concerned that this will affect the river. They want to know if this activity is allowed.

A quick survey down the length of the river revealed eight locations where snow and ice from parking lots of riverfront properties has been dumped or pushed onto land beside the river.

In two cases, the large and heavy materials have damaged and uprooted trees. All eight properties have very limited space to accommodate snow storage. Large snow piles appear to be encroaching on public land but it is hard to tell without property markers.

Even if a snow dump is on private land, this activity may be restricted by Winnipeg's waterway bylaw, which requires a permit for "the deposit, removal, alteration or disturbance of any material" within the regulated area (i.e., 350 feet from the Red, Assiniboine, or Seine rivers). If you are concerned that snow dumping within this zone may impede surface water flow, endanger the stability of land, or cause land to slip into a waterway, contact 311.

Unfortunately, the bylaw does not address water quality. Thanks to everyone who is part of SOS's Eyes on the River

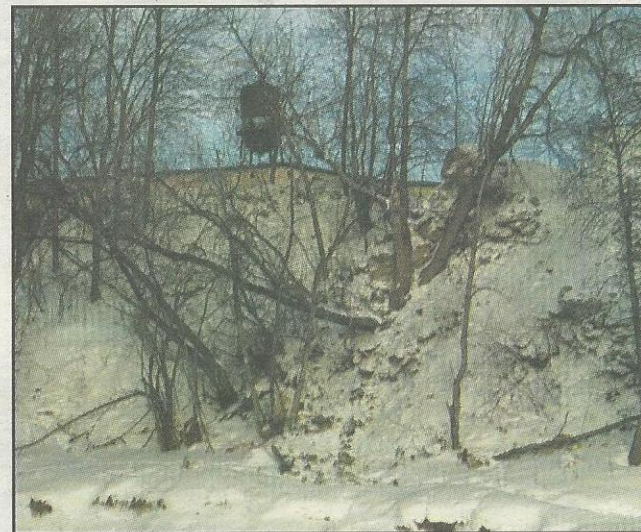


Photo by Michele Kading

Heavy snow and ice pushed over steep riverbanks uproots trees and causes land to slip into the river.

initiative. Bringing your observations and concerns to SOS and the city encourages everyone to become better stewards of our precious rivers and creeks.

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