November 18, 2026

[More info: CommunityBikeways@gmail.com]

Streets That Work for Everyone: An Open Letter to Premier Ford

The Honourable Premier Doug Ford,

We are community groups, professionals, and non-profit organizations that care deeply about building healthy, safe, and vibrant neighbourhoods in communities across our province. We are confident that you share this ambition. Ontario benefits enormously when active transportation, including walking and cycling, is treated as an essential element of an efficient transportation system. We urge you to leave in place bike lanes in Toronto and to lift province-wide restrictions on new bike lanes.

The advantages to individuals from active transportation are many. They include fewer chronic diseases, better levels of fitness, and greater affordability. At the communal level, the quality of our air and the health of our climate improves when more people walk and cycle, lowering tailpipe and related greenhouse gas emissions.

An affordable option for Ontarians

Affordability is a key issue for many families in Ontario. In urban areas, the bicycle offers a low-cost alternative to a car, including for the many households that don't own a car. New residential towers are often designed with minimal car parking and the expectation that residents will walk, cycle, or take transit. Developers also benefit, given the huge cost of building underground parking. Many cities offer short-term bike rental for as little as 25 cents per day for a commuter. In Toronto, BikeShare provides an alternative to crowded shuttle buses during subway shutdowns on Bloor, University, and Yonge.

Greater safety for everyone

Bicycle lanes provide a range of community benefits. As a road design feature, bike lanes reduce road width inducing lower motor speeds while creating shorter crossing distances -- a particular benefit for elderly pedestrians. Bike lanes provide a safety buffer between the sidewalk and motor traffic, reducing stress for parents with young children. Bike lanes, with noiseless bicycles, also buffer curbside patios, a newer feature of thriving main streets. Individuals reliant on mobility aids, including motorized wheelchairs, often find it easier to use bike lanes than sidewalks. Many motorists appreciate bike lanes for clearly demarcating boundaries between bikes and cars.

Bike lanes also facilitate certain municipal services, including, for example, paramedic services, parking enforcement, and some policing duties. The private sector profits, especially for food delivery, and increasingly for parcel deliveries. Many workers engaged in delivery work by bike, which continues through the winter, depend on bike lanes for their safety.

Health, health care savings, and mobility for all ages

Doctors routinely counsel patients to walk and cycle more -- advice that can be put into practice for daily commutes when roads are safe. Toronto Public Health estimates that walking and cycling prevents about 120 deaths annually in the city from chronic disease, resulting in health care savings up to $160 million.[1] Shifting from cars to clean alternatives reduces the hundreds of premature deaths from traffic pollution.[2]

The benefits of active transportation extend to mental health. A study of 380,000 commuters found that people who commuted by bicycle were prescribed medication for anxiety or depression about 15 percent less often than commuters using other modes of transportation.[3] For many people, a bicycle, including an electric "pedal-assist," offers greater mobility. In the Netherlands, where safe cycling routes are the norm, about a third of trips by people in the 65-75 age group are by bike.[4] But a bicycle will only be used if the rider can safely get to the pharmacy, the grocery store, or the doctor's office.

Your government's position is that cyclists can use side streets. A principal reason for conflicts over road space, however, is that people who ride a bike and people who drive a car are going to the same places, often at the same times of day. In the context of utilitarian --- as opposed to recreational or sport --- cycling, bike lanes are needed on arterial roads to reach destinations. Even if there were feasible routes along side-streets, which is often not the case,[5] cyclists must ride on arterials to access shops, and even homes, located there. Removing bike lanes on main streets does not remove cyclists; it merely deprives them of their safety.

Recent municipal and provincial election results in areas where existing bike lanes have been threatened undermine the claim that residents oppose bike lanes.[6] Moreover, we believe that decisions about safe road design are best left to city councils, given their understanding of local conditions and concerns.

Solving the Toronto region's $50 billion road congestion problem is an important policy challenge that requires a variety of initiatives. Providing alternatives to car travel is best achieved with investments in mass transit as well as alternatives such as cycling.

We therefore urge you to withdraw the plan to eliminate bike lanes in Toronto and to remove restrictions on new bicycle lanes in communities across the province.

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[1] Toronto Public Health, "Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto, April 2012. For a more recent study, see: Pereda, Zoe Heyding, "Walkability, Cycling Infrastructure, and Chronic Disease: A Neighbourhood-Level Analysis of Integrated Care Needs in Toronto," Int'l Journal of Integrated Care, v. 26, issue S2, Sept 2026.

[2] "Marshall Lloyd *et al*., Estimating reductions in premature mortality attributable to outdoor ultrafine particles with increasing prevalence of electric vehicles and 2 other tailpipe-related emissions reduction scenarios," *Environmental Science & Technology,* June 2026.

[3] Berrie, Laurie, *et al*, "Does cycle commuting reduce the risk of mental ill-health?" University of Edinburgh, Int'l J Epidemiol, Feb 2024.

[4] Mobycon.com, "Cycling Modal Split in the Netherlands." Infographic.

[5] Kate Allen and David Rider, "Do cycling corridors really slow traffic? We fact-checked the bike lane blame game," *Toronto Star*, Oct 27, 2024.

[6] In Etobicoke, e.g., combined results for polls bordering Bloor St where bike lanes removed in Oct 2026, showed majority support for the pro-bike lane city councillor.

Sincerely,

[List of signatories below]

cc: The Hon. Minister of Transportation, Prabmeet Sarkaria

Signatories:

Community and neighbourhood groups **3**
Road safety and cycling groups **3**
Business associations and business owners **4**
Public health groups and medical professionals **4**
Professional associations **4**
Faith groups **4**
Recreational and sport groups **4**

Community, non-profit, and neighbourhood groups

TPASN Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network

Coalition of Women in Leadership

Citizens Environment Alliance

Friends of Tom Riley Park

ClimateFast

Green 13

Road safety and cycling groups

Bike Law Canada

Etobicoke South Cycling Committee

Toronto Community Bikeways Coalition

Bike Windsor Essex

Avenue Road Safety Coalition

Bicycle Mayor of Toronto (part of BYCS global bicycle mayor network)

Business associations and business owners

Public health groups and medical professionals

Professional associations

Faith groups

Recreational and sport groups