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## Road work

# Spinning our wheels on bike lanes

It seems Minnow Lake residents are going to get their bike lanes after all.

Ward 11 Coun. Terry Kett told Northern Life yesterday that, thanks to well-organized public pressure from the Minnow Lake CAN, the reconstruction of Second Avenue this summer will include bike lanes, or cycle tracks, more precisely.

Maybe I'm cynical, but democracy always seems to work best in an election year.

The biggest roads project of this coming construction season, the \$4.9-million effort will rebuild and widen the roadway to accommodate the 2,000 or so new units being built in Minnow Lake.

Work will include sidewalks, new curbs and gutters, street lights, watermains and storm sewers. To handle projected traffic loads, Second Avenue will be widened to five lanes between Donna Drive and Scarlett Road, for two lanes of traffic in both directions and a centre turning lane. Two-metre-wide bike lanes will now be included in both directions.



On the level  
**Mark Gentili**

The project promises better access to the Civic Cemetery and the dog park, and better traffic flow through what is becoming a bustling neighbourhood.

Proponents for change flooded the city with correspondence, pressuring for the alterations they want to see and complaining the city has provided no real rationale for not including bike lanes in the project.

In truth, the city has provided current traffic data and future traffic projections, factoring in new housing and the potential for

more businesses as the neighbourhood develops.

Despite the change of heart on the project, the city remains its own worst enemy when it comes to bike lanes. Let me explain.

Greater Sudbury does have a policy regarding bike lanes — that is, such lanes should be included in any road project where it makes sense to include them.

This kind of vague and open-ended approach gives the city a convenient out. It can pay lip service to the importance of bike lanes, while not actually having to do anything about it. The city's nebulous position leads only to one thing: confrontations like this with taxpayers who are rightly confused by the municipality's ambivalence.

Is Sudbury for or against bike lanes? No one is really sure.

The only solution is for Greater Sudbury to establish a firm and clear position, much as Thunder Bay has done. Northern Ontario's second largest city has made bike lanes a priority, adding kilometres of new lanes almost on a yearly basis.

And they've claimed a number

## Ambivalent

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of successes: ridership is up, collisions between cyclists and vehicles are down, and on those streets with bike lanes, collisions between vehicles have actually fallen as well.

This has only happened because Thunder Bay city council made it happen, but they were empowered to do that by a citizenry that wanted it. Greater Sudbury isn't there. The city hasn't made it a priority — neither our elected officials, nor taxpayers themselves.

Sudburians consistently vote in candidates with a conservative approach to spending, the priority being to keep tax hikes to a minimum. This approach emphasizes necessity over liveability, prudence over vision. If Sudburians want

bike lanes, we have to elect officials who will deliver them.

There's no doubt bike lanes would make Sudbury a more liveable city, encouraging healthier lifestyles, resulting in fewer cars on the road and less pollution in the air, making for a community that is more cosmopolitan.

The trade off, of course, is cost. Bike lanes are expensive, both to plan for, build and maintain. They make roads projects more expensive. The city, as a whole, must decide if the expense is worth it.

I often think of Sudbury as the Toronto of Northern Ontario. The region's largest population centre should be the model, the touchstone for what a modern, northern city should look like, incorporating the best, most progressive urban planning, while preserving that connection to the natural world that makes Northern Ontario so special.

Unless the city and the citizens are pedalling in the same direction, we're all just spinning our wheels.

*Mark Gentili is managing editor of Northern Life and NorthernLife.ca.*

## IN FOCUS



## Snow dog

It may be April, but people and their pets are still out playing in the abundant snow. Joël Dickinson sent in this photo of her dog, Georges, having fun in some of the white stuff. Northern Life welcomes submissions of local photography for publication on this page. Send high-resolution images to editor@northernlife.ca.

## LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be exclusive to Northern Life. Include name, address and daytime phone number. Keep letters under 300 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. E-mail: editor@northernlife.ca

### Build in haste, repent at leisure

The most particular concern with respect to the city plan for reconstruction of a section of Second Avenue is the lack of public consultation.

There was an information session held last week, but it was basically only to inform those attending what the project would involve.

According to staff present, few changes could be made and tenders were to go out shortly with work to begin as early as May.

While most citizens agreed to the redesign of the Scarlett Street and cemetery entrance intersection, the need for five traffic lanes was questioned, and in particular the absence of any dedicated bike lanes, especially as the area is heavily residential.

### Hefty pricetag

**The cost of the project has been estimated at \$5 million.**

The cost of the project has been estimated at \$5 million. Most felt that the money for the five lanes could be better spent on two traffic lanes, one in each direction with a centre turning lane and bike lanes extending further down Second Avenue.

Responding to these concerns as chair of the Minnow Lake Community Action Network (CAN), I have asked our area councillor, Terry Kett, who is also chair of

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## Newspoll

**Should local school boards introduce technology to conduct online classes on snow days?**

Yes - 22.76%

No - 70.85%

Undecided - 6%

813 responses

Next poll question: Should the city revise its plans for Second Avenue and replace two traffic lanes with bike lanes? Vote at NorthernLife.ca.

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