



Speaking up on Bill 212

As you may know, the Ontario government recently tabled Bill 212, the "Reducing Gridlock Saving You Time Act".

This new omnibus highway Bill will fast-track the construction of Highway 413 by exempting provincial environmental assessments. The legislation also changes the expropriation process removing landowner rights and speeding up expropriations.

Of greatest concern to us is that Bill 212 restricts where new bike lanes can be built with the Premier stating that existing bike lanes will be removed from some streets before studies are completed. "It's a done deal" he stated regarding the bike lane removals on Bloor Street, Yonge Street and University Avenue despite the protests of Toronto elected officials, staff, and citizens.

The Ontario government is now proposing an addendum to the framework that would require the province to remove sections of the Bloor Street, Yonge Street, and University Avenue bike lanes in the City of Toronto and return them to a lane of traffic for motor vehicles.

But while some think that this legislation is focused solely on Toronto – and in fact the political motivation for the legislation may reside there, the scope of the legislation extends province-wide and the risks include the politicization and polarization of bike lanes which is something that we at the Share the Road Cycling Coalition (The Coalition) have worked very hard to prevent since our inception in 2007.

The legislation would also, if passed, provide the province with the authority to establish a review process on other existing bike lanes (where the removal of a lane of traffic took place).

The review of municipal submissions would lead to the decision of whether to maintain existing bike lanes or to require their removal and return lanes to motor vehicle traffic.

Approval will be based on a set of specified criteria, to be set out in guidance and/or regulation. The criterion for the assessment of existing bike lanes will consider environmental implications and be developed in consultation with targeted stakeholders including large municipalities.



As you can imagine, we were very distressed that the provincial government made this decision, an act that risks undermining close to two decades of hard-won progress that The Coalition has worked with so many of you to achieve.

Further, the data which the Premier and the Minister cited, e.g., that Toronto has a cycling mode share of 1.2%, is incorrect. In fact, [recent studies have shown](#) that Toronto has an average mode share of 7-9%, particularly in the core of the city in proximity of the three bike lane corridors targeted by the province.

In addition to this data, last year The Coalition polled Ontarians about their cycling use – and their opinions when it comes to cycling investments by the government. You can find our polling data [here](#).

Here are a few highlights:

Ontarians are cyclists – and motorists too

- 68 per cent of Ontarians (9.8 million people) ride their bike at least monthly.
- Of those, 22 per cent of Ontarians (3.2 million) say they ride a bike frequently (daily or almost daily) and an additional 46 per cent report riding occasionally - weekly or monthly.
- Ontarians are both cyclists and drivers: 87 per cent of Ontario's 3.2 million frequent cyclists say they also drive frequently, while 85 per cent of Ontario's 9.8 million occasional cyclists say this is the case.

There is pent up demand for cycling in Ontario

- A majority (51 per cent) want to cycle more often with 70 percent of regular cyclists and 58 percent of occasional cyclists, indicating this preference.
- A majority of Ontarians, 65 per cent, expressed their desire to cycle more if there were improved cycling infrastructure.
- The biggest obstacle to cycling more is fear at 48 per cent.
- 61 per cent of respondents stated that they would feel more comfortable cycling if their area had well-connected and safe cycling infrastructure.
- 56 per cent of Ontarians agree that "Where I live, cyclists need more bike lanes or paved shoulders"



There is strong support for action from the provincial government on cycling

- 66 per cent of Ontarians believe that their government should allocate funds towards cycling infrastructure in order to make cycling a safer and more convenient mode of transportation.
- 65 per cent of respondents felt that such investments would benefit cyclists and motorists
- 57 per cent Ontarians see a need for a dedicated active transportation fund by the provincial government.
- 68 per cent support investments in cycling and bike paths.

Perceptions related to investments in cycling infrastructure and tax incentives

- 72 per cent believe investing in proper cycling infrastructure makes it safer for all road users.
- 65 per cent say "investing in cycling is good for my municipality".
- 58 per cent agree that investing in cycling is good for their city's business and tourism.

When we learned that the province was contemplating this, we reached out to our partners – Mayors and municipal leaders, other cycling groups, fellow road safety organizations such as CAA, the Ontario Good Roads Association, the Ontario Traffic Council and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute. We mobilized, we discussed strategy and compared notes.

We discussed our shared points of view which are: this is politically motivated – it is not public policy based or evidenced based; we are dealing with a majority government, led by a Premier who is not well informed about cycling and who sees "cyclists" as a political construct, who believes that bike lanes cause congestion and who will not be easily deterred in advancing that point of view; the government will use their majority to get this legislation passed as quickly as possible, and any intervention has to be considered carefully as the very real risk is, that it could lead to reputational damage that hurts our stakeholders (municipal leaders and advocates) making their job of defending cyclists in a now highly politicized debate, more challenging.

In essence, how can we speak on behalf of all of you – and do so in a way that allows us to continue to be a voice of influence with government? The work to come with government officials in Ministries like the Ministry of Transportation is going to require assistance from external partners.



Being a good partner to the government in our experience - given our record of legislative progress and change in the last two decades - doesn't mean that you can't express your point of view but that you do so at the right time, in the right places and with the right audience to maximize your effectiveness.

So where does this leave us? We have decided to play the long game because we believe as many do, that an election is coming this spring. We are working on options to mobilize our network for political action – including all of you – and will have more to share very soon.

In the meantime, here's how you can help:

- Use your voice to send the government a message about their decision to severely curtail the implementation of life saving, and congestion reducing, cycling infrastructure.
- [Speak up on the Environmental Registry of Ontario](#) and tell the provincial government what you think about their plan for fewer bike lanes. The Premier noted recently that he has not heard much opposition. Let's send a message that provincial support for bike lanes is important now more than ever to save lives, enhance livability, and reduce congestion.
- We will be submitting a response to the government on Bill 212, via the Registry.
- Send an email to your MPP, sharing your concerns. You can find your MPP, including all their contact information [here](#).

Finally, you can [help us to fight this legislation by donating](#) to The Coalition to assist with our advocacy efforts. We rely on the support of donors and our partners to fund our work. As a registered charity, your donations qualify for a tax receipt. Thank you!

As always, feel free to share your concern with us, by emailing us at info@sharetheroad.ca We welcome your comments and suggestions.

In the meantime, stay well and stay safe.

Yours in safe cycling,

The Share the Road Cycling Coalition