



For immediate release  
5 June 2020

An Open Letter to the Castlegar RCMP, Local Media, and residents of Castlegar,

Yesterday there was an incident in Castlegar along the Kinnaird bridge that involved a cyclist and a driver. The 67 year old cyclist was fortunate to come out of the crash with non-life threatening injuries. But this was a close call that could have been a lot worse. A life could have been lost.

These incidents, and the media coverage of them, demonstrate that we need to request that incidents involving vulnerable road users be reported in a fair manner. These are our sisters, our brothers, our children, our parents, our grandparents, our grandchildren, our aunts, our uncles, our friends, our neighbours, our leaders, our colleagues, our teammates, our coaches.

We all have a role to play in ensuring safety on our roads between users. However, those who walk and cycle are at a far greater risk of severe and fatal consequences. Providing initial impressions or speculative commentary on who was in the right or wrong from the Castlegar RCMP, which is then reported in local media, has cast the impression the cyclists or pedestrians were somehow at fault in these incidents. At the end of the day no one involved is a winner, and we do not need media coverage to add to that pain and to fuel the animosity between road users. We feel that blanket statements about cyclist and pedestrian behaviour remove the humanity of the individuals, and contribute to a culture where victim-blaming is seen as appropriate. The comments would not have been considered acceptable if those injured or killed had been the victims in any other type of incident, and the comments add to the suffering of the victims' families and the broader community.

We encourage the Castlegar RCMP and local media reporting on collisions and near misses involving pedestrians and cyclists to reiterate the legal requirements for motor vehicle drivers to exercise due care and the reminder that our streets are shared spaces. This means: checking mirrors, shoulder checking, maintaining awareness of your surroundings and your travel speed, passing cyclists only when it is safe to do so, turning safely, yielding to pedestrians, and avoiding distracted or intoxicated driving; all before offering safety advice to vulnerable road users. Failing to address these obligations, and instead inappropriately focusing on pedestrian or cyclist behaviour, sends the false message that walking or cycling is unsafe, and hampers efforts to improve road safety for all.

It is important to be mindful of the fact that many pedestrians and cyclists, such as children and persons with impaired mobility, might not be able to process and navigate complex traffic situations and may be less experienced users. Over the long-term, we need to continue to work together to design and modify streets to better suit the safety and comfort of all users. Until we have infrastructure that eliminates these risks of collisions, we need all road users to be patient, courteous, and safe.

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