

November 18, 2010

Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister
Ministry of Transportation
3rd Floor, Ferguson Block
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister Wynne:

I am writing this letter to support the passing of Bill 100, an Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. This private member's bill was put forward by Mr. Norm Miller, MPP Parry Sound-Muskoka on September 13, 2010, and passed second reading in the Legislature on September 16, 2010. Bill 100 requires the Minister of Transportation to construct, during resurfacing, one-meter (minimum) paved shoulders on prescribed highways and provide signage that warns vehicles to watch for and share the road with pedestrians and cyclists.

With the inclusion of one important amendment, Bill 100 will make it possible for people to cycle and walk more safely on Ontario's secondary highways. Increased cycling and walking for recreation, commuting and as a general means of getting around, has major health and environmental benefits. From a safety perspective, however, I recommend that the Bill be amended to include the requirement for a minimum paved width of 1.2 meters (as opposed to one metre) along with line painting that visually separates the vehicle and cycling lane. This recommendation is based on best practice that suggests 1.2 meters is the minimum recommended width for a shoulder lane to safely accommodate bicycle and/or pedestrian travel when vehicle speeds on that stretch of road exceed 55 km/h, as it would on the rural roads/highways in question. Best practice also suggests that the creation of a visual distinction (i.e. painted line) between the paved shoulder and the vehicle lane is necessary to create the desired separation of space such that the motorist does not consider the paved shoulder as part of the vehicle lane.ⁱ

Bill 100 is important legislation that will support a healthier built environment for all Ontarians. Our physical environment is a key determinant of health and we know that the way our roads and communities are designed directly affects health. For example, evidence shows that people who live in neighbourhoods with a mix of shops and businesses within easy walking distance have a 35 per cent lower risk of obesityⁱⁱ. Compact, dense communities result in fewer vehicles on the road, which means that streets are safer to walk and cycle on and public transportation works more efficientlyⁱⁱⁱ. And safe road design, along with active transportation features such as cycling lanes and sidewalks, which translates into more walkers and cyclists being on the street, results in lower rates of vehicle-pedestrian collisions^{iv}.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, along with many other health units across Ontario, has been involved for a number of years in work to change the built environment in order to improve the health of the population. This includes working with partners, such as municipal planners and elected officials, to incorporate healthy community design principles into official plans and other strategic municipal documents. To assist municipalities with this we developed

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Healthy Community Design: Policy Statements for Official Plans, a resource that is available on our website at http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Libraries/JFY_Communities/Healthy_Design_FINAL_ONLINE_24mar10.sflb.ashx. This resource contains health-enhancing official plan policy and implementation suggestions. We are also working with municipalities to develop active transportation plans in their communities for both leisure and utilitarian purposes as a means to encourage citizens to increase their daily level of physical activity. At the provincial level we recently reviewed the Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and provided comprehensive health-related feedback to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

With more than 16,500 km of provincial highways in Ontario and more than 90 per cent of Ontario residents living within 10 km of a provincial highway, Bill 100 would provide the environmental supports required to boost our population's participation in active transportation. The availability of paved shoulders on our highways, along with appropriate signage and other safety features, would therefore serve to enhance active transportation opportunities across the province. I believe that the passage of Bill 100 with the modifications that I have recommended would signify a very sound societal investment.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dennis Roughley
Chair, Board of Health

DR:MW:mk

- c. Honourable Margaret Best, Minister of Health Promotion & Sport
Ms. Aileen Carroll, MPP, Barrie
Mr. Norm Miller, MPP, Parry Sound-Muskoka
Mr. Garfield Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey
Ms. Julie Munroe, MPP, York-Simcoe
Ms Linda Stewart, Executive Director, alpha
Ms. Connie Uetrecht, Executive Director OPHA
Dr. Arlene King, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Ms. Eleanor McMahon, Share the Road Cycling Coalition
Ontario Boards of Health
North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN
Central LHIN

ⁱ Litman, T., Blair, R., Demopoulos, B., Eddy, N., Fritzel, A., Laidlaw, D., Maddox, H., & Forster, K. (2009). *Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning Guide to Best Practices* (Appendices). Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Victoria, B.C.

ⁱⁱ Frank, L.D., Andresen, M.A., & Schmid, T.L., (2004). *Obesity relationships with community design, physical activity and time spent in cars*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ewing, R., Frank, L., Kreutzer, R., (2006). *Understanding the relationship between public health and the built environment: A report prepared for the LEED-ND Core Committee*. Washington, DC: LEED for Neighbourhood Development Partnership.

^{iv} P.L. Jacobsen (2003). *Safety in numbers: More walkers and bicyclists, safer walking and bicycling*. Injury Prevention 2003;9:205–209; and J. Pucher & L. Dijkstra, (2003). *Promoting safe walking and cycling to improve public health: Lessons from the Netherlands and Germany*. Am J Public Health. 2003;93:1509–1516.