

Bike to the Future – Questions for NDP Leadership Candidates & Their Responses

On September 25, 2009 Bike to the Future sent the following set of questions to each of the NDP leadership candidates: Steve Ashton, Greg Selinger and Andrew Swan. Subsequently Andrew Swan withdrew from the race. By October 7 responses were received from the remaining two candidates. Their responses are provided below, following our questions.

As an organization that is dedicated to promoting the use of bicycles as transportation, **Bike to the Future** has prepared some questions concerning these issues for your consideration. We would like to post your responses on our web site as a way of letting our own members and other interested members of the public know your views. Would you be willing to respond to these questions for this purpose? Thank you.

1. Provincial Bicycle Policy

Manitoba does not have a provincial bicycle or active transportation policy, unlike some other provinces. Quebec is a leader in this area and updated their provincial bicycle policy in 2008. (See http://www.mtq.gouv.qc.ca/portal/page/portal/accueil_en)

Do you agree that a provincial policy concerning cycling and other forms of active transportation should be developed?

If so, would you see this policy as governing the construction and rehabilitation of provincial roads and bridges, along the lines of the “Complete Streets” movement that has been adopted in many jurisdictions in North America? (Information on Complete Streets was attached to the original questions but is omitted here.)

2. Cyclist Education

Would you agree that more needs to be done in order to ensure that cyclists and motorists have a good understanding of their rights and obligations and how they are expected to behave?

How would you see the provincial government’s role in this process?

3. Funding for Infrastructure Improvements

What level of provincial funding do you feel is required in order to begin to address the lack of cycling facilities throughout the province?

Bike to the Future has proposed that 5% of the provincial highways budget should be the minimum level of expenditure for active transportation – do you agree with this proposal?

4. Provincial Cycling Routes

Cycling can be an attractive and valuable tourist attraction and recreational activity. At present, however, Manitoba does not have many attractive cycling routes through the province. Would you agree that the provincial government should support the development of a set of designated cycling routes covering the major regions of the province, ensuring that these routes have appropriate infrastructure that meets current safety standards?

5. Highway Traffic Act

Do you agree that it would be useful to undertake a review of the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act from the standpoint of cycling, involving cyclists and motorists in the process, and update it where needed?

Candidates' Responses

Steve Ashton

As MLA and as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs I have been a strong supporter of active transportation and have met with Bike to the Future on many occasions. As Minister I was able to work with my colleagues to fund bike paths and to fund the historic first Rapid Transit/ Active Transportation corridor in South Winnipeg. As a candidate I have further committed to extend this to the East Rapid Transit/ Active Transportation Corridor.

1. I agree that a provincial policy concerning cycling and other forms of active transportation should be developed.
2. I agree that more needs to be done in order to ensure that cyclists and motorists have a good understanding of their rights and obligations and how they are expected to behave. I see both the schools and MPIC having a key role in this.
3. I see a significant amount of provincial support going to cycling over the next few years. Not all of that funding will be coming from the transportation budget. Given my commitments I believe this amount could well be above the target you have identified.
4. I agree that the provincial government should support the development of a set of designated cycling routes covering the major regions of the province, ensuring that these routes have appropriate infrastructure that meets current safety standards.
5. I agree that it would be useful to undertake a review of the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act from the standpoint of cycling and pedestrians involving cyclists, pedestrians and motorists in the process.
6. I believe that it is important that active transportation and the needs of cyclists be included in transportation planning from the outset.

Greg Selinger

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding my views on a number of cycling issues. As someone who rides a bicycle to work, and elsewhere, on a regular basis, I have a very substantial and abiding interest in this issue.

I agree that we need to take a much closer look at opportunities to promote and encourage cycling as a serious transportation alternative. As NDP leader and Premier, I will want to work with all interested parties to move this forward and dedicate resources to it. We will need to work especially with municipal authorities and achieve some consensus on how to proceed. We will also need to continue to build awareness and support within our communities for active transportation.

I appreciate your bringing to my attention the many initiatives that support cycling in North America and I look forward to further discussion with you and others on developing options appropriate for Manitoba.

Thank you again for your interest.