

Don't we live in a crazy world?

By **Jackie Chow - Maple Ridge News**

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I previously wrote about a motion by the City of Victoria at last month's conference for the Union of B.C. Municipalities, for a reduced speed limit of 40 km/h on all residential streets.

Unfortunately, it got shot down.

I'm sure that, in their hearts, decision makers know it's the right thing to do. But they're afraid of the ire of drivers, and their revenge come the next election.

Talking about speeding, remember the verdict that got so many headlines recently, about the nurse who had had a rough day at work? She burst into tears when she noticed some vomit on her clothes, and through her tears couldn't see on her speedometer that she was going way over the speed limit and that she was going through a red light? She ended up killing two young people.

Madam Justice Miriam Gropper felt that 'oh, well, everybody speeds.'

And running a red light? 'It happens.'

The judge consequently acquitted the young woman of dangerous driving causing death.

Message to drivers: 'Go ahead, keep disobeying the law. It's OK, because everybody does it.'

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Often cyclists are being singled out by non-cyclists for their scofflaw behavior.

Some of the most cited behaviours that seem to irritate some people to no end:

- cycling on the sidewalk (which is actually legal in Maple Ridge, and which in other places usually happens because people are aware of their vulnerability, having to share the road with two-ton vehicles, the drivers of which are not always considerate when a cyclist dares to block their path);

- riding without a helmet (which sometimes provokes angry comments, such as ‘we should confiscate people’s bikes if they don’t wear a helmet,’ but which in fact has never harmed anyone but potentially the person without a helmet);
- not stopping for stop signs.

I certainly don’t encourage people on bikes to disobey the law, but I do understand why some of these things happen. Following the rules of the road, which were made for cars, sometimes doesn’t make much sense for people on bikes. The important thing to remember here is that only in rare cases might any of these types of offenses result in death or severe injury of anyone other than the cyclist.

When it comes to speeding, though, drivers are generally confident they won’t cause an accident.

But according to ICBC traffic collision statistics, of the Top 5 contributing factors in 2007 fatal collisions, speed was first, at 41.4 per cent.

Some more figures obtained from ICBC: 8,200 speed-related collisions injured 5,500 people and resulted in 161 fatalities (annual averages over 2003-2007).

A disproportionate number of vulnerable road users – pedestrians and cyclists – end up being victims of car collisions, including those where speed is a contributing factor.

To illustrate the dramatic effect that reduced speeds have in case of a crash, consider:

- a pedestrian hit at 50 km/h has an 80 per cent chance of being killed;
- a pedestrian hit at 30 km/h has a 10 per cent chance of being killed.

The B.C. Minister of Transportation now wants to do a review of speed limits on provincial highways.

The reason being that drivers routinely exceed the speed limit, so that means the speed limits need to be adjusted.

Huh?

He said there’s been a 28 per cent drop in injury-causing collisions since 2003.

So I guess he means we need to increase the speed limits to get the numbers up?

He blames those who actually obey the maximum speed limit for not 'going with the flow.'

We certainly do live in a crazy world.

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