



A commitment to cycling

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Anyone who regularly drives along Hope River Road or Camp River Road early in the morning or at the end of the work day, has likely seen a large figure barreling along the road on a bright yellow bike.

Sheldon Feyter is a rare type of commuter in Chilliwack, but the kind you would see hundreds of Holland, even out in the countryside.

Feyter doesn't look like your typical bicycle commuter. Over his tall, lumbering frame he wears a yellow raincoat and gumboots, he rides a one-speed bike with no handbrakes and yet he cycles more than 30 kilometres every single day from his home downtown to where he works at a greenhouse in Rosedale.

"It's a bit of a challenge, but you've just got to do it," he said. "If there is a lot of east wind it can be hard. It helps on the way home though."

Feyter went to Holland for a year, returning in January a year ago, and it was there he discovered the culture of the bicycle. He went to learn the language and worked at a greenhouse operation over there and found that cycling is literally a way of life for the Dutch.

"Then I thought, 'If I could do it there, why not do it here?'" he said.

Of course, there are lots of answers to that question: Canada is huge and mountainous, Holland is tiny and flat.

But then again Chilliwack is pretty flat and, as for the distance, he just got used to it.

In fact, he figures it's about 16 or 17 kilometres from home to work and some days after riding home from work, he showers, and rides all the way back to Scouts at Timothy Christian at night.

"On those days it's about 60 kilometres a day," he said.

He owns a Jeep, but in September he let the insurance lapse and just didn't renew it.

"That forces me to ride my bike," he said. "I have choir twice a week, church on Sunday, I bike to get groceries."

He even goes to visit friends in Agassiz on his bike.

"It's a commitment," he said. "You've got to plan your time."

His cycling route to and from work isn't a busy one as far as cars go, but there sure isn't much room on the roads. Despite that, he says he hasn't had any close calls yet.

"I fell once in the snow," he said. "That day I was late for work."

His co-workers at the greenhouse are pretty impressed with his commitment to cycling. Some people told him he'd never be able to last at it, but now that the depths of dark winter are over, he figures it should only get easier.

"If I can get through January I'll be fine," he said. "If I could do it for a year that would be really cool."

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