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May 7, 2013

The Honourable Denis Lebel
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
Transport Canada
Place de Ville, Tower C, 29th Floor
330 Sparks Street, Mail Stop: XA
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N5

Dear Minister Lebel:

I'm writing on behalf of the Toronto Centre for Active Transportation to add our voice in support of Private Member's Bill C-344, which was introduced in the House of Commons by Olivia Chow, Transport Critic, MP Trinity-Spadina in the fall of 2011. Bill C-344 would make a significant contribution to road safety by requiring trucks operating on Canada's roads to be equipped with sideguards. The Bill was introduced after yet another tragic truck-related accident, this time involving a pregnant young woman from Toronto who was killed while riding her bicycle.

In June and September of last year, Ontario's chief coroner called for mandatory truck sideguards in order to save lives. This recommendation came after a detailed review of cyclist and pedestrian deaths since 2006 and 2010 respectively. Previous studies by the Regional Coroner for Toronto and British Columbia have shown a disproportionate percentage of cyclist deaths resulting from collision with a truck or other heavy vehicle.

In response to these studies, the Ministry of Transport concluded that sideguards, mandatory in Europe for over 30 years, would not be effective in Canada due to different road and weather conditions, and would put Canadian trucks at a competitive disadvantage. In fact most of the fatalities occur in urban centres, not unlike European cities and driving conditions. In addition, numerous European studies have shown that for highway use, closed sideguards on tractor-trailers provide between 4-7% fuel efficiency through improved aerodynamics.

The human costs caused by both right-turn accidents and accidents as a result of a truck passing a cyclist or pedestrian, can be reduced by equipping the truck with some form of under-run protection which prevents people from falling under the truck and being crushed by the rear wheels.

Many Canadians have been devastated by the loss of a loved one in truck-related accidents which could have been prevented had sideguards been in place. The Toronto Centre for Active Transportation respectfully request's that as Minister of Transport, you support this bill in order to save lives, reduce fuel costs and help the environment.

Sincerely,

Nancy Smith Lea
Director,
Toronto Centre for Active Transportation

cc: Olivia Chow, NDP Transport Critic, MP Trinity Spadina, olivia.chow@parl.gc.ca