Julie Penner

July 7, 2015

Dear members of the Executive Policy Committee:

My name is Julie Penner. I am a mother, a violinist, and the music producer for CBC Radio's *Vinyl Cafe with Stuart McLean*. I am also a lifelong cyclist, and I am writing to express my support for the Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies.

Like many others in our generation, my husband and I moved from Winnipeg to Toronto in the late 1990s. We didn't own a car in Toronto; we didn't need to. We biked, walked, cabbed, and took transit everywhere we needed to go. While Toronto is still working to improve its bike network, living downtown there was always a bike lane nearby.

We usually tell people that we moved back in 2013 for the affordable real estate and childcare help from our parents. But there's really a third reason: Winnipeg no longer looked like the city we left in the '90s; it was starting to resemble cities we loved visiting while on tour as musicians. Cities like Portland, Austin and Asheville, with thriving independent businesses and creative thinkers who had decided *not* to move away and were, in fact, attracting others like them.

A few months ago, a friend of ours, a former Winnipegger now living in New York, visited us in our neighbourhood of Wolseley. He hadn't been back in many years, and the thing that impressed him most - out of all the changes in this city - was the separated bike route on Sherbrook and Assiniboine. It was the improvement that most made him feel that Winnipeg was moving forward in a tangible way.

I don't consider myself a "booster" - I am just as likely to criticize Winnipeg as to promote it. This doesn't mean I don't love my hometown, but it does mean that I recognize our limitations and see, perhaps more clearly than those who have never left, where we could improve.

But that is why I feel so strongly about the Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies: I genuinely believe that this an area where Winnipeg could be a leader. I'm convinced it is within our grasp to implement this plan and show the rest of the country, the continent and - sure, why not - the world, what a mid-sized Prairie city can do if it puts its mind to it.

It's true that many of my fellow citizens may not yet understand the need to improve our biking and walking infrastructure. But it is the role of our city councillors to be the best informed of our citizens. We elected you to lead, and so I ask you: please show leadership and approve the Pedestrian and Cycling Strategies.

Sincerely,
Julie Penner