

Cyclists put their lives in the hands of motorists

To the editor:

Another member of the local triathlon community was injured in a motor vehicle collision—an event that seems to happen with disturbing frequency in Kelowna.

The triathlon community is a close-knit community and word of such events spreads quickly. In this case, the collision was a hit-and-run, where the driver fled the scene with absolute callous disregard for human life. How could this cowardly, selfish, despicable person not have noticed the carnage they caused with the force of the impact? Did they have something to hide—drugs, weapons, stolen goods, driving while disqualified or intoxicated?

Ignorance is no excuse—failure to stop at the scene of an accident is a criminal code offense that could result in a prison term of up to five years, and life in the case of the person knowing the other person involved in the accident is dead or injured.

Sharon Lonergan was a very cautious cyclist—as are most triathletes—triathletes are taught not to ride abreast or in close formation both during training and in a race—an ac-

that automatically results in a penalty or disqualification for drafting—unlike bicycle racers who ride in close formation during races.

These kind of events are a constant reminder to cycling enthusiasts—just last month three triathletes were killed in Quebec after being struck by a pickup truck.

It doesn't matter how careful you are—as soon as you hit the road you put your life in someone else's hands. For a cyclist, a collision with a motor vehicle could be a life changing event resulting from someone's negligence or stupidity. I've seen it all too often—a cyclist was struck by a drunk driver at the same corner a couple of years ago requiring several surgeries. In another case a cyclist was mowed down on Glenmore Road requiring several major surgeries. In another case a cyclist was mowed down and killed on Old Vernon Road. And in another a young woman was struck by a drunk driver whose blood alcohol level was over four times the legal limit—at 7:30 a.m. Unfortunately, for some of these people was the added hassle of deal-

ing with ICBC—especially in light of the fact that technically in the commission of a criminal offense—insurance is null and void. In provinces that have private insurance it is between the accident victim and the perpetrator to duke it out in court—in this province ICBC acts as an intermediary that seems to protect the rights of drunk drivers and street racers more than victims.

Such events are going to keep happening unless there is political will to change driver attitudes and make our roads safer for cycling. Aggressive drivers, and narrow roads are a recipe for disaster. You've got some idiot behind you blaring his horn, and yelling at you to get out of the way because he can't pass—you've got nowhere to go—you are clipped into your pedals, and going onto the gravel will likely result in a blowout. Most Kelowna drivers seem totally ignorant to the rights of cyclists. You've got all sorts of fools like that on the road and they're not usually young men in fast cars or the granny living down the street, but rather affluent baby boomers driving their big SUVs or luxury

sedans. You've got narrow, curvy roads with no shoulder and no place to safely pass. And then you've got these cycling groups on Sunday morning that ride up in East Kelowna—an accident waiting to happen—which almost did recently when three cyclists almost got taken out at the corner of my street. And despite having copious amounts of bike lanes, they are not where they would serve the greatest benefit—Glenmore Road, and Old Vernon Road. And you wonder with the repaving of Glenmore Road by McKinley why they didn't put a bike lane

in while they were at it?

Cyclists are left with few options—train under suboptimal conditions, or pack your bike out of town. In town, you've got traffic lights, stop signs and sharp curves requiring constant stopping making it hard to train for a target heart rate.

For a lot of local cyclists, riding in Kelowna has become too dangerous, and so not worth the risk. For those of you who continue to ride their road bikes in town, be careful out there, it's a jungle.

**Robert Hogue,
Kelowna**

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