



**RNAO comments on the yonge
TOMorrow Proposal**

Submission to the Infrastructure and
Environment Committee on Item IE19.11

January 11, 2021



Introduction

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) is the professional association representing Registered Nurses (RN), Nurse Practitioners (NP), and nursing students, in all roles and sectors across Ontario. Since 1925, RNAO has advocated for healthy public policy, promoted excellence in nursing practice, increased nurses' contributions to shaping the health system, and influenced decisions that affect nurses and the public they serve.

RNAO and its 46,000 members welcome the opportunity to provide feedback to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee on the Yonge Tomorrow Municipal Class Environmental Assessment,¹ for the stretch of Yonge Street between Queens Street and College/Carlton Streets. The need for watermain replacement in that stretch provides an opportunity and an urgency to get the street configuration right – to realize a vision for complete streets that meets everyone's needs.² The proposal recommended by the General Manager of Transportation Services includes provisions for expanded pedestrian space and bike lanes, which will make that stretch safer, cleaner and more livable. It will be important to ensure connectivity of bike lanes north and south of the proposed stretch of Yonge Street, but the proposal is an important first step. As health professionals we find the health benefits of strongly supporting active transportation (walking and biking) to be very compelling.

First, there are many health benefits from increased physical activity due to active transportation, including reduced risk of:^{3 4 5 6 7 8 9}

- High blood pressure, heart disease and stroke
- Obesity
- Type 2 diabetes
- Various cancers
- Osteoporosis
- Depression

Second, allowing people to get out of their cars by providing other options helps to reduce air pollution, which in turn lowers the risk of:^{10 11}

- Cancer
- Neurological damage
- Cardiovascular disease
- Respiratory disease
- Reproductive and immune system damage.

And of course better separation of cars and vulnerable road users helps reduce the number of injuries they suffer.¹²

Finally, allowing people to travel more readily and to connect with each other in setting more conducive to interaction is better socially, and that in turn is good for overall health.¹³

RNAO urges the Committee to accept the recommendation of General Manager of Transportation Services to support the Recommended Design Concept of the Yonge Tomorrow Municipal Class Environmental Assessment outlined in Attachment 8 to the report (December 18, 2020) from the General Manager of Transportation Services. When we can convert roadways to complete streets that are designed to meet needs of all users, we must seize the opportunity.

¹ Toronto. (2021). IE19.11 *yongeTomorrow - Municipal Class Environmental Assessment on Yonge Street from Queen Street to College/Carlton Street*. January 11.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.IE19.11>.

² Toronto. (2020). *Complete Streets Overview*. <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/streets-parking-transportation/enhancing-our-streets-and-public-realm/complete-streets/overview/>.

³ Mueller, N., Rojas-Rueda, D., Cole-Hunter, T. de Nazelle, A., Dons, E., Gerike, R., et al. (2015). Health impact assessment of active transportation: a systematic review. *Preventive Medicine* 76:103-114. April.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275219139_Health_impact_assessment_of_active_transportation_A_systematic_review/link/5e5fcda24585152ce808e121/download.

⁴ Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. (2017). *A National Active Transportation Strategy can Reduce Chronic Diseases & Health Care Costs*. <https://cape.ca/a-national-active-transportation-strategy-can-reduce-chronic-diseases-health-care-costs/>.

⁵ Toronto Public Health. (2012). *Road to Health: Improving Walking and Cycling in Toronto*. April.
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-46520.pdf>.

⁶ Alberta Centre for Active Living. (2017). *Benefits of Active Transportation*.
https://www.centre4activeliving.ca/media/filer_public/07/77/077713ef-e097-4bc5-8278-1fb455d26630/2017-active-transportation-factsheet.pdf.

⁷ Mammen, G., Faulkner, G. (2013). Physical Activity and the Prevention of Depression A Systematic Review of Prospective Studies. November. *American journal of preventive medicine* 45(5):649-57.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258058583_Physical_Activity_and_the_Prevention_of_Depression_A_Systematic_Review_of_Prospective_Studies.

⁸ Ranjbar, E., Memari, A.H., Hafizi, S., Shayestehfar, M. Mirfazeli, F.S., and Eshghi, M.A. (2015). Depression and Exercise: A Clinical Review and Management Guideline. *Asian Journal of Sports Medicine*. 6(2): e24055.
<https://sites.kowsarpub.com/asjasm/articles/21607.html>.

⁹ <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-69323.pdf>.

¹⁰ US Environmental Protection Agency. (2018). Research on Health Effects, Exposure, & Risk from Mobile Source Pollution. March 14. <https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/research-health-effects-exposure-risk-mobile-source-pollution#:~:text=Motor%20vehicle%20emissions%20contribute%20to,and%2For%20immune%20system%20damage>.

¹¹ Mowat, D., Gardner, C., McKeown, D., Tran, N. (2014). *Improving Health by Design in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area*. May. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2014/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-69323.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.