

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council,

I love the city of Guelph, increasingly, each year that I live here. I tell everyone that this city is unique. It is mixed, friendly, safe, and adorable. Guelph has real neighbourhoods. It is small enough to feel cosy in, and large enough to have a lot of amenities, resources and social clubs for many groups and activities.

For me, a large part of Guelph's livability and loveliness is the ease with which I can move around the city and get to surrounding forested areas on a bike. I can get anywhere I need to go in 5 to twenty minutes.

I do not own a car, and do not want one. I have turned down the offer of a free car. I live close to downtown and I am a member of Communauto. I have access to about 7 car share vehicles, which I use often. To book them on-line takes about 30 seconds. This is a wonderful resource. For all of my other transportation needs, I walk or use a bike. I have three: a 35-year-old mountain bike, a road bike and a fat bike, for winter riding.

I am an avid winter cyclist. After our first snowfall of this year, which took place the weekend of November 7 and 8, I excitedly took out my fat bike. I am a very safety conscious rider. My fat bike has metal studs for snow and ice. I have lights at the front and back of my bike. I always wear a helmet. I keep aware while I ride.

On Sunday evening, November 8, I was riding from my gym near Gordon and Stone Road, to downtown, on Gordon, and using the bike lane. It was dark. The bike lane was filled with snow and leaves. It was very difficult to safely stay in the bike lane. If I hit a big clump of leaves or snow, I might have slid out into the traffic. To ride on a clear road, I had to ride close to the road or, in some sections, on the road, in the car lane. While I was very visible to motorists, I felt unsafe.

What is the point of having bike lanes, I thought, if they are unsafe to use? And, I thought, how annoying it must be to drivers of cars to have a bike veering into their lane when there is a wide bike lane on Gordon?

I thought this incident was a one-off event, and that the city would get its plows out and start cleaning up the roads. I am deeply upset to learn that the city is planning to stop clearing bike lanes during the winter to cut costs.

Bike lanes, like roads, and sidewalks, need to be cleared of snow and other debris so that they are safe to use. Each year more Guelphites are riding bikes in the winter. Bikes belong in bike lanes whenever possible, especially during rough weather. This is for the benefit of everyone.

Having invested in bike lanes, the city of Guelph now needs to maintain them. They are as important as roads. They are a part of the road. People expect them to be kept clear. Not

keeping them clear of snow and debris is akin, I feel, to having public washrooms, but not cleaning them.

I ask Council to restore winter bike lane snow removal to ensure year-round safe travel for cyclists.

The decision to scale back cycling and trail investments, eliminate winter maintenance of bike lanes, and delay projects from the Cycling and Trail Master Plans will make our streets less safe and less inclusive. These cuts move Guelph backwards from achieving its Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

These reductions also threaten progress on our Climate Action Plan. Shifting more trips to active and low-carbon modes is one of the most effective ways to reduce transportation emissions, which addresses the single largest source of greenhouse gases in our community.

Please help to keep Guelph safe for cyclists, all year round, by maintaining the bike lanes, which you have already invested in building.

Sincerely,
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