

*June 12, 2007*

## **NB Climate Change Plan 2007-2012 - A View from the Saddle**

*Joe Godin*

This is a plan with ambitious goals and the environmentalists will bite into it find a way and work with it. Of course it's mostly voluntary and stops short of capping carbon emissions and establishing credit trading system and that's generated the only criticism so far. As I perused the transportation sector I saw walking and cycling mentioned in terms of trails in a transit network instead of a viable stand alone modes of active transportation. Don't get me wrong, we need to get people out of speeding cars and clean sport utility vehicles and into public transit buses but the real victory against the harbinger of climate change will only come with making more bicycle and walking commuters out of us. I don't have to explain the merits of non-motorized transportation as it relates to human health, climate change, peak oil and culture so why is it then we the cyclists and pedestrians have no champion in New Brunswick? Our province tops only Nunavut and Newfoundland and Labrador in the 2001 bicycle to work category at 0.47%, well below the national average of 1.13% and next March Stats Can will release the 2006 figures. Will they reflect our warmer temperatures or steadily declining snow cover? Probably not, but it shouldn't deter us. What is in front of us yet is more slick auto industry marketing, lingering cheap petroleum supply and our own modern largess. Most people learn how to walk and bike before they go to school but it's only when they're able to economically and environmentally impact the world that they get put behind the wheel. The reliance on the automobile and the subsequent suburbia built to support happy motoring, big box lifestyles remains the main stranglehold against any real sustainability in New Brunswick and I think we'll make little progress unless we change the way we move. So what do we do? I suggest we lobby municipalities for bicycle master plans, infrastructure and facilities and the other two levels of government for money to develop programs that will work to get people of all ages on to bicycles and walking on the trails and sidewalks. We can look to other provinces for inspiration given by middle aged, university professors clad in spandex riding hybrids at 30km/h to a campus in Vancouver or young Halifax urbanites jamming streets in their monthly critical mass rides and dream or we take a serious look why we perform so poorly when it comes to non-motorized transportation modes in New Brunswick and build some activism.

Joe Godin is a car-free bike hugger / CCNB member currently revolving around Saint John