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Alberta cracks down on overdue traffic fines

Goal is to make province's roads safer

Edmonton... A new pilot project is targeting Albertans with overdue traffic fines to pay up voluntarily or face having income tax refunds or rebates diverted to pay for these fines.

Under this initiative, the Canada Revenue Agency will withhold tax refunds and GST rebates from motorists with overdue traffic fines and allow the Alberta government to intercept those dollars as payment for the fines.

The new initiative is one more tool the province is using to actively pursue people with overdue traffic tickets in an effort to make Alberta's streets safer.

"Traffic violation fines are intended to deter drivers from disobeying traffic laws and endangering the lives of other drivers, passengers, and pedestrians," said Ron Stevens, Alberta Minister of Justice and Attorney General. "This will help create more incentive for drivers to not commit traffic offences."

Already, on the day a ticket becomes overdue, services such as registering a vehicle or renewing a driver's licence are withheld until the ticket is paid. A debtor's wages may also be garnisheed.

Under the new pilot project, Albertans with overdue traffic tickets will also be sent a letter requesting payment. If payment arrangements have not been made within 30 days, the debtor is registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, and income tax refunds and GST rebates are intercepted. Canada Revenue will send another letter warning of the refund and rebate interception.

Drivers need to recognize their responsibility says Ty Lund, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "Traffic safety is everyone's responsibility. Based on the current situation, driver attitude definitely needs to improve," said Lund. "Driving is a privilege and everyone is responsible for the consequences of breaking the law."

The pilot project is taking place in Edmonton before expanding to the rest of the province over the next few years. There are almost 600,000 overdue traffic fine tickets in Alberta representing approximately \$104 million in uncollected revenue.

Stevens says drivers will have plenty of opportunity to pay fines "By the time Canada Revenue gets involved, the violators will have had four separate warnings and ample opportunity to clear up their fines," said Stevens. "So far, the worst individual offender has 57 outstanding tickets. It's time we hold people accountable for their actions and make the province's roads safer for everyone."

- 30 -

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