



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14th 2020

The Higgs Government will not adopt road safety recommendations by the provincial Bicycle Safety Working Group.

Since August 2016, representatives of Saint John Cycling, Fredericton Folks on Spokes and Velo NB have met with government officials to discuss needed amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act, including a one-metre clearance rule when passing cyclists.

In December 2016, competitive cyclist Ellen Watters was struck by a vehicle while training near her home in Sussex. She died from her injuries. She was 26 years old.

After Watters death, New Brunswickers rallied across the province demanding stronger laws to protect vulnerable road users, such as cyclists. A one-meter clearance rule, known as Ellen's Law, was introduced to the legislature in March 2017 and a Bicycle Safety Strategy Working Group was formed under the Department of Public Safety to make further recommendations for safety legislation.

The working group provided their report to government in July 2018. After the fall election, representatives from Saint John Cycling, Folks on Spokes and Velo NB met with the new Minister of Public Safety, Carl Urquhart, to discuss the recommendations. After months of follow up with government officials, Premier Higgs has informed Saint John Cycling and Velo NB that his government would be taking no further actions with the recommendations.

"I am disturbed by the way our elected officials pass off their promises and responsibilities," said Nancy Watters, mother of Ellen Watters.

"I was disappointed," said Wayne Arrowsmith, Advocacy Director for Velo NB and member of the working group. "The amendments we are asking for are to enhance basic safety, promote the physical and mental health of New Brunswickers, and aid in the promotion of cycle tourism.

"Unlike programs and infrastructure, these amendments cost nothing. It's a no-brainer."

Recommendations of the working group would update definitions in the Motor Vehicle Act to address enforcement issues, provide rules for "dooring" when a cyclist is hit by an opened door of a vehicle, provide municipalities the authority to allow bicycles on designated sidewalks, and a commitment to holding annual meetings with the Department of Public Safety.

Regular meetings would have provided the opportunity for continued work to ensure New Brunswick roads are safe for all users. New Brunswick is one of four provinces in Canada that does not have legislation that addresses dooring, along with Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. However, Nova

Scotia has dooring rules currently under development. New Brunswick also has one of the lowest distracted driving fines in the country, even with the recently proposed increase in Bill 16.

The Bicycle Safety Strategy Working Group included representatives from several government departments, the New Brunswick RCMP, Saint John Police Force, Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau Brunswick, Velo NB, Fredericton Folks on Spokes and Saint John Cycling. Their full report may be found at www.SaintJohnCycling.com/MVA

Media Contacts:

Wayne Arrowsmith, Advocacy Director for Velo NB and working group member

506-647-1530

kwa@nbnet.nb.ca

Gary Crowley, Director for Saint John Cycling and working group member

506-647-5113

sjc-treasurer@outlook.com

Nick Cameron, Advocacy Lead for Saint John Cycling

506-343-7946

sjc-advocacy@outlook.com



Ellens Law Rally, Saint John, 2017. Photo Credit: Gilles Gautreau