
City Council

Notice of Motion

MM38.2	ACTION			Ward: All
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Bicycle Safety: All Cyclists Must Wear Helmets - by Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Hall

- Notice of this Motion has been given.*
- This Motion is subject to referral to the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Hall, recommends that:

1. City Council enact a by-law to mandate that all cyclists must wear helmets on roads and sidewalks in the City of Toronto.

Summary

Recently, City Council has prioritized the user groups in public space and public roads within the City of Toronto. The four groups are prioritized as follows: 1) pedestrians; 2) cyclists; 3) transit riders; and lastly, 4) vehicle drivers.

Since cyclists are now considered as priority #2 on the public highway, it is being modified to accommodate these cyclists. Accordingly, with more space on our roads being given over to cyclists, more rights are being given over to cyclists, and with increased rights come increased responsibility. Cyclists need to be made aware of this increased responsibility for safe use of our roads.

Safe use of our roads must include the safety of the cyclists themselves; cyclists must be protected against the foreseeable dangers on our roads. Conflict between cyclists, cars and most particularly trucks, and as well conflict between cyclists themselves, create potentially dangerous conditions. A collision between a cyclist and a car or truck can result in life-altering injuries or death, particularly for the cyclist involved. A collision between a cyclist and another cyclist can also result in a serious outcome, if not from the impact itself, then because of the cyclists falling into oncoming vehicular traffic which results in another collision. It is not at all rare for a cyclist to experience a disabling head injury from a collision and for that cyclist to become incapacitated and not be able to provide for his or her family.

Cyclists have equipment at their disposal to increase their safety, such as sounding bells, reflectors, lights and helmets. By far, the most important safety equipment to the cyclist is the helmet.

Currently, all cyclists under 18 years old must wear helmets to use roads and sidewalks in Ontario. Cyclists 18 years old and older are allowed to use their own discretion and choose whether they wear a helmet or not. This law came into effect in 1995; in the ensuing 14 years, cycling in Ontario has increased incredibly, particularly in Toronto. Since 1995, several cities have passed additional bylaws to further protect their citizens from harm. It should be mandated that all cyclists must wear a helmet as it is for others that share our roads, such as motorcyclists and scooter drivers. Also, since bicycles are deemed vehicles and cyclists must obey the Highway Traffic Act, we should make sure we address their safety similar to other vehicles and not similar to the pedestrian as they are currently.

Since the applicable Provincial law was passed nearly a decade and a half ago and the conditions of safety for a cyclist in Toronto are different than in any other part of the Province, the City of Toronto needs to have its own rules for cyclists, the first of which needs to be the requirement to wear a helmet. It is not reasonable to continue to allow cyclists in Toronto this discretion regarding wearing a helmet or not - the potential dangers are too many.

(Submitted to City Council on August 5, 2009 as MM38.2)