

November 2, 2006

Government takes on the challenge of improving traffic safety

Edmonton... The Alberta government has taken on the challenge of improving traffic safety by moving ahead with a comprehensive, made-in-Alberta Traffic Safety Plan.

Alberta's Traffic Safety Plan: Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads is a comprehensive strategy designed to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries in the province. It outlines key initiatives to help prevent motor vehicle collisions, build safer roads, enforce traffic laws, and better educate all Albertans about traffic safety.

"Motorists must realize that they are responsible for their own safety and for the safety of other drivers, passengers and pedestrians on our roads," said Ty Lund, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. "Traffic safety needs to be a concern for everyone, and driver attitude is an essential component of any traffic safety plan. All road users must realize that there are deadly consequences of not giving one's full attention to the important task of driving."

The Traffic Safety Plan was developed in response to the McDermid Report, "Saving Lives on Alberta's Roads: Report and Recommendations for a Traffic Collision Fatality and Injury Reduction Strategy." The McDermid Report was the result of an independent review of the government's traffic safety programs aimed at finding the most effective ways to change driver habits and reduce collisions.

"Traffic safety is an important part of our commitment to Albertans, especially in light of our rapidly growing economy, and the influx of people to this province," said Harvey Cenaiko, Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. "By combining education and action, this plan fits perfectly with other traffic safety initiatives such as our new Alberta Sheriff Highway Patrol."

In his report, Don McDermid, former RCMP Assistant Commissioner, concluded that with an effective process and leadership from the province, the active involvement of stakeholders, adequate resources, a clear plan, and measurable targets, Alberta has an opportunity to be a leader in road safety.

The Traffic Safety Plan comprises numerous initiatives in key areas.

- Leadership and coordination
- Effective communications
- Community traffic safety
- Public education and awareness
- Research and evidence-based decisions
- Sustained enforcement
- Legislation based on best practices

- Engineering and infrastructure improvements.

Many of the initiatives identified in the plan have already been initiated. They include new legislation to help protect police officers, firefighters, ambulance workers, tow truck operators and construction workers on Alberta's roads; the hiring of Traffic Sheriffs to work with the RCMP to patrol Highways 8, 11, 21, 22, 43 and 63 and others; public awareness campaigns on impaired driving, speeding, intersections, school bus safety and back-to-school safety for children; a new automated driving knowledge testing system; and working with police to conduct Joint Forces CheckStops throughout the province.

As the Alberta Traffic Safety Plan moves forward, new laws will be considered and will be formulated based on research and best practice. They will pertain to areas such as seat belts, impaired driving, speeding, intersections, rural roadways, commercial vehicles, young drivers and riders, vulnerable road users, high-risk drivers and aging drivers.

The Traffic Safety Plan and the McDermid Report are available at: www.infratrans.gov.ab.ca and click on publications.

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Note to the Media

: Backgrounder attached.

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Backgrounder

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The Alberta government is undertaking numerous initiatives under the Traffic Safety Plan. These initiatives fall under the following areas of focus:

Leadership and Coordination -

Collaboration among all traffic safety partners, combined with sustainable funding, is critical to the success of the Traffic Safety Plan.

- Establish the Office of Traffic Safety to enhance collaboration among all traffic safety partners. The office will be located within Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation and will coordinate the work of stakeholders and government in implementing the Traffic Safety Plan.
- Establish strong partnerships among law enforcement, education and engineering organizations to improve traffic safety on the road and at intersections.
- Combine all existing driver-related data in a consolidated history report to identify specific driving performance triggers such as speeding convictions, impaired driving convictions and collisions.

- Strengthen the formal exchange of driver and vehicle-related data among provinces and territories.
- Engage other road users including emergency workers, tow truck operators, and road construction and maintenance crews in finding and implementing solutions for their specific work-related hazards.
- Take a coordinated approach to monitoring commercial carrier safety to identify carriers operating at a risk to the motoring public.
- Work with the carrier industry to develop an enhanced safety partnership program in which carriers who adhere to a higher degree of safety are formally recognized and given greater latitude in meeting standard roadside inspections.

Communications and Advocacy -

A strong communication and advocacy initiative will help ensure consistency in messaging, cooperation in leveraging resources and filling gaps, and increased awareness and understanding of traffic safety challenges.

- Increase and better coordinate among stakeholders advertising and promotion of traffic safety initiatives and volunteer programs.
- Publicize enforcement operations to increase the perceived risk of apprehension and raise awareness of traffic safety issues.
- Improve communication and collaboration with enforcement partners, including joint enforcement and selected enforcement, to improve commercial vehicle safety.
- Raise awareness of commercial vehicle safety issues by publicizing enforcement operations to increase the perceived risk of apprehension.
- Implement a major communications campaign prior to and during implementation of any legislative changes relating to traffic safety.
- Build on the successful Alberta Occupant Restraint Program model to mobilize communities in pursuit of the goals and targets set out in the 10 target areas.

Aboriginal Traffic Safety

- Include an Aboriginal component in traffic safety strategies.
- Consult with key community leaders and elders when implementing traffic safety strategies in Aboriginal communities.
- Recruit, select and deploy traffic safety coordinators to work in consultation with leaders and elders in the Aboriginal community.

Education -

This is a critical component of the Traffic Safety Plan that will provide a basis for future education opportunities to rural, urban and Aboriginal audiences.

- Increase community education programs by expanding them to provide additional resources that will help reach high-risk, non-compliant drivers and passengers.
- Review driver examinations and driver education and training on an ongoing basis.
- Review licensing standards for all classes including motorcycle (Class 6).
- When reviewing driver education and training, ensure programs instill a culture of road safety.
- Raise the overall standards of driver testing by implementing an automated knowledge testing system.
- Enhance safety and training for young drivers through ongoing enhancements to the Graduated Driver Licensing program.
- Expand the use and availability of traffic safety education materials for parents and caregivers of young children.
- Develop new learning resources that address traffic safety across the school grades.
- Work towards delivering a commercial training and driver certification program.

Enforcement -

Increases in law enforcement personnel, particularly those dedicated to traffic safety, are needed to successfully address the Traffic Safety Plan targets.

- Increase resources for enforcement to heighten the general deterrence for impaired driving, speeding, and other high-risk driving habits.
- Target specific offenders, offences and locations.
- Improve administration and develop systems to better track and apprehend repeat high risk drivers.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of the Alberta Transportation Safety Board to ensure it is as effective as it can be.
- Develop and use thermal imaging to more effectively screen and inspect commercial vehicles.

Legislation

- As the Traffic Safety Plan moves forward, new laws will be considered and formulated based on research and best practice, in areas such as seat belts, impaired driving, speeding, intersections, rural roads, commercial vehicles, young drivers and riders, vulnerable road users, high risk drivers and aging drivers.

Research and Evaluation -

All strategies in the Traffic Safety Plan will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess and understand what works, what does not, and what needs to be changed to be successful.

- Create a solid framework and scorecard, including developing a well-resourced research and evaluation structure in the Office of Traffic Safety.
- Develop baseline and ongoing Traffic Safety Plan measures.
- Enhance the collection and use of traffic safety data.
- Research new ways to undertake engineering safety improvements throughout the province.

Engineering and Infrastructure -

Safety improvements to Alberta's infrastructure are needed to support the Traffic Safety Plan.

- Maintain government's commitment to ongoing road safety audits and in-service road safety reviews to detect and correct potential safety deficiencies.
- Undertake engineering safety improvements at highway intersections throughout the province.
- Provide more rest stops in rural settings along provincial highway routes.
- Initiate programs to install shoulder and centre-line rumble strips on major highways.
- Enhance pavement markings on major highways and bridges, improve appearance of warning signs, and improve roadway lighting.
- Use *Intelligent Transportation Systems* to help reduce collisions. These systems include advanced traveller information, traffic management and road weather information systems.
- Continue to enhance the province's "Black Spot" program. The Black Spot Program is a system that monitors locations on the highway network to identify areas that have high rates of collisions and patterns of similar collisions. This system makes it possible to compare the frequency and severity of collisions, collision trends and the average costs to society for each site. The Black Spot Program can be used to identify locations where physical changes to the infrastructure can enhance safety.

Budget

In addition to government's ongoing investment in traffic enforcement, engineering safety enhancements, education programs, public awareness activities and other traffic safety programs and initiatives, the Alberta government is committing additional funds to support the Traffic Safety Plan, as follows:

- \$5 million dollars each year for three years for communications and social marketing; education;

enforcement such as joint forces partnerships; research and evaluation; community mobilization; driver examination and education; and policy and coordination of legislation. This is in addition to the \$2.4 million currently spent on traffic safety programs and awareness campaigns.

- \$42.2 million over three years for engineering and infrastructure enhancements including:
 - shoulder rumble strips - \$4 million
 - centre rumble strips - \$2 million
 - intersections - \$25 million
 - black spots - \$10 million
 - enhanced pavement markings - \$1.2 million
- \$4.6 million to hire 42 Traffic Sheriffs for traffic enforcement (Solicitor General and Ministry of Public Security)
- \$3.4 million for community mobilization over three years (Health and Wellness)

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