



City Council News **May 30, 2018**

Courtesy and common sense

The “rules of the road” on the water are complicated and, for some, hard to understand. Despite being a long time sailor, I always have to refresh myself on those rules before setting sail. In open water there is some room for forgiveness, but in busy harbours and narrow waterways knowing and abiding by the rules is essential to avoid collisions.

There are no laneway markings on the water (except in rare occasions); complicated navigational aids that help direct traffic only if people can interpret them; and powerboats (from tankers to skiffs), sailboats, and smaller human-powered pleasure craft, all of which are free to move in every direction and change course at a whim.

Every skipper is also supposed to know how to interpret, on sight, the point of sail that every sailboat is on in order to ascertain which boat has right of way. On the water, boats under wind power have right of way over motorized vessels and there is a complicated system of determining which sailboat has right of way over other boats under sail in the same area.

Despite the complex nature of navigation on the water, however, there are relatively few accidents as a result of boat to boat collisions. I think the reason for this is simple: people generally take the time to refresh themselves on the rules of the road and boaters exercise courtesy toward other boaters. Seldom do boats pass each other without the passengers and skippers waving and acknowledging each other.

We need more of this sense of courtesy on our roads, and a lot more common sense practiced too.

Unlike on the water, the rules of the road on our highways and our municipal and rural road systems are clear, intersections are marked, and directional signage is easy to understand, even for visiting motorists. However, in the haste to get to wherever they’re going, too many drivers act as though the rules don’t apply to them (but lash out when someone else doesn’t abide by the rules of the road).

In recent months, more and more truckers seem to think that stop lights in the City don’t apply to them, and, for some reason that baffles me, too many drivers still don’t adhere to the right turn only rule on Highway 97 at the Carson and Kinchant, despite multiple clear markings put up by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Spring also seems to bring out the worst in some drivers who cannot abide by any construction delays and who cannot stand cyclists using "their" roads. These drivers fail to recognize that we have a narrow construction window during which to maintain and repair our infrastructure and simply plan their trip accordingly. And, too many drivers still fail to acknowledge that cyclists have the same rights to the use of our taxpayer funded road system as they do (cyclists ought to refresh themselves on the rules of the road too, and adhere to them).

If drivers simply slowed down (at least adhered to the posted speed limit) and obeyed all of the posted road signs, our roads would be a lot safer for everyone using them and accidents would be minimized. And, if all road users exercised some common courtesy, our driving and cycling experiences on our taxpayer funded road system would be more pleasurable and a lot safer for everyone.

This Bike to Work Week, let's courteously and safely accommodate cyclists using our public road system so we encourage more people to cycle for health and environmental reasons.

Mayor Bob Simpson