

POLITICS AS USUAL: Cyclist vs. Pedestrian

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

We've had our first real heat wave, evidence that summer is finally in full swing. And with that, folks are out enjoying outdoor activities: picnics, walks in the trail system and cycling around town.

Speaking of cycling, I received another lovely handwritten letter about cyclists on sidewalks. (I have to say, while I am appreciative of the emails I receive from readers, I truly enjoy receiving letters. There's just something about receiving a letter in the mail)

This reader is also a senior and expressed the other side of the argument that cyclists on sidewalks are a danger to pedestrians. She related to me her concerns about traversing a small section of St. John's where cyclists regularly whip along the sidewalk either forcing her to move onto the grass or worse get physically brushed by them as they whiz by. That is simply unacceptable.

Pedestrians of any age should be able to walk on our sidewalks without fear of being mown down by cyclists. And Cyclists should be able to ride our roads without fear of being squashed by a car or truck.

And it is a fear based on real danger.

I will use myself as an example: I had my own brief skirmish with road terror this weekend in Aurora while travelling along Industrial Parkway. The Aurora Soccer Club was hosting the U22 Peruvian National team in a friendly at the Highland Park near Industrial and Yonge. I couldn't stay for the whole game but I wanted to be there for at least the beginning part as my husband had been asked to do the coin toss.

But, as I was not staying for the whole thing, and my husband was, and as I do not drive (for the safety of everyone) that meant I had to get from the soccer pitch back to our home, which is near St. John's and Yonge, by bike. As I had no wish to take my life in my hands by riding all the way up Yonge Street, I took the safer route along Industrial to St. John's to Yonge and home.

Well, so much for safe. Not only is there no bike lane anywhere along that route, there is no sidewalk for much of it either. So, I wouldn't even have the option of riding on the sidewalk to escape the cars flying by.

I had a few close calls with a truck and an SUV (to be fair, I think I was riding in their blind spots) and was genuinely frightened as a consequence.

I can't imagine what it would be like to be a senior, or a mom with kids, riding along those same routes routes, I might add, that take you to the Family Leisure complex, the dog park, Lambert Willson Park, etc. It simply isn't safe.

So, to my two letter writers I say that I agree with you both. The current situation is not safe for the cyclists or the pedestrians. To solve this problem I think we need two things more bike lanes and a municipal by-law that requires cyclists to use the bike lanes.

Everyone should have the right to get where they're going safely.

Until next week, stay informed, stay involved because this is after all Our Town.