

January 10, 2012

The Honourable Denis Lebel
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
330 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Lebel:

Re: Truck Side Guard Legislation

The British Columbia Cycling Coalition strives to encourage all levels of government to make cycling a safe and enjoyable means of transportation for everyone.

On May 9, 2007, Ms. Olivia Chow MP introduced a petition in the Commons asking for legislation that trucks and trailers in Canada have underrun protection similar to the European ECE Regulation No. 73. The petition was initiated by the Toronto Cycling Committee after a number of cycling deaths involving trucks. Further support was found in a recommendation by the 1998 analysis of deaths among Toronto's cyclists by the Regional Coroner for Toronto. Soon after she introduced the petition, two cyclists were killed in Portland, OR, as a result of collisions with trucks. One accident was due to a cyclist being in the blind spot of a truck.

The Regional Coroner for Toronto concluded that trucks and other heavy vehicles were involved in 37% of accidents leading to the deaths of cyclists in that city. The British Columbia Coroner's study of bicycling deaths in BC over the period 1986 to 1995 showed that in 34% of the cases a cyclist died as a result of a collision with a truck or other heavy vehicle. This latter analysis also shows that bicycle helmets offer only limited protection in accidents with trucks, especially when the cyclist is pulled under the wheels of the truck or the trailer.

At the time, the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition, one of our member organizations, wrote a letter to the then Minister of Transportation asking him to introduce legislation requiring that large motor vehicles like trucks and trailers have sideguards in order to protect cyclists and pedestrians from serious injury or death in the event of a collision.

As cities around Canada are actively encouraging the use of bicycles, we will see a continuous increase in the number of bicycles on the road, not only in the cities, but also on provincial roads. We think it therefore mandatory that the government should move on this issue with laws and rules that will make traffic safer. In particular, underrun protection and blind spot mirrors are relatively cheap and effective measures to increase the safety around trucks and other heavy vehicles. They can prevent fatalities and serious injuries in case of accidents.

In Europe, open side underrun protection has been mandatory since 1995. There is, however, a movement to take an additional step and make closed side underrun protection mandatory. Closed protection is safer in that victims cannot be caught in the protection itself and has two added benefits: better fuel efficiency, and less spray when it rains. It is important to note that (side) underrun protection is to the benefit of cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, and car drivers. Making it mandatory would increase traffic safety for all road users and would also reduce health care and insurance costs.

In addition to underrun protection, blind spot mirrors are another important device for increasing the safety around trucks. The better the driver can see what is going on around the vehicle, the better he or she can anticipate the admittedly sometimes less than admirable behaviour of other traffic participants.

Accidents involving trucks have a high human toll. These accidents are more likely to result in fatalities and serious injuries and vulnerable road users like bicyclists and pedestrians are often the victims. But let us also not forget the trauma these accidents can

cause to the truck drivers when the circumstances of the accident show that nothing done on their part could have prevented the deadly outcome.

MP Olivia Chow has now renewed her efforts to encourage the Government of Canada to introduce legislation to make sideguard protection on trucks mandatory. Since 2007, we know that at least 2 cyclists have died in Metro Vancouver from crashes involving trucks and recently cyclists in Toronto and Victoria were run over and killed by trucks.

The British Columbia Cycling Coalition therefore urges you to initiate and support legislation on this issue that will make Canada's streets and highways safer for all road users, especially the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Richard Campbell,
President, British Columbia Cycling Coalition
president@bccc.bc.ca

cc: Olivia Chow, NDP Transportation
Critic

Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada
Hon. Denis Coderre, Liberal Party Transportation

Critic

Hon. James Moore - MP Port Moody—Westwood—Port
Coquitlam
John Weston - MP West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea
to Sky Country
Fin Donnelly, MP New Westminster—Coquitlam
Libby Davies, MP Vancouver East
Joyce Murray, MP Vancouver Quadra
Hon. Hedy Fry, MP Vancouver Centre