



Safe streets
Healthy city
Vibrant voice

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September 29, 2021

Mayor John Tory and Toronto City Council
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: MM36.11 Stopping Bike Theft in Toronto

Dear Mayor Tory and members of City Council,

Cycle Toronto is writing to express support for motion MM36.11 Stopping Bike Theft in Toronto. According to the Toronto Police website, approximately 4000 bikes are reported stolen each year, and thousands more go unreported. The rate of recovery for bikes registered with the Toronto Police Bike Registry is around 1%. There are modern systems that can vastly improve the ease of registration and increase recovery rates by as much as 30% per year, such as the success of adopting the 529 Garage registry system in Vancouver. Cycle Toronto requests that the City moves toward using a modern, open, transparent bicycle registry system that could transform the vicious cycle of theft in our city.

Since piloting 529 Garage in 2015, Vancouver has seen a 43% reduction in bike theft. Cities across Ontario such as Guelph and Ottawa have since come on board to adopt this system as well. Bike theft is a cross-jurisdictional issue beyond the Toronto Police Services' reach, with bikes being transported to nearby cities and as far as Montreal to be resold. Community-led programs like 529 Garage act as a neighbourhood watch for bicycles and increase in their effectiveness with every city that supports the program. They are capable of easing the process for registering and recovering bikes with minimal personal data collected, and make reporting a stolen bike as simple as a click of a button from a computer or smartphone, which alerts key places like bike shops, community members, and the police.

Of course, a new system will only be as effective as the investment in it. If your car was stolen, you would not be satisfied to learn that the crime was not being investigated. The dollar value of most bicycles is the only difference in why this type of theft (under \$5000) is considered a crime less worthy of investigation. But thousands of people in our city rely on their bicycle as their primary mode of transportation, the value far outweighing the price tag of the bicycle itself. Having your bike stolen can be the loss of your only viable way to get to

work, to school, or to anywhere you need to go. We urge the City of Toronto to commit to tackling bike theft and devote the necessary resources toward ensuring Toronto's residents have better than a 1% chance of getting their stolen bike back into their hands.

The good news is that systems like these are cost-effective and have a huge return. They also can be supported by an engaged cycling community at a fraction of the cost of deploying police resources to register bikes. Cycle Toronto will commit to lending support to make a new program a success. If a modern system is adopted, Cycle Toronto will provide outreach online and at our in-person events across the city to register bikes with the public, get key partners like bike shops and community bike hubs on board, teach bike theft prevention, and continue working on policies to address secure bike parking as one of the root causes of bike theft.

The tools are out there and the results are clear. Together, we can end bike theft in Toronto.

Sincerely,



Keagan Gartz
Executive Director
Cycle Toronto

Cycle Toronto is a member-supported charitable organization that works to make Toronto a healthy, safe and vibrant cycling city for all. We are focused on advocacy, education and encouragement, as we work to shape policy and infrastructure, and build community to transform our city's cycling culture.