

## The Story and History of the Clarington Cycling Club (3C)

The Clarington Cycling Club—affectionately known as 3C—officially began as a not-for-profit cycling club in 2014, but its roots stretch back more than two decades earlier to a small, friendly group of retirees who simply loved to ride.

### 1993 – The Beginning: Seniors on Spokes (SOS)

The origins of 3C trace back to 1993, when a group of General Motors of Canada retirees formed a bicycle club. They called themselves Seniors on Spokes (SOS). This was not a performance-driven group; it was a laid-back, social club that enjoyed local trail rides. By 1996, about 20 riders would gather every Thursday at 9 AM to explore the area together.

### 1998 – Growing Attention and the Birth of a Second Club

By 1998, SOS was slowly growing, still operating with nothing more than a handwritten weekly schedule for Thursday rides. During one of these outings, a local newspaper profiled the group, and the story ran on the front page shortly after.

That article caught the attention of the Clarington Older Adult Centre, which reached out to SOS to help start a seniors' cycling group in Bowmanville.

This new club became known as the Beach Street Spinners, named for the location of the older adult centre.

Although the two groups—SOS and the Beach Street Spinners—were independent, many cyclists happily rode with both.

### Early 2000s – Joint Adventures and Expanding Horizons

Around 2002, the two clubs began joining forces for overnight cycling trips outside the region. These adventures took riders across:

- The Niagara region
- Ottawa and into Quebec
- Michigan and Ohio

A few years later, the clubs organised an ambitious Bike and Barge trip in the Netherlands. The adventure made the local paper once again—and membership surged from 30–40 riders to 70–80.

However, the Beach Street Spinners—being part of the Clarington Older Adult Centre—were restricted by insurance policies that prevented rides outside Durham Region. Interest continued to grow, but the limitations were becoming a challenge.

### 2013–2014 – Becoming the Clarington Cycling Club

By 2013, the Beach Street Spinners decided it was time for independence. They separated from the Older Adult Centre, created their own bylaws, secured their own insurance, and formed the Clarington Cycling Club—the group we now call 3C.

SOS continued on as its own informal riding group, and many cyclists still took part in both communities.

The newly independent club maintained its senior-friendly focus, building strong safety guidelines such as:

- Group sizes capped at 10 riders
- Highway groups spaced at least ½ km apart
- Offering short, medium, and long ride options each day

These principles helped preserve inclusivity, safety, and enjoyment.

#### 2020–2022 – COVID-19 and a New Era of Cycling

When COVID-19 hit in early 2020, the club paused group rides altogether. As the government allowed small groups to meet outdoors, the club implemented a structured sign-up system for rides. This ensured smaller groups and made it easier to notify others if someone later tested positive.

During this time, the idea of allowing electric bikes (e-bikes) came up—a decision that would transform the club.

Many older riders had been struggling to keep up and were considering dropping out. With e-bikes, they could continue riding with their friends and stay active.

The shift was dramatic:

- Early adoption: ~20% e-bikes
- Following years: 40%, then 70%
- Today: about 90% of riders use e-bikes

As one member put it:

“We don’t go any faster—we just go easier.”

The introduction of e-bikes helped preserve the club’s social cohesion, keeping members connected, active, and engaged as they aged.

#### Today – A Thriving, Positive, Connected Community

Today, 3C has approximately 120 members. The club:

- Rides every Tuesday and Saturday
- Mostly explores Durham Region, with at least one out-of-town ride each month

- Hosts 3–4 social events per year
- Conducts roadside cleanups twice annually
- . Has a feel good toonie fund that helps local charities
- Encourages members to travel together on cycling trips across Canada, Europe, and beyond

The club maintains a warm, positive atmosphere with low membership costs and a strong sense of camaraderie. Many lifelong friendships have formed from these weekly rides.

Jim Boate  
Longtime member