

September 8, 2004

"With clear leadership and deliberate plans in place, we have an opportunity to be national leaders in road safety. We have an opportunity to save millions of dollars in costs, particularly in Alberta's health care system. And we have an opportunity to save lives on Alberta's roads."

Don McDermid
RCMP Assistant Commissioner, Ret.

McDermid recommends road safety plan and sustainable funding for traffic safety in Alberta

Edmonton...A comprehensive road safety plan led by the Alberta government and a sustainable source of funding are needed if Alberta is going to see a significant reduction in traffic-related deaths and injuries. Those are highlights of a report completed by Don McDermid, retired RCMP Assistant Commissioner, on the state of traffic safety in the province.

Transportation Minister Ed Stelmach today released McDermid's report and the government's response to his nine recommendations. The recommendations are aimed at a cross-ministry approach to addressing traffic safety in Alberta and the need to make traffic safety a high priority within the provincial government.

"I have accepted all nine of Don's recommendations on how to effectively change driver habits and reduce the unacceptable number of collisions in Alberta. My colleagues and I are committed to developing the plan and dedicating appropriate resources to education, awareness and enforcement. Bad driving has to become economically and socially unacceptable in Alberta," said Stelmach. "The Alberta government recognizes the magnitude of this problem and realizes there are no quick and easy solutions. That is why so many departments have been and will continue to be involved in reducing the carnage on our roads."

In his report, *"Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads: Report and Recommendations for Traffic Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy,"* McDermid concludes that with an effective process and leadership from the province, the active involvement of stakeholders, adequate resources, a clear plan, and measurable targets in place, Alberta has an opportunity to be a leader in road safety.

The 2003 Alberta collision statistics show some improvement, but fatalities are up slightly. Overall the number of collisions decreased by 2.5 per cent compared to 2002. Injuries decreased by over eight per cent while fatalities rose by 3.5 per cent.

The Alberta Motor Association (AMA) estimated that in 2000, the total costs to society for health care, policing, property damage and lost work time productivity totaled \$4.7 billion. That's about half-a-million dollars every hour spent on collisions. These costs are preventable and research indicates that 90 per cent of all collisions are the result of human error.

"Traffic-related injuries are just as preventable as a diet-related heart attack," said Gary Mar, Minister of Health and Wellness. "We must choose to slow down, pay attention and obey the rules of the road, just as we choose to exercise and eat well."

"Alberta Justice will continue in its dedication to help improve road safety by ensuring that Crown prosecutors have a full range of tools directed to the prosecution of driving offences," said Dave Hancock, Minister of Justice and Attorney General. "We are committed to removing drinking drivers from Alberta's roads and helping to improve the quality of life for Albertans."

In his report, McDermid also emphasized the importance of enhanced enforcement on Alberta roads and highways.

"Clearly, more enforcement will go a long way toward saving lives on Alberta roads," said Solicitor General Heather Forsyth. "We'll be working with Transportation, Justice, and Health and Wellness to implement these recommendations so we can meet the 2010 Road Safety Vision traffic safety targets over the next six years."

Next steps

- The development of a provincial action plan on traffic safety is underway and will be finalized by a cross-ministry committee and working committee co-chaired by Alberta Transportation, Solicitor General, and Justice and Attorney General. Other government departments represented will be: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Finance; Government Services; Health and Wellness; Human Resources and Employment; Learning; Municipal Affairs; and Seniors.
- Key stakeholders and other government departments will continue to be consulted in the development of the provincial plan.
- In conjunction with the provincial action plan, a business plan outlining the requirements for stable, long-term funding, objectives and performance measures will be developed.

"I think Don's report clearly identifies the need for four things when it comes to tackling the large and complex problem of traffic safety: leadership, accountability, education and enforcement," said Stelmach. "Without these, the number of collisions in this province will continue at epidemic proportions."

McDermid's report can be found at: <http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca/Content/doctype48/production/SavingLives.pdf> and the 2003 Collision Statistics at: <http://www.trans.gov.ab.ca/Publications/CollisionStats.asp>.

The McDermid recommendations and the government's response are attached.

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Backgrounder

Government Response to McDermid Recommendations on Traffic Safety

Recommendation One:

Establish a provincial mechanism to provide leadership direction, coordination and evaluation of road safety programs in Alberta.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta Transportation, with key ministries, will establish a cross-ministry initiative that has commitment and representation at the Minister level with coordination and support from their Deputy Ministers. Ministerial leadership of the cross-ministry initiative will be provided through a committee co-chaired by the Minister of Transportation, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Alberta Transportation will establish a high level multi-sector advisory group with representatives from all the major stakeholders to provide regular input and advice to the Ministers, in order to assist in developing a province wide plan.

Alberta Transportation will establish a single office for road safety which will also draw on support and expertise from other ministries.

Alberta Transportation will establish necessary working and technical committees to address specific components of road safety in the province. Several of these already exist in support of the Traffic Safety Initiative.

Recommendation Two:

Develop and implement a comprehensive road safety plan for Alberta with clearly defined objectives, strategies and work plans tailored to meet provincial and local needs.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta Transportation, together with key ministries and stakeholders, will develop a comprehensive road safety plan that is based on Alberta data and needs.

Alberta's plan will be consistent with and support Road Safety Vision 2010, Canada's Road Safety Plan; however, it will be tailored to meet Alberta's specific needs.

The umbrella plan will need to be complemented by specific local plans and initiatives that support and reinforce the overall plan.

Recommendation Three:

Establish a sustainable source of ongoing funding for road safety initiatives in the province.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

An increase in spending on traffic safety will be required in order to successfully mitigate the number of collisions, fatalities and injuries in Alberta. A business case for this funding will be required with clear lines of accountability for the expenditures of these funds. Support for the recommendations will need to be sought from Treasury Board.

The creation of a business case will include consideration of funds that are currently spent on traffic safety and an evaluation of the effectiveness of this funding. The business case will also consider the need for funding to support overall traffic safety initiatives such as education and awareness, linkages with Alberta Learning curriculum, enforcement activities, data research and analysis, as well as local/municipal initiatives which support the overall targets.

Recommendation Four:

Expand research and the availability of comprehensive, timely information about road safety in the province.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta Transportation is responsible for the collection, analysis and dissemination of collision data in the province of Alberta. This area needs to be more fully resourced in order to effectively deal with its mandate and to effectively work with other research facilities in Alberta and elsewhere. For example, better links between collision and health data would be very beneficial. This will ensure that evidence based decisions are made regarding traffic safety.

Implementing this recommendation will involve the use of new technology which is able to more quickly and accurately process collision information to ensure dissemination and sharing of this information for national needs, provincial initiatives and for community traffic safety initiatives.

Recommendation Five:

Establish specific targets consistent with Road Safety Vision 2010 and report regularly on progress in achieving those targets.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta Transportation, as part of its development and implementation of a road safety plan, will establish a scorecard with targets specific to Alberta. These targets will support Road Safety Vision 2010, Canada's Road Safety Plan, and also reflect targets established within Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta's Injury Prevention Strategy. Through the scorecard, periodic reports on progress will be created for the Ministers' and Deputy Ministers' oversight and advisory committees.

Recommendation Six:

Engage Aboriginal leaders and elders in the development of targeted strategies to reduce the rates of collisions, injuries and fatalities among Aboriginal people.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta's Aboriginal population continues to have a much higher rate of involvement in collisions resulting in fatalities and serious injuries than the rest of the population.

Clearly any traffic safety strategy will require involvement, support, and approaches and initiatives on the part of aboriginal communities in the province. Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development will be involved in a leadership capacity to assist in initiating these initiatives.

Recommendation Seven:

Take advantage of advances in technology provided the objectives are directly related to improving road safety.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

It is acknowledged that technology can significantly augment traffic safety strategies. Technologies need to be thoroughly researched and proven to ensure they are effective, user friendly and have a positive cost-benefit analysis. The use of technology within traffic safety will also supplement officer safety techniques. For example, swiping a driver's licence to connect wirelessly to a main computer to gather driver data will allow officers to concentrate on offenders. The use of global positioning systems will identify incident locations.

The use of technology must have clear linkages to road safety. It is clear that technology can be effective in assisting with collision reduction; however, it must not replace manned police operations.

In areas where evidence supports the use of photo technologies the policies and practices concerning the uses of these devices should be included in legislation to ensure that they are used appropriately, effectively and in accordance with Alberta's public policy objectives.

Recommendation Eight:

Ensure adequate resources are available to provide effective enforcement on Alberta roads and highways.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

If Alberta is to be successful in reducing fatalities and injuries, a strong enforcement component is an essential element. Without consistent, sustainable and effective enforcement, targets will not be achieved.

The first priority will be for the key Ministries, Alberta Transportation, Alberta Solicitor General and Alberta Justice and Attorney General to work with municipalities to ensure police services are up to optimum levels to conduct effective, sustained enforcement in the province. As this will have implications for the judicial system, the need for additional resources will have to be considered.

Communities should have traffic enforcement plans in place as well as dedicated traffic enforcement services in order to impact traffic

safety.

Recommendation Nine:

Undertake a thorough review of current driver education and driver examinations in the province.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

Alberta Transportation will undertake a comprehensive review of driver training curricula to determine whether the appropriate measures are in place to prepare drivers for the complexities of driving in Alberta.

Alberta Transportation has already implemented recommendations to address issues and concerns that were identified in the Auditor General's report regarding driver examinations in Alberta. This includes the implementation of a risk based assessment to be used for monitoring of driver examiners. Further review of this area will occur.

Alberta Transportation will continue to work towards earlier identification and intervention with drivers who are displaying signs of problematic driving behaviour. This may involve a driver who requires more experience, is experiencing diminishing abilities or an emerging medical issue or a driver who appears to be consciously ignoring the rules of the road. Interventions may include retraining, retesting, driver licence conditions or restrictions, or sanctions against the driver.

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ALBERTA TRAFFIC COLLISION FACTS

2003

WHAT HAPPENED ON ALBERTA'S ROADWAYS IN 2003?

During 2003...

- 385 people were killed as a result of traffic collisions.
- 26,426 people were injured in traffic collisions
- A total of 113,357 collisions occurred.

Every day in 2003 approximately...

- 1 person was killed.
- 72 people were injured.
- 311 traffic collisions were reported.

ALBERTA TRAFFIC COLLISIONS

1999-2003

Severity of Collision	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Fatal	321	322	341	312	305
Non-Fatal Injury	18447	20152	19000	18246	17398
Property Damage	94589	95834	88050	85905	77543

Total Reportable Collisions	113357	116308	107391	104463	95246
Number Killed	385	372	404	364	347
Number Injured	26426	28989	27583	26464	25451
Total Number of Casualties	26811	29361	27987	26828	25798

WHO WERE THE VICTIMS?

Traffic Fatalities (%)	Traffic Injuries (%)
216 Drivers (56.1)	15858 Drivers (60.0)
99 Passengers (25.7)	7624 Passengers (28.9)
37 Pedestrians (9.6)	1172 Pedestrians (4.4)
3 Bicyclists (0.8)	589 Bicyclists (2.2)
13 Motorcyclists (3.4)	627 Motorcyclists (2.4)
17 Other road user class/unspecified (4.4)	556 Other road user class/unspecified (2.1)

SPECIAL ROAD USER CLASSES

Pedestrians

Based on population, pedestrians between the ages of 15 and 19 were most likely to be involved in a crash. Pedestrian casualty collisions were most likely to occur during the evening rush hour. Of pedestrians involved in injury collisions 14.8% had consumed alcohol, compared to 44.8% of pedestrians in fatal collisions.

Motorcycles

There were 13 people killed in collisions involving motorcycles. Motorcycle drivers under the age of 25 were most likely to be involved in casualty collisions. Compared to other drivers, motorcyclists were more likely to have consumed alcohol before the crash. Compared to drivers in total casualty collisions, motorcycle drivers were more likely to run off the road or pass improperly.

Truck Tractors

In 2003, there were 76 people killed and 782 injured in collisions involving truck tractors. Compared to drivers of other vehicles, truck tractor drivers were more likely to run off the road, but less likely to have consumed alcohol before the crash.

Trains

In 2003, three people were killed and 35 people were injured in crashes in which a train was involved.

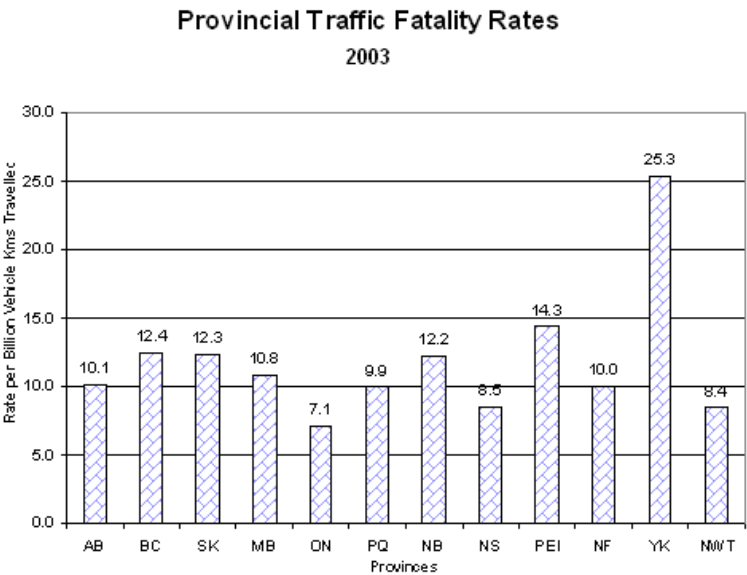
Bicycles

Young bicyclists, 10-14 years of age, were the group most frequently involved in bicycle casualty collisions. Compared to other drivers, bicyclists were more likely to fail to yield the right-of-way at an uncontrolled intersection or be left of the centre line.

WHEN DID THE COLLISIONS OCCUR?

July saw more fatal collisions than other months. January recorded the highest number of injury collisions. The highest number of property damage collisions occurred during November. There are more collisions on Friday than any other day of the week. The afternoon rush-hour period accounted for the highest number of crashes.

HOW DOES ALBERTA COMPARE TO OTHER PROVINCES?



Note: The fatality rate for Nunavut for 2002 was N/A. Figures for 2003 are not available at this time.

Sources: Transport Canada Canadian Motor Vehicle Traffic Collision Statistics TP3322 and Statistics Canada, "Canadian Vehicle Survey", catalogue No. 53-223-XIE.

Looking back...

- Fatality rates are unchanged from the past year.
- Injury rates have decreased over the past year.
- Property damage collision rates have decreased over the past year.

WHERE DID THE COLLISIONS OCCUR?

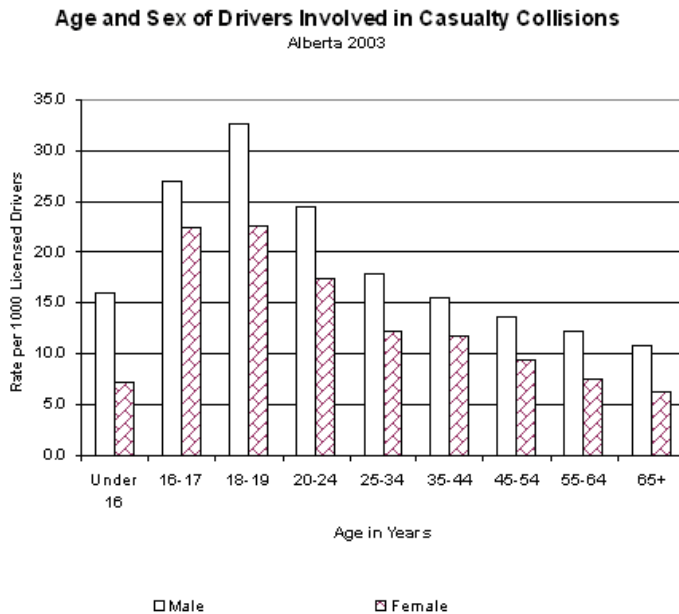
Approximately four-fifths of all collisions occurred in urban areas. Fatal collisions were more frequent in rural areas.

Urban (%)	Rural (%)
0.1 Fatal collisions	1.0 Fatal collisions
16.2 Injury collisions	16.6 Injury collisions
83.7 Property Damage collisions	82.5 Property Damage collisions

WHAT ABOUT DRINKING AND DRIVING?

Of all drivers involved in fatal collisions, 22.3% had consumed alcohol before the crash. Of all drivers involved in injury collisions 4.6% had consumed alcohol before the crash. The majority of drinking drivers were males between the age of 25 and 44. In terms of involvement per 1,000 licensed drivers, males 18-24 years of age were more likely to have consumed alcohol prior to a casualty collision than any other age group. Alcohol related casualty crashes were most likely to occur in the month of August on the weekends and during the late night/early morning hours.

WHO WERE THE DRIVERS INVOLVED IN CASUALTY COLLISIONS?



WHAT ABOUT SEAT BELTS?

The data shows that occupants who were using restraints at the time of the collision were injured less often (12.7%) than occupants who were not using restraints (39.5%). Therefore, non-restraint users were three times as likely to be injured as restraint users.

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