



November 2, 2011

The Honourable Bob Chiarelli,
Minister of Transportation
Ministry of Transportation
Corporate Correspondence Unit
3rd Floor, Ferguson Block
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Re: Support of a Provincial Policy Framework for Cycling Infrastructure

Dear Minister Chiarelli:

On September 14, 2011, the Board of Health for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU) endorsed the attached letter from the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA) and accompanying recommendations contained in the Ontario Medical Association's new Policy Paper, *Enhancing Cycling Safety in Ontario*.

The PCCHU recognizes that the design of our communities greatly affects individuals' health and safety.¹ Bicycling is an excellent form of active transportation, enabling Ontario residents to meet Canada Physical Activity Guidelines, and, in so doing, protect themselves against chronic diseases. However, safety concerns prevent many individuals from cycling, and those who do cycle are at risk of injury or death.² As an organization that promotes and protects health, the PCCHU strongly supports the development and permanent funding of a provincial policy on cycling infrastructure.

Presently, two-thirds of Canadians are inactive³ and at risk for developing chronic diseases³, which would be a significant burden on the health care system. Bicycling can increase individuals' physical activity levels, not only through recreation, but also through utility trips.^{1,4} Bicycling is cost-effective; time-efficient; accessible to the young and old alike and provides a moderately intense workout.⁴ However, in Ontario, cycling injuries and fatalities are pervasive. The Ontario Injury Compass 2009 indicated that cycling injuries resulted in 26,300 emergency department visits and 1,374 hospitalizations that year⁵, most of which were for children and youth.⁴ Moreover, the Ontario Road Safety Annual Report indicated that 12 cyclists were killed in reportable bicycle-vehicle collisions in 2008.⁶ Enacting a provincial policy on cycling infrastructure would prevent cycling injuries and fatalities as well as encourage more individuals to cycle.² In addition, by decreasing individuals' reliance on automobiles, a cycling infrastructure would decrease motor vehicle collisions and ensure pedestrian safety.

An integrated and comprehensive cycling infrastructure also has the potential to increase air quality. The health effects of air pollution include respiratory infections, asthma exacerbations and cardio-respiratory mortality.⁷ Based on derivations from the Ontario Medical Association's Illness Cost of Air Pollution Model, approximately 9,500 premature deaths in Ontario in 2008 were attributable to smog.⁸ By investing in infrastructure that promotes cycling as an alternative to driving, the positive impact on air quality will improve Ontario residents' health. The benefits are compounded when one considers that investments in cycling infrastructure enables enhanced walking infrastructure.⁹

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It is notable that in four other provinces and two Territories, individuals engage in far more bike to work trips than in Ontario, and infrastructure may be a reason.² Quebec's comprehensive cycling infrastructure, la Route Verte, and British Columbia's BikeBC program are supported by \$88.5M and \$30M, respectively.^{10,11} Moreover, the progress in developing cycling infrastructure in these provinces has been fast, due to the overarching provincial plans.⁴ If Ontario takes the lead in creating an integrated cycling plan, including paved bike paths and separated lanes, its progress will also be expedited; leading to large gains in residents' health outcomes, a reduction in injury, and a decreased burden on the health care system and economy.⁴ Ontario needs a comprehensive policy that supports municipalities in building a safer cycling infrastructure.

On behalf of the PCCHU, I am writing to urge you to commit to the development and permanent funding of a provincial policy on cycling infrastructure as per the recommendations of the Share the Road Campaign's Green Paper recommendations.¹² Share the Road has recommended that the amount of the funding be \$20 million annually, reflective of the provincial revenue from the application of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) to bicycles.⁹ A world-class cycling infrastructure should be accompanied by education for bicyclists, children and motorists⁹ as well as mandatory bicycle helmets, on and off road, for both children and adults alike.⁴

Although the amount of funding requested is modest in comparison with cycling infrastructure expenditures in British Columbia and Quebec, it will still be sufficient to greatly improve cycling infrastructure in Ontario.⁴ Moreover, it will be a welcomed demonstration of leadership on the part of the Ontario Liberal Government. It will decrease medical costs and other societal economic impacts through avoided injury and mortality. It will decrease environmental degradation as well as improve the health, well-being and quality of life of Ontarians.

The time to act is now.

Yours in health,

Original signed by

Andy Sharpe
Chair, Board of Health
for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit

/at
Encl.

Copy: Ontario Boards of Health
Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, President, alPHa
Dr. Stewart Kennedy, President, Ontario Medical Association
Jeff Leal, MPP, Peterborough
Laurie Scott, MPP, Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Brock

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