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FEATURED

## Making safer community tobogganing hills

Feb 12, 2021



Trudeau Parc in Côte Saint-Luc.

Photos: John Zimmerman

Côte Saint-Luc resident and ardent photographer John Zimmerman ( [www.johnzimmermanphotography.ca](http://www.johnzimmermanphotography.ca) ) took these photos of his borough's Trudeau Parc on the weekend of January 23-24 when snow makers were busy adding more of the white stuff to, apparently, make safer community tobogganing and sledding hills.

The move comes soon after doctors and nurses at the Montreal Children's Hospital's (MCH) trauma centre witnessed an unusual uptick in the number of injuries from a winter sport that has seen an unusual uptick in popularity — tobogganing.

“We started looking at the numbers and just paid attention to what was going on,” said Liane Fransblow, injury prevention coordinator at the hospital's trauma centre, during a Friday afternoon telephone interview. “I have young kids and I kind of looked at my colleagues and said, ‘There's a ton of people at the tobogganing hills. We should check out what's going on there.’”

Ideally, Fransblow said she would like to see municipalities actually block off access to some of the more dangerous hills. For anyone who will be going tobogganing, the MCH offers the following safety tips:

- Make sure there are no obstacles on the hill, such as park benches, trees, bicycle racks, bales of hay (which easily freeze), wooden boards, metal fences or other park equipment.
- It is important to use hills specifically designated for sledding.
- Always check the conditions of the hill; avoid icy conditions.
- Ideally the bottom of the run should have enough flat open space so the toboggan comes to a stop by itself.
- Never slide into the street.
- A helmet (ski or hockey type) is highly recommended. High-speed impacts can result in serious traumatic brain injuries.
- Use more traditional sleds and toboggans, which allow for better control.
- Young children should always be supervised.
- Avoid hills that exceed a child's skill level. Ensure that younger children toboggan on hills with a gentle slope.
- Do not pile too many people on a toboggan. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Always sit facing forward, never stand or lie head-first.
- If you lose control, roll-off sideways and do not try to stop the toboggan or sled using your hands or feet.
- Get out of the way at the bottom of the hill to avoid being hit by oncoming sliders.
- Toboggan during daylight. Many injuries occur during the late afternoon or early evening.

— *By Anthony Bonaparte*

— *Photos: John Zimmerman*

— *[www.johnzimmermanphotography.ca](http://www.johnzimmermanphotography.ca)*