



# BRITISH COLUMBIA CYCLING COALITION

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## BC CYCLING COALITION - President's Report 2002

"Maintaining our persistence in changing times"

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Things haven't looked so rosy of late, and it would not be right to attest the opposite. Government cuts are happening all over the place and committees have been stagnant at almost all levels. If your community hasn't felt the cuts yet, they will for sure be in preparation for those cuts to arrive.

The BC Cycling Coalition (BCCC) over the years has built valuable relationships with senior staff in various levels of government and crown corporations. Due to the rapid changes currently in process, we have lost some valuable connections and good working relationships. The BCCC however, is known to maintain our persistence regardless of the fact that, the times they are changing (thanks Bob!).

The biggest loss we, cyclists and the communities in BC, suffered only last week, is that the Ministry of Transportation's (MoT) - Cycling Network Program is empty. That's right, the grant program is still in place, however, it is empty as can be, not a dime in it. The empty Cycling Network Program is a devastating blow for municipalities and smaller communities in BC. These communities rely heavily on the 50/50 cost-share grant program with the Ministry. The larger municipalities are facing problems as well, because they will not be able to stretch their cycling budget as far anymore. This is bad news for all of us who strive to change our communities into more liveable and cycling-friendly places to live, work and play.

At the board level we are working together to see how we will approach this problem of the empty grant. The good news is that we still have the grant, the bad news is, it is empty.

Like I mentioned last year, the most important accomplishment and benefit of the BCCC is that all the cycling advocacy groups are now functioning on the provincial level under the same BCCC umbrella. We share information and we network together, we maintain tight connections and in some cases have built strong friendships. It is now, virtually impossible for various levels of government and other agencies to play one cycling organization out against the other, and that(!) even in changing times like this, is still quite the accomplishment!

As I mentioned earlier with all the recent government cuts and lay-offs here in BC, in Ministries and Crown Corporations, we have seen and continue to see staff we have established relationships with, leave their jobs. Either voluntarily or due to the current

situation. I'm fully confident that with most we will cross paths again, as I have noticed to our benefit is already occurring.

It has been a pretty erratic year. On the surface it appears nothing much is happening. Committees are not meeting, and most agencies are waiting for the BC Government's core-review to come through.

Nevertheless the groundwork we have done is in effect and rolling.

A few days ago, an engineer within the Ministry, mentioned to me that we have come a long way, we are professional, well connected, we have the knowledge and expertise and we have institutionalized the BC Cycling Coalition and with that the cycling community in BC.

"And this may surprise you, Francis", a regional planner said to me a few months ago:

"The cycling community is powerful, vocal, acutely aware of what is happening when and where and VERY well organized". I suggest we take these comments for what they are, compliments!

It would be nice if I could tell you, we have been on cruise control for the past year and things have been going just swell and easy. But here is what has been truly happening:

# The ICBC-Cycling Advisory Committee is still in place, but has not met since before the provincial elections. The wait is for the core-review to come through and then all, within ICBC, will be re-assessed. ICBC is still in touch with some of the committee members for specific issues, but that is about it.

# The MoT-Provincial Advisory Cycling Committee, continues to meet at regular intervals and continues to work with staff to resolve issues and make recommendations, as they occur or are on-going.

# The BCCC office maintains the cycling hotline for the province. Our phone and e-mail is red hot. And believe it or not, most of that is our own doing. They phone with questions and requests and we try and locate an answer. They being: engineers, planners, ICBC, MoT, individual cyclists and cycling organizations. There is really no one else to turn to who has the contacts, knows the network and has the most recent information OR can provide the assistance so desperately needed. Most of the days in the office are spent dealing with the daily questions and the ensuing research and replies required.

# We have our on-going committees, who mostly only meet by e-mail. Motor Vehicle Act Committee, Intermodal Committee, Bicycle Education Committee and our brand new Design and Standards Technical Advise Committee. The BCCC also provides an e-mail discussion list for cyclists in BC. I would like to highlight two of our committees:

The Bicycle Education Committee, is the only committee of its kind in Canada. Members are cycling instructors from all over Canada. And each week another one joins the committee. It is the most lively e-mail discussion list. I see the committee members sharing their knowledge with each other and comparing the various issues facing them in each province. I firmly believe, we will see this committee come together and move towards better cycling education in the country. I'm very pleased the BCCC provided the forum to enable this process.

The Design and Standards Committee, contact either myself or Peter Stary for more information or if you would like to be part of this committee. We have set up this technical committee about a week or so ago. We felt there was a need that needed to be addressed. Our member-organizations and individual cyclists are many times in need of technical advise. Engineers and planners turn to us needing technical advise as well. It was time to strike a committee that solely focuses to assist on technical advise and assistance on cycling facilities.

- # We continue to make beneficial connections. We suggested to the Capital Regional District in Victoria that the CRD connect the ICBC's Safer Bicycle Planning (SBP) software to the planning of their Regional Cycling Network. This suggestion was successfully implemented.  
The same is under way with an introduction to MoT on the same SBP-software package.  
It deserves particular mention that cyclists played an important role in the last couple of years in the technical development and implementation of the SBP-tool.
- # For the BCCC, I developed together with ICBC a Bicycle Safety Tips PowerPoint presentation. The 50-slide presentation is available for downloading or viewing on our website: <http://bccc.bc.ca/bikesafety/sld001.htm>  
Under the same umbrella for the BCCC, I provided editing advise on other cycling information printed and distributed by ICBC.
- # The BCCC is an active member of the Victoria Tourism Cycling Advisory Committee. The committee focuses on promoting Cycle Tourism on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The enthusiasm is high and with the backing of Tourism Victoria and foremost the driving force of Brian Hobson (Operations Manager, Oak Bay Beach Hotel and Marine Resort), the committee has started a few successful projects. Cross border connections are cultivated by this Tourism Advisory Committee. Yesterday, BEST and I discussed expansion to the Lower Mainland. BEST will contact Brian Hobson. The Victoria Tourism Cycling Advisory Committee has generated two web-sites focused on cycle tourism. One for the tourism industry:  
<http://www.cycletourism.com/> and one for the tourists visiting the area:  
<http://www.cyclingvictoria.com/>
- # The BCCC also holds a position on the CRD Regional Cycling Advisory Committee, as a matter of fact, yours truly, is the spokesperson of this committee. John Luton, President GVCC and myself have both been selected to the Stakeholders Committee of the CRD Regional Transportation Strategy.
- # We try and use any opportunity we have and within the allowance of good financial practices of the organization, to educate our members by partially sponsoring their presence at conferences on cycling issues. We have also been known to negotiate a reduced conference fee for them.

## THE FUTURE:

What will the future bring? In changing times like this, no one knows.

- # The BCCC will persist in maintaining our positions in the province.
- # We will continue to look for opportunities to discuss inclusion of the cycling interests.
- # We will remain the watchdog for cycling at the provincial level.

My crystal ball tells me that the coming year, we will be busy getting back on track with the BC Government and ICBC. If any changes will take place, we will again lobby for a rightful spot for cycling representation and work towards an atmosphere of inclusion and cooperation.

We have recently become members of the Thunderhead Alliance in the USA. The BCCC is looking forward to work together with the cycling advocacy organizations in the States.

Our connections overseas with professional engineers and cyclists in Britain is very good and we maintain close contact.

But foremost our focus is British Columbia, and to improve the climate for transportation cycling in BC.

The implementation of the Cycling Policy needs work, and the dialogue and consultation with some of the MoT Districts could certainly improve.

The BCCC works in the background, we are not a very high profile organization. It is the local organizations, coalitions and individuals that receive and deserve the attention.

The BCCC supports them, encourages them, makes the network connections and advises them on what is possible.

There is no better way to illustrate on how the BCCC works, then profiling Dennis.

#### PROFILE:

One particular cyclist deserves special mention. Dennis Della Siega from Fernie, BC, contacted the BCCC office one evening. He was upset about shoulder rumble strips that were badly installed around the Sparwood and Fernie area. Badly installed for Dennis, at that point in time, meant they were in his way! I still hear him say to me: "Francis, you should see these things! They are terrible, wobbly, all over the place, and I can't ride on the shoulder anymore. I found you on the web, can you help me?"

Well since then, Dennis and I have an on-going relationship. He calls once, sometimes more, a week. Many people in the cycling community now know him, everybody in the MoT Engineering and Standards Department knows him, everybody in the MoT Maintenance and Construction Contracts Department knows him. I believe even the Minister has heard of Dennis. He is called: "Dennis, THE cyclist from Fernie".

The fact in itself, that no one refers to Dennis as "THAT cyclist from Fernie", shows the respect Dennis has obtained.

Dennis was alone, he turned to us and we assisted him. He is still the sole cyclist out there in the Fernie area tackling the issues. But hey, he is sharing his knowledge with other cyclists. And thanks to Dennis, the BCCC became aware of an enormous problem with the Shoulder Rumble Strips in the Interior. The installation of them was faulty, the Ministry's own standards and guidelines were not adhered to. Dennis went out there with a measuring tape and a piece of paper. He measured every km. post and everything in between. He measured the width of the rumble strips, the width of the shoulder, he looked at the physical landscape of the land and the road, he checked

visibility and the width of the vehicle lanes, he observed the traffic patterns and the speed, he studied the MoT-Shoulder Rumble Strip Guidelines, and became more aware of safety issues. He wrote a report, which included all the measurements and all his findings. He answered all of my questions! And believe me there were many! If he could not answer them, he would take his bike and go out and have a look and phone me back.

We discussed what to look for and debated what would be best, we strategized every move and every turn. Most of all, me being in Victoria, and Dennis being in Fernie, Dennis became the BCCC's eyes, nose and ears in Fernie.

The BCCC submitted Dennis' report to the MoT-Provincial Advisory Cycling Committee (PACC), and we attached our own observations and comments. Don't forget we are a Coalition, and some of our member-organizations went out on their bikes: the Cross Canada Cycle Tour Society, the BC Randonneurs and they cycled through and paid attention and backed up Dennis' story of woe. The BCCC pushed for a proper audit and review of the area in question and concluded the faulty installation needed to be redone or removed. In fact, I believe we actually said: "If you can't fix it, they should not be there in the first place. Rip them out!"

MoT send their engineers out to see what was going on, their District Manager was called to report, the Maintenance and Construction Contracts Department went to Sparwood and Fernie and to review the area. We involved ICBC, whose engineers started to ask questions. MoT came back to the PACC with pictures and the conclusion, yes Dennis was right, the situation was terrible and something needed to be done, and soon.

Dennis was asked to go out with the Ministry engineers and managers and point out which areas were the worst for safety for cyclists. They settled on 10 km of rumble strips that needed to come out. This summer Dennis observed 8 km were removed, and come spring the rest will be taken care of. Every week Dennis phoned me to report on the progress.

MoT regarded this process as very beneficial to all involved. Their regard for Dennis is high for his hard work, persistence and willingness to find solutions. But if it was not for Dennis picking up the phone that one evening and looking for help, nothing would have happened.

Right now, I think, if I have a question about rumble strips I will call Dennis, because, by now, he knows more about them than I do. He also has become an avid and active cycling lobbyist, he continues to talk to maintenance crews to make them aware of his presence on the road and to remove their debris from his path. He talks to cyclists in the interior and tells them on what is ok and what requires action, he jokes he has improved his computer skills, he remains polite, he has patience and he persists and he LOVES the BCCC.

Dennis is still with us, because we now work on a couple of other cycling related issues together. He still phones, but it is only about once every two weeks. He no longer feels alone, he has found his voice, and he has almost achieved what he set out to do. And still he finds time to ride his bike.

It is people like Dennis that the BCCC is made of, you are the backbone of our organization.

The BCCC continues to work with anybody who wants to work with us. And if they don't we hassle them so much and stick our nose so deep into it, they will eventually work with us.

This organization depends solely on membership funds and runs solely on volunteer power. We have no paid staff. Our volunteers throw in a lot of their own money, time and effort to keep us independent and going. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so now, because without your assistance we could not do this, and we would not be where we are today.

Our biggest strength is that we do keep momentum and we do not give up, we are known for our persistence even in these changing times. There is a bit of Dennis in all of us.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis van Loon  
President  
BC Cycling Coalition