



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

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[The committee met at 10:06.]

The Chair: — Good morning, everybody, and welcome to our all-party Traffic Safety Committee hearings in Prince Albert this morning. If I can just take a couple of seconds to advise the witnesses of the process to be followed today. I see you've given us a document which now will be tabled for public consumption and that's fine, I understand, with the presenters.

The process for the most part is that we have you scheduled for an hour. Typically we've had presenters go through their presentation. There's a series of questions and answers that take place from the committee members to you. And by process, we will not enter into debate with you and nor will you be able to ask us questions; however that hasn't been a concern yet. So it's been a really good exchange back and forth so far in our public hearings.

And if I can ask that when you first present, for Hansard, that you tell us your name and the organization you're with. And those microphones in front of you are controlled by the Hansard people, so you have no reason to activate them. There's a red light, as you can see mine, and when your red light comes on, that means the mike's activated for you. So having said all that for process and procedure, we welcome you this morning. And we look forward to your presentation, and the floor is yours.

Presenter: Student Transportation Association of Saskatchewan

Mr. Evans: — Okay. Thank you, Darryl. My name is Neal Evans. I'm with the Student Transportation Association of Saskatchewan. And I'll give you just a little bit of background on our organization for those of you that aren't familiar with us.

We're a non-profit organization, and we work with the school divisions and the contractors in the province that operate school bus fleets. Safe student transportation is our main concern. And I think it's fitting that we're here because school buses are one of the major users of the roadways in the province and safety is always a great issue with bus fleets. So we're happy to be here, have the opportunity to tell you some of our concerns. I've given you the statements that I've written out here. I'm not going to read them word for word, but I will just go over the concerns that we have. I've listed two concerns there.

School buses have warning lights, as you all know, and there's a procedure the driver follows and there's a procedure that the public, motoring public has to follow when the buses are operating. We find that quite often, and it is quite often, that these procedures are not, the motoring public do not follow the procedures that they should. Sometimes maybe it's somebody's just in a hurry. They know they should stop when the stop arm's out, and they're just in a hurry and they ignore it and go.

Quite often though, I find there's some confusion on part of the public as to exactly what they should do. If they're meeting the bus from the front, if they're overtaking a bus, and the pre-warn lights come on and, you know, there's just some misunderstanding there in the public about how they are to proceed.

So I guess, you know, the more public awareness we can bring out, whether it's media campaigns or signs, this type of thing, I feel would help that. Because any time a car or a truck or any vehicle passes a school bus that is stopped, loading and unloading children, it's a safety hazard to the bus, to the students, to the drivers of the other vehicles as well as the bus. So it is very much of a safety concern for all involved. And nobody wants to see students get injured with vehicle accidents, so that's why we have brought this point forth.

I know in the driver training, driver education programs that new drivers are going into, there is some coverage of, you know, what you're supposed to do when you come upon a school bus loading. I'm not sure if maybe we could expand upon that a little bit, put more emphasis on that in the driver training programs. It may help the issue.

Larry, this was a concern that you brought up to me. Have you got anything you want to add to that point?

Mr. Senga: — Like Neal said . . .

The Chair: — Sorry, sir, just your full name for the record please, first.

Mr. Senga: — Oh, sorry. Larry Senga, student transportation director. It's like Neal said: the education is not there, in my mind anyway, for the general public when they're travelling. Like the three of us have been in school busing a very long time and you're always hearing drivers reporting vehicles passing buses, near misses with students, you know. Like I know of an example where a car passed the bus on the right-hand side in the ditch. Well you know, we can all come up with crazy stories, horror stories. And I believe that we should be educating more, maybe more right from the point of a person getting their driver's tests, their first driver's test, and following it up with the media, I guess. That seems to be the best way.

We've all had incidences where we've had to report to police and, you know, have roads watched kind of thing. But you know, people see a Crown Victoria sitting on a driveway somewhere. Well they know what it is and, you know, the police have a tough time trying to find people passing when they're around. So this is just one of my concerns anyways.

Mr. Evans: — Okay. Thanks, Larry. I guess we'll move on then to my second point. We have a conference annually, our organization, and this is a point that has been brought up. We have what we call a managers' round table discussion at our conference, and this is attended by the management of the school bus fleets across the province. And they are the ones that brought this concern forward to me and asked me if we could pursue it as an organization. So that's where the history behind this point is coming from.

All professional drivers in the province are required to pass a driver's medical examination. And I have a class 1 licence, and I've undergone this examination several times also, but I don't think the issue lies within the point . . . I believe SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] are the ones that make the document that is given to the physicians to fill out when you do a medical. I don't think there's an issue or a serious issue

with the content of their form that is supposed to be filled out.

I think where the issue and the problem lies is what the physicians report back to them. I guess nobody wants to be the bad guy and say, hey you can't drive a school bus or you can't drive a truck because I don't feel you're fit. I mean that's, it's a pretty serious step in anybody's life to not be able to pursue their career as a professional driver. In some cases maybe it's just a timing thing, like we've had drivers that have had strokes, had heart attacks, gone through surgeries, this type of thing and have gone back and had a medical and passed it and come back to work.

And as far as I'm concerned, it's several issues that I have personally seen, and it's being reported to me by these fleet management that there is a lot of cases out there where they don't feel comfortable with the person coming back to work and driving professionally and hauling students, transporting students, in their condition.

[10:15]

The one case that I did mention in my written document here is a driver that we had when I worked with Nipawin school division. He had hip replacement surgery and he came back to work and reported to me that he was ready to go back and resume his duties, and I seen him physically walking with two canes, very slow, not mobile to the extent that I was happy with him driving a school bus load of students. As I couldn't . . . in my position I didn't have the authority to say, you know, I don't think you're fit to drive the school bus. But I did have the authority to ask him to go and get a medical, driver's medical, which I did.

He went down and had his medical, came back and showed it to me, and he was ready to go back on the bus. And I was not happy about that. I was in a position where, I mean, I had done, I guess, everything I could do. Because once he had a valid medical in his hand that he had passed that day, I didn't have the authority to say no, you can't drive the bus. So he walked over to the bus with his two canes, crawled up the steps and drove away.

I did report it to my superiors in the school division and they also talked to him. But in the end he did resume his duties driving and, you know, after two months down the road he was more mobile and I was more comfortable with it. But at that time that he came back to work, I still do not believe it was safe for students to ride with him. But the physician signed the paper and said yes, you can go back driving a school bus. So there are instances out there. That's one that I personally know of; I know the details. But I'm hearing from fleet managers that that is not a rare occurrence.

Heart attacks are another issue. I know we did have, when I was with North East School Division, we had a driver that had had a heart attack, and I think that one worked out pretty well. They did restrict him from driving for a time period. They put him through stress tests and various procedures before they okayed him to come back and drive. And you know, that specific instance I think was handled well. But I'm not hearing that that is consistent with all cases. There are cases where they come back to work and maybe have never had a restriction on the

licence, even with the physicians knowing that they did have heart conditions. I'm not sure where the . . . I'm not sure, I guess, who can step in and police this. It's a tough issue.

I guess I've kind of said my part on this. It is a concern with people that are worried about highway safety.

If I may, I guess I'll bring up one more point here, and that is speed zones in highway construction areas. There was a drastic accident last year where a highway worker lost their life, and everybody is aware of that and that's probably one of the reasons that everybody's here today. However, I did yesterday . . . We were on a little trip and I got home yesterday. We came across from the United States border up to my home in White Fox. We came through four construction zones and there is some points that I feel are going to create traffic concerns, I guess.

The first zone we came to, there was the signs we came upon. There was big signs, you know, gates kind of in the ditch and signs saying that highway workers were present and the speed limit was 60 kilometres, which is great. But from that point we drove over 2 kilometres before we seen a worker. And then we did drive through a zone that was probably about a kilometre or a kilometre and a half long where there was people working. And then we drove — after we were past all the workers and all the machinery and everything else — we drove over 2 kilometres before we came to the sign where it said the end of construction. And people get a bit impatient.

I know by the time we reached the far end of the zone, and it was so long since we had seen any activity on the highway, people were pretty . . . Cars were getting pretty rammy. They were right up to your tailgate and trying to pass you almost. So I don't know. I realize it takes a lot of manpower to move these signs all the time and things, but maybe that should be looked at, is tighten that zone up a little bit.

The second construction zone we came to, it was perfect. There was a sign. It was very, very soon after that we came up on the flag person. They stopped us. A pilot vehicle came through. We sat and waited for a little while. The pilot vehicle came through, turned around, took us through, dropped us off, and there was an end of construction sign. You're back on the road again. That was excellent.

The third one we came to, you entered the construction zone. They had speed bumps set up. They had a 60-kilometre zone, a sign saying workers present. And we drove. It wasn't a long distance. The distance was fine. We went through the area where they were working, and after that there was another sign that said workers present, and there was another sign saying the flag person was on the road. And we drove . . . that was the end of . . . That was the last sign we seen. There was no sign saying end of construction zone. There was no more workers. We would have drove all the rest of the way home at 60 kilometres an hour if we'd have waited for an end of construction sign. So this is going to cause impatience and erratic behaviour of drivers. I wouldn't even mind if they slow you down to 25 kilometres when you're passing workers when they're actually physically on the road working. But I think they need to make sure there's an end of construction sign there so people know when they can go back to the normal speed.

I guess that's all I have on that. Larry or Nick, do you have anything to add?

Mr. Senga: — Well if I could add something on the physicians portion. Myself, I've taken a driver's test 12 times because I've held a school bus licence for many years and had medicals done by my family physician for the bus driver, and it's always been a perfect full medical all the time. I've got an excellent doctor. But I have, like Nick, I've heard different stories where people have gone in and five minutes later they have a signed paper in their hand and they're out the door.

So the thing I think, consistency has to be brought in with the medical profession as to what needs the school bus industry has to have for a medical for driving a school bus. Because it is a very difficult job and you need somebody that can physically and mentally handle it. And we can't just let somebody like with, like Neal said, with two canes hobbling up the stairs of the bus to drive when, if there's an accident, the school bus driver is responsible for the safety of the children afterwards, for the evacuation of the school bus. And if they have trouble handling their own physical needs, they cannot do a proper evacuation with students. I think consistency is the word that we're looking for in the medical profession.

The Chair: — Great. Thanks for that. One thing I do want to ask before we open for questions, can you tell me the highways that you were referring to, especially the last one, where it was no end of a construction zone? Please.

Mr. Evans: — Pardon?

The Chair: — What highway was it that you were talking about?

Mr. Evans: — That was on Highway 35, south of Wadena.

The Chair: — Okay. That won't be for the committee members to worry about, but I'll send an email and talk to the minister's staff about that because I know that I've come across some ghost zones as well. And they want to do a better job of making sure that private companies that are doing that work don't have that happen so it becomes a driving concern. So I'll deal with that right as soon as we're finished this hearing this morning.

So I have Mr. Cox and then Ms. Chartier, and then we'll go to Ms. Wilson.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you very much for coming, gentlemen. And this has been — I think I speak for all of the committee — this has been a great learning experience for us, travelling around the province and hearing different aspects of road safety and where we can improve things. And I thank you for your input, guys.

And I think, Neal, actually you asked the same question I'm about to ask. You mentioned a couple of times in your report that you didn't have the authority to say who can or can't drive the school bus. I also hold a class 1A and I get my medical every two years of course to keep that class 1A. But if I went to get a job for Edge transport, I would have to pass a basic standards test with them. Do the bus companies . . . I understand some school buses are owned by the school division

and some by private companies. Is there not a basic requirement that each person would have to take to drive that school bus?

I'm thinking that there must be a huge liability issue if you put somebody like that in a school bus and he couldn't help kids get out in the case of an accident or something like that. Somebody must have authority. Like maybe not your association, but does not the company or the school board have the authority to say, yes, you're okay to drive the bus; no, you're not?

Mr. Evans: — I guess that varies from school division to school division, but in the case that I cited, I was working for Nipawin school division at that time, which has since been amalgamated. But the board policy was what regulated their decisions in that regard, and the board policy stated that a bus driver was . . . well, same as SGI's requirement. In order to get a bus licence, you have to pass a commercial driver's medical. And as far as the board policy was concerned, if you pass that commercial driver's medical exam, then you're considered to be fit to drive the school bus.

Mr. Cox: — Okay. Yes, that seems like there's a disconnect there somewhere. It seems like that . . . My doctor doesn't know whether I'm qualified to drive a 20-wheel semi just by passing my medical. I think there needs to be maybe something we can recommend there.

Mr. Evans: — There is also the requirement that you have to hold a class S licence to operate a school bus, and by passing that exam, that's also a requirement before you drive a bus for that school division.

Mr. Cox: — Once you pass that you're good forever, kind of thing?

Mr. Evans: — No, your class S licence has to be rewritten every five years.

Mr. Cox: — Okay.

The Chair: — Ms. Chartier.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you very much for your presentation. It's interesting, in the last few weeks or so I've actually had a constituent and others flag all three of these issues as concerns for them. As the critic for SGI, I've heard about the medical exam issue. A constituent who is a former bus driver called me actually about the use . . . not using the arm in Saskatoon. I'm a Saskatoon MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. And I'm wondering if you could comment. We don't use, in Saskatoon anyway, some of the same controls. If you can comment a little bit about that.

Mr. Evans: — Yes, okay. Some urban municipalities have a bylaw controlling the use of school bus warning lights on stop arms within the city or village or town, whatever the case is. There is a list provided to school divisions of the communities that do have bylaws regarding that. And some communities it's a total ban, like you can't use them anywhere within the town limits or city limits. Some specify certain portions of the community where you can use them and where you can't use them. Usually, I guess, if you're not able to use your warning lights on your stop arm for loading and unloading students, you

would have to find a safe place where you can, or hopefully you can find a safe place where you can pull over out of the traffic and load and unload.

[10:30]

Ms. Chartier: — Can you tell the committee a little bit about the rationale for some of those municipalities choosing to put bylaws in place to not use the warning signals and arms?

Mr. Evans: — I think traffic flow is probably their concern. Not to tie up a busy street or that type of thing.

Ms. Chartier: — It's interesting. Just in my life as a driver, mostly in Saskatoon, I've never seen the use of . . . obviously in the urban setting, and it's been a long time since I got my driver's licence, so that I think could explain some of the ignorance if you haven't come across them in your travels, if the area that you live doesn't utilize them. It's been a long time since I've passed a driver's test so I think that living in a place that doesn't use them and coming across them somewhere else, I think, is possibly part of the problem. But I sure appreciate your feedback.

And I just heard actually last week from someone who expressed the same concerns about construction zones — that it's great to have the speed limits, but part of the problem is the frustration when you don't know when it really started and really ended. And people will get impatient.

But I just want to clarify here, with respect to the medical examination, your concern isn't that there . . . There is already a medical exam, but it's not rigorous enough to be a school bus driver. Is that what I'm hearing?

Mr. Evans: — I don't know if the problem lies as much in the content of the examination. I haven't looked at one of those forms for a little while, but I think the requirement is there. But I don't think it's being followed by the physicians to the point where they're willing to say to a school division or a contractor that, you know, I don't think this guy should be driving this bus. It just seems that they hesitate to draw the line there and say that the driver shouldn't operate the vehicle. Maybe the form needs to be looked at. Maybe it needs to be, you know, more clearly identified. And you know, maybe some physicians don't realize what is involved in being a school bus driver. That could be part of the problem also.

Like I know another fellow that came and applied for a position driving bus for us, and he did go and pass his medical exam to become . . . As far as that, his paper said that he passed a commercial driver's medical. He was a very large man, very, very overweight, and had a hard time getting himself in and out of the bus. And like Larry mentioned earlier, it is part of your job as a school bus driver to do emergency evacuations and that type of thing. At that point he was not a hired person. He didn't have a position with us, so I did have the option at that time to say, no, I wouldn't hire him as a driver. But once he was hired and on the payroll and maybe had a couple years seniority or whatever, if his condition changed to that point, then that's where I would have had the problem getting him to quit driving.

Maybe we need to redefine the form, go over it a little bit, and

explain it a little bit better to physicians what is involved. Maybe that's where some of the problem lies.

Ms. Chartier: — That's what I was going to ask you in terms of a specific recommendation, perhaps renewing the form but perhaps on the form some information for the doctor. Obviously we can't regulate doctors, but if doctors are missing a piece of the puzzle about what's involved in being a school bus driver . . . I have never seen the form myself, but echoing what Mr. Cox said, this is something that we can definitely look at.

Thank you very much for your presentation. As I said, it just is interesting to me in that in the last month, the three points that you touched on, I've had an occasion to have people approach me about them. So thank you.

Mr. Evans: — These points again aren't something that I just decided I should talk about. They're concerns that have been brought up to me from the industry, so that's where that's coming from.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you. We have Ms. Wilson now, and I have a question or two after as well.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, gentlemen, thank you very much for providing this information today, and your recommendations and your presentation has been very forthcoming, lots of information. And I will echo with my colleagues as well: I'm thinking perhaps there needs to be additional physician training. And what are your thoughts on the driver's medical examination? Should it be studied more to make improvements for traffic safety?

Also you talked about public awareness and media campaigns. Is this something you think we should be looking at?

And because some of you are from rural Saskatchewan, wildlife. You haven't talked about that. Do the school bus drivers see a lot of wildlife on the roads? Has there been any traffic collisions? If you could comment on that. Thank you.

Mr. Evans: — Okay. On the wildlife end of it, yes that is very common in the rural settings. That is very common there. Just in my own experiences, I know several of our buses have hit deer and even things like we had a prairie chicken come through a windshield on a bus one time. So they're a pretty large bird, and if a school bus windshield is . . . Mind you, the design of school buses since that time has changed. The windshields I believe are more curved, and they're stronger now than they used to be. They used to be a large, flat pane of glass and square with the road, so any object coming towards it, there was nothing to deflect it. It just stopped it or came through — one or the other.

You had a question also about the medical thing.

Ms. Wilson: — Yes. I was wondering if the physicians need additional training regarding school bus drivers.

Mr. Evans: — I'm not sure what they get for training now, so I find it hard to answer that. But maybe it should be identified to

them, the exact duties that a school bus driver does have. And I'm not sure if they're getting that information now or not. I can't comment to that.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you very much for your answers and your input. It'll give us a lot of additional information to filter. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thanks. If you don't mind, Mr. Forbes, I will have just a couple of questions before you. Thanks. I appreciate that.

So understanding labour law the way I do — and I could be a little bit off base with this one — if a school division hires the employees to drive the bus, regardless of their medical examination being passed, the school divisions should have the ability to actually have them pass a driver's test first to prove their status by the fleet manager. And then daily, when they arrive for work, if the fleet manager was to see them in a condition other than normal or in a satisfactory condition to actually operate the bus to perform their duties as a driver, the fleet manager could and can, does have the right to suspend that driver immediately based on safety standards.

It's no different than any other place, workplace. If a manager or a safety person decides that a person is not safe or fit for duty, that person can be suspended from that job site. Then of course there'd be a hearing and interviews and such take place after that.

Now in the case where there is a private company that examines drivers and provides a roadside test, a road test, they would deem that person is going to be fit for duty. Those private companies that provide services to school divisions then, does a fleet manager still have the authority over those private companies on a daily basis? Or how does that work then? That's the question that I have about the private companies.

Mr. Evans: — I'll maybe let Larry speak to that. The school divisions I have worked for all own their own bus fleet. And I haven't worked with contractors that much, so maybe Larry can speak to that.

Mr. Senga: — I was with a private contractor for 27 years in school busing. So I can't completely answer your question, but any time I had a concern with a driver for any physical impairment that I believed they had, I was always told by my superiors that it seemed like once you were hired, you were there. It was hard to suspend you or fire you. That was the explanation I was always given by my superiors. So it seemed like . . . I was always told it was too many hoops to jump through, and get on with it.

The Chair: — That's disappointing because even in unionized environments, management has a right to suspend and pull a person off a site for safety issues. So I think with Mr. Cox and Ms. Chartier's points, we're going to take a look at this and possibly . . . We have SGI reporting back to us on the 26th of June. We're going to have to ask them some questions about this as well. But I do know that within the labour law, there can be that provision, and it is provision because I know I did that. Part of my job when I worked at the penitentiary was to do that, so I know that. So I mean you can report people who aren't fit

for duty.

So that's disappointing to hear that but especially when you have the children's lives in the hands of one person in that bus. I mean today coming down I saw multiple school buses full of kids. I mean it's a very interesting point. Today it's timely. Schools are ending, but the committee recommendations can still be coming forward for sure on this one.

On the point of the orange zones and the school bus drivers in the province, are they experiencing that in the rural settings now too? Not just your personal story, but if they had construction zones and ghost zone stories, is there a mechanism for them to report that through their management people that would come back to the government possibly? Just out of curiosity.

Mr. Evans: — They definitely would report to their fleet management about any construction zones because it would affect their schedule, you know. They're trying to keep a timeline to get the students to school at a specific time. So it definitely would be reported back to the managers if they have a zone to go through that's going to affect their timing. And that I guess is kind of what you're looking for there.

The Chair: — Yes. Thank you very much. Mr. Forbes, your floor, sir.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. And I find this very interesting. In my younger days, I was a school bus driver for Regina public school system for Hertz. And so I find this very interesting.

But I wanted to get back to the medical thing because I think that's really a big issue. And it's my understanding though that, bus drivers are supposed to, at the end of every run, they have to actually check the bus. They have to physically go to the end of the bus, and there's a sign at the end of the bus to say it's empty or not empty. Right?

So this is . . . I'm wondering if there was a way — and this would be for the committee with the help of the organization maybe — to articulate actually the physical challenges that bus drivers have because if they have to do certain things, it's not just as simple as sitting in the bus driver's seat and starting and stopping and then that's the end of your work. You have actually a lot of physical work that you have to do. But is that right? You do . . . It is the law to check the bus to make sure it is empty of students.

Mr. Evans: — Yes it is. The sign you're referring to I think or the one that says bus empty . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Mr. Evans: — That isn't a legal requirement to use that. But it is a legal requirement, as soon as you unload all of your students, to check the bus, whether it's after your morning run to the school where you drop the kids off at the school . . . We have had instances where a small child will tip over in his seat and go to sleep, and when they get to the school and unload, he's still on the bus. So it is definitely the driver's responsibility, and that is regulated that you do have to physically walk the bus, look in the seats, make sure there's

nobody left on the bus.

Mr. Forbes: — And that's not easy to do because that's a narrow walkway.

Mr. Evans: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — You don't have a 4-foot walkway to go down there.

Mr. Evans: — No. That's right.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. So there are challenges. I just want to highlight that. The other one, I just have a question just about distractions in terms of driving a school bus. It can be quite distracting in terms of students on the bus. Other issues that we've often, you know, talked about is seat belts on a bus. Do you have any comments about how are students these days on buses? Do you find that an issue at all? Or are they . . .

Mr. Evans: — That is an ongoing issue. It always is. The way that, you know . . . I guess if you could pick the school bus driver and clone them, you could help that situation some because it's just the way a lot of drivers handle the students though, their interaction with them, how they talk to them. Some drivers have no problem at all with student behaviour on the bus. Other drivers just don't have the control over the students. Some students are definitely very hard to control, very hard to handle.

[10:45]

And so each situation's different. Every driver handles it differently. Some have mostly good kids. Some have some kids that just don't want to behave on the bus. And so distraction is definitely part of their job. They have to learn to handle the kids but also to drive the bus and then watch the highway, make sure if there is an issue, they are always told to pull over and stop and deal with the issue in a safe place.

Mr. Forbes: — And my last question is really about driver shortages — you know, we hear a lot about this in the city, and I think it's right across the province — qualified drivers that you can have a lot of confidence in. And that relates to safety. I don't know if you have any comments on that. Is that a very significant issue? And what are the implications for safety?

Mr. Evans: — Driver shortages is a very real thing in our province. Yes it is. That's another concern that's brought up to our organization from school divisions and from contractors. There's various ways that individual companies and things deal with it. Issues like if you're a school bus driver, can you, if you have preschool children at home, can you bring them on the bus with you while you drive? Some divisions allow this; some don't.

That all influences whether the driver is going to take a job with you or not. Is it safe for them to bring their preschool kids on the bus with them, or are they going to be paying attention to them instead of driving the bus? Some school divisions feel that it isn't a safe situation, so they don't allow it. Some do. They feel it's no different to the other kids on the bus.

So you know, there's a lot of points like that that can be brought up, but driver shortages is a real thing in the province. And it probably is something that affects your decision to hire a driver, whether, you know, maybe a little bit of health issue is there. And you're not really sure if it's good to have them driving or not, but you don't have another driver.

Mr. Forbes: — Well thanks very much. And I'm not looking for a job. My licence has lapsed, so thanks a lot.

The Chair: — It's actually been an interesting point you brought today about the whole driver shortages thing. It's a very demanding job. I know that a friend of mine I used to work with at the penitentiary, he retired and did that job. And he was this very large man who was very physically fit, not large obese, but very physically fit. But he was the biggest teddy bear in the world with these little kids, and they loved him. So he did that job until his back finally started causing him problems. But he recognized his own limitations, so he moved away from that profession.

But it's a profession. It's not a part-time job. It never should be considered one because of the amount of work that has to get done to police the children on the bus. And you're also looking out for the children's safety pre- and post-departure.

So thank you for your time today. I don't see any more committee members with any questions. I will tell the committee this, that I'll ask SGI to provide us with a medical form so we have that at our next . . . when we make recommendations, so we can look at it. We can see if we have to make changes to that. I am just wondering if there isn't maybe a fact sheet that should go along with that form. We'll have to look and see what they provide to us first. But we'll have that for the committee when we sit at the end of June to make recommendations.

Thank you and safe travels through the summer.

Mr. Evans: — Thank you very much for the opportunity to present today. And if there's anything else as an organization we can assist with, feel free to contact us at any time.

The Chair: — Thank you very much for that. For the committee members, we'll take a 10-minute recess, roughly. I don't see the next presenter here yet, so we'll reconvene at 11 o'clock.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — Well welcome back, everybody. I know it's been a good part of the morning so far this morning with the first presenters. We're here with the last group for the day. I'll just ask the presenters to understand a couple of procedural things we have to work with. The first time you speak at the mike, please tell us your name and who you represent. I know you've given us a document that's tabled now for public consumption, so that's good. Thank you very much for that. At the end of your presentation, we'll have a period for question and answer time from the committee members. We won't debate you on matters. We will ask questions and ask for answers. All we ask is that you cannot ask us any questions, just by procedure. So on that note, the floor is yours.

Presenter: City of Prince Albert

Mr. Innes: — Thank you very much. My name is Colin Innes. I'm the director of public works for the city of Prince Albert. With me I have Scott Golding. Scott was instrumental in helping me put this document here together, and so I've asked him to come as well.

Today we wanted to bring forward I guess three items that we had identified. When we got the invitation to come speak to you, we thought we'd be definitely remiss not to take an opportunity to come and speak. And so we thought about what were a couple of things that we thought would be of interest both to municipalities as well as to the province. And so we've brought forward these three ideas here that we hope that you'll consider.

The first item that we'd like to bring up is work zone, crosswalk, and school safety zones. We were very impressed with what the province did in regards to work zones on highways. And with the tripling of the fines that occur for somebody speeding in a work zone along a highway, we think this is an excellent safety move forward. And I guess what we did is we wanted to look at that and see if we could do that too within the cities, because of course we're doing a lot of work in right-of-ways, and we're going to have a lot of workers out in the street.

[11:00]

So when we took a look though at the documentation that's out there, we looked to the summary offences and procedures regulations. And from what we found looking through the tables there is it appeared that although the city does have the ability to pass bylaws that do have an effect on various items that are identified in the table, it really looks at speed as a defined thing. And so our reading of it is that we don't believe that we have the ability to pass a bylaw that would address the speed component of it.

Now where this comes into effect is that when you take a look at how the regulation was written up in regards to the orange zone on highways, I mean it's very, you know, very much obviously written for a highway scenario. And again we didn't think that we would be able to take that and apply it within the city and have the ability to have a ticket issued that would be at that three times the rate that a normal speeding ticket would be issued.

So what we're coming forward with here is with an idea that if there is an ability to expand the definition of that orange zone so it could be something that's applied in an urban municipality for a work zone that is properly set up and signed but that where we would have a speed restriction that would be less than 60. I understand on highways that 60 would be where the speed limit is set.

I mean, a lot of our speed limits in town are going to be 60 at a max, and if we're setting up a work zone with a speed reduction, it would be less than that. It would be probably 30 if we're on a major intersection, that I guess that some ability be given and so that we could apply that to our situation because with all of the infrastructure work that I see going on in cities, I

think there's going to be a lot of people working in rights-of-way. I think that what the province has put forward is an excellent initiative. And it would just be very nice if we could take that, pass that into the municipalities as well and promote the safety of our workers that are out and working in our streets and rights-of-way.

I guess to piggyback on that with the work zone, we also had looked at crosswalks and school zones. And with the crosswalks again, it looks like very much that the fine for violating driving through a crosswalk when someone's there is defined in that we don't have the ability to put a different fine into effect for that. And with school zones, we can see that the fines have been set up and so there's a doubling of it if you have a speed offence in a school zone. We think that this, the tripling of the fine, really puts an emphasis on how important this is.

We believe again that for school zones there's a lot of kids — I mean, I think every parent wants to have their kid crossing the road properly — but we all know from experience that kids get excited and sometimes with their best intentions they can wind up running out into the road. And really, people speeding through school zones is something that we think is something that needs to really be recognized as something that's dangerous. And we, even though there is already the doubling provision that's in effect, we're suggesting that the tripling would just bring it up to saying hey, you know, this is something which is very important. So we're putting that forward as a suggested, I guess, improvement that we think would just accentuate how important it is not to speed in school zones.

The second item that we wanted to bring up is in regards to electronic billboards. Now within cities, of course we do have bylaws that affect how signage is applied in cities. And one of the things that of course has come up here recently is the use of electronic billboards. Now while electronic billboards I do think have tremendous use and potential, I know certainly communicating emergency-related things from a city point of view, it would be nice to be able to have something that we can very quickly modify, present messages. So we see the things as being positive, and I certainly will imagine that more of them will be coming into effect.

The problem that we have with them is that due to the amount of rapid images that are moving on them, the luminosity of them, they do catch your eye, which is what they're intended to do. But of course because they're catching your eye, they're also taking your attention away from what you're doing, which is driving.

Now although we do have the ability as a city to regulate placement of these things, the thing that we don't believe that we have a very good ability to do here is to actually define what luminosity is something that should be accepted. There appears to be a lot of contradictory information that's out there as to what's being suggested would be good or what would be poor. And I guess what we're feeling, I guess as a smaller municipality, is that for us to go and do all the research on it, we don't really have all the resources that it would take to do that. And then it would be something where if there's going to be massive differences between Saskatoon and Regina and

Prince Albert, it would be kind of across the map.

But we just think that because there's probably going to be more of these coming into effect, we're suggesting that if there was some ability to set a luminosity maximum or something that's looking at the rate in which figures are flashing on these things, I think that that would be a good thing to sort of set as, looking across the province in a general sense. And I think that ultimately it goes towards driver safety, just due to the distraction that a device like that can create.

The last item that we wanted to bring forward is the implementation of compulsory headgear for cyclists under the age of 18. We know that the city of Saskatoon had tried to bring a bylaw into place to address this, and my understanding was that due to the pressure that they received that this was turned down. But I guess the thing that we've observed is that I think just about every other jurisdiction across Canada has this. I believe Manitoba just passed a compulsory bike helmet for those under 18. I think Alberta's is the same. I think BC's [British Columbia] is more restrictive; it's everybody. Ontario, I believe, is everybody under the age of 18. And then out in Atlantic Canada, I think that it's also everybody that's, okay, under 18.

So I guess what we've seen is that because the city of Saskatoon attempted to do this and it was something which wasn't successful in implementing it, but we're seeing this as being something that's being done in the other provinces, we're bringing that forward as a suggestion for something that we think would be good for the safety of cyclists. And again, if it was something which was standardized across the province — as opposed to being in one municipality you don't have to wear a helmet, in another one you do — we just think that it would be a better approach to do it as more of a standardized thing across the provinces.

So that is, I guess, the body or a summary of what we've brought forward here. Scott had prepared the rest of the document that you have before you, and so I guess that we're here to present that to you. That is the end of what I had put together for my speaking notes, so I guess we'll turn the floor back over to the Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Mr. Steinley, you have a question to begin with.

Mr. Steinley: — Yes, and thank you very much for your presentation this morning. We appreciate you guys making the time to come out. We've had a couple discussions about bike helmets, and actually the Deputy Chair and myself had a discussion about this yesterday. I think Alberta and Saskatchewan are the only ones that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . So Alberta did bring it, when did they bring it in? Sorry.

Mr. Golding: — Mr. Chairman, 2001, Alberta enacted theirs. Manitoba, just May 1st here, 2013.

The Chair: — I'll just ask that the mike you have in front of you is controlled by Hansard, so you don't have to push the buttons. That's fine. The only mike that's controlled by anybody here is me, mine.

Mr. Steinley: — Just to follow up, you said Saskatoon had thought about this and they had some issues with public pushback. Obviously you guys are on the ground in Prince Albert. Do you think you'd feel that same pushback? Or is that why you think it'd be better to have a provincial strategy overall with the bike helmets because then it would be easier . . . [inaudible] . . . just fall in line with that?

Mr. Innes: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that the reason why we believe that it would be a good thing to be put in place provincially is exactly that. I think that from what we saw in Saskatoon, there was a tremendous amount of pushback that occurred from some groups. And I think we'd probably see that here as well.

Now although I'm not trying to off-load political liability onto somebody else because we don't want to feel the heat, so to speak, I just think that because jurisdictionally from what we're seeing in the other provinces, it just seems like a good place for that to be done. And then it makes it so in a municipality we know what, okay this is what the standard is. And then I think it would be a lot more readily able to be adopted and accepted into play if it was brought forward that way.

Mr. Steinley: — And just one more thing on the bike helmets because we did have a presentation on this from Susanna Martin. And they said other provinces are about half and half with the bike legislation, is what we were told a couple days ago. And she said — and I would like your feedback on this — that they would do it for every age, not just under 18. And I just wanted to ask why you think 18 and under would be the better way to go.

Mr. Innes: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that the reason why we felt that just having the under-18 would be the better approach, is just due to what we've seen in the neighbouring provinces. And we thought that this way it would be more of where it would be similar to what was going on on our borders to either side. Whether, I guess, from a safety perspective, having everybody wear their helmet is likely going to be a better scenario than just having those under 18, but we just felt that it would probably, bringing something forward, it would be a lot easier if there was seen to be kind of a level of uniformity that existed, especially with our neighbouring provinces, with the approach.

Mr. Steinley: — All right. Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes will have a couple questions, I guess. I will as well then after that.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. I find the comments very interesting. I am the MLA for Saskatoon Centre, and I'm just substituting for another member today. But the crosswalks and that whole issue, particularly in urban settings, can be kind of controversial. I know that . . . I've a couple of points on this, Mr. Chair. One is the quality of paint used on crosswalks, and I don't know if you have any comments about this. This is an issue that I know the city of Saskatoon is facing. And maybe would you have an opinion about whether there should be a provincial standard?

I know that some crosswalks have paint . . . It's kind of an

interesting story because the quality can be a big issue in terms of whether crosswalks are actually identifiable after a couple years or five years. They're completely faded and they're gone. But if you have a standard of paint that's used, any comments? I don't know what P.A. [Prince Albert] does in terms of making sure their crosswalks and their street markings are actually identifiable after a year or two. Any comments on that?

Mr. Innes: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a very, a very good observation. I know from the amount of wear that we see over a season on the paint, I mean we're painting crosswalks at least twice if not three times. And certainly our line painting, it's the same thing. We've looked at various products that, you know, basically embed a piece of plastic into the road surface to give you that better longevity. But certainly a better quality of paint would be much appreciated, I mean even if it just saves us in the amount of time that we're having to spend in going and redoing these areas.

The one thing though that I think with crosswalks, which is something though that we need to keep in mind though, is that during the winter months of course the snow's covering the crosswalk so you can't actually physically see it. And so the one thing that I thought that would be an improvement for crosswalks would be some form of being able to identify them with something that's more free standing, that would denote a crosswalk being there. Because of course during much of the year, you're not going to be able to physically see it because of the snow.

Mr. Forbes: — The other point I wanted to ask you about and your thoughts are, you know, many of our streets in our cities are actually highways. You know, I'm thinking of my office is on 22nd, which is actually Highways 7 and 14 coming into Saskatoon. And there's the big debate about pedestrians crossing and how many crosswalks you have, and I'm sure it's the same in Prince Albert and in Regina, that type of thing.

And so it's interesting that, if I'm gathering what you're saying, is you'd like to see an increase in fines. You know, I'm not sure if this is a commonly shared viewpoint or not, because I know in Saskatoon we have a great debate about pedestrians. But then it leads to jaywalking and then it leads to the tragedy which we've seen way too many times. I know I can speak about that on 22nd Street. I can remember several, and I'm sure you have that and you can speak of some in Prince Albert.

So I'm encouraged to hear that you're saying that we should see that same kind of attention paid to fines here in crosswalks and people not respecting them. I don't know if you have any further comments, but I appreciate your comments so far.

Mr. Innes: — Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And yes, I certainly feel that this is important and I hope that our comments that we've provided here are useful for this committee.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Ms. Chartier, I'll let you go first before I ask any questions.

Ms. Chartier: — On the topic of crosswalks, I don't know

what the correct language is, but obviously you've pointed out some challenges with crosswalks in Saskatchewan in winter. But one of the things . . . I don't know what the correct language is, but instead of just using the double lines . . . As my colleague has talked about possible standards, I know some jurisdictions say that in dealing with the human factor it's much better to use the two lines and the double, the full-in crosswalks. And I'm wondering if there's any benefit to standards around that as well. So instead of just using the two lines, that crosswalks are very clearly delineated.

[11:15]

Mr. Innes: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that's a very good question and a good observation. I think that from what we've seen, like especially on 6th Avenue East, we've got a crossing by the high school which, there's a lot of traffic through there, a lot of kids going through there. Just having the crosswalk lines didn't seem to be getting everybody's attention. And so we had added some lines that precede the crosswalk to really draw the driver's attention to there's a change here. And that seems to have helped somewhat. I can't say that that resolves the issue in its entirety. But I do think that if there was something like that to kind of augment and enhance a crosswalk and so that it was visible and it really drew the driver's attention to it, I don't see how that could be a bad thing. I think that that would be a really good thing.

Ms. Chartier: — Okay. And just to be clear here, you, you're . . . Not being 100 per cent familiar with the legislation, you're asking for an amendment to *The Traffic Safety Act* around orange zones in municipalities then and . . . or construction zones in municipalities. So that would be a change to *The Traffic Safety Act*.

Mr. Innes: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, that is what we are requesting.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you for that.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. Now I have a couple questions. I guess we'll talk about that work zone issue in the municipalities and the actual issue with the fines. Now I think that if I recall the Act right, we may have . . . We can make a recommendation to increase fines on that level, but for designated orange zones in the municipalities, that might be more difficult inasmuch as that municipalities have their own work zone kind of ideology with their engineering departments, and for signage as well, which is different than the highways. But we'll have to look into that for sure.

I want to ask you about the boards, the billboards. That's interesting. SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] — of course you know I was minister of Municipal Affairs — SUMA never brought that to our attention ever as a concern provincially. Are you hearing that from your colleagues that you would want to have this as not just Prince Albert's issue? Are you hearing this from your colleagues and is SUMA bringing it to your attention? Is your mayor talking about it when he returns from SUMA meetings?

Mr. Innes: — Mr. Chairman, no I haven't been getting the feedback from that end as far as it coming from the mayor or

other political people. Where I guess we've identified this ourselves is when these items are brought forward to council for an approval and we're routinely asked, well what's appropriate? And that's where we're feeling that we're kind of . . . We don't feel that we've got all the technical expertise in that end of it. And so we feel that we're being put in a position where we're being asked to deem them appropriate or inappropriate, but we don't really feel that we have the tools to do so. So I think that it . . . more so as opposed to being something that's being pushed from more the political end, it's more just from the administrative end of dealing with them in a practical sense, is where we're coming from with that request.

The Chair: — Thank you. And then on the issue about crosswalks and paint usage and stuff, municipalities are allowed to do and choose what they want to use for equipment and what they want to use for standards. Now I would hope that there's a benchmark that you want to put forth, and you would want to use the best possible available equipment and the best possible paint in this case. But across the province, is there a standard within the Act provincially, when you designate a school crosswalk or a crosswalk area, that there is certain dimensions and certain requirements for signage provincially?

Mr. Innes: — Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that there is the definition of how a school zone is to be established, and I believe that there's also guidance as provided by the Transportation Association of Canada in the application of how zones like this should be laid out. I don't know. Scott, did you have any more feedback on that?

Mr. Golding: — Nothing more right now. Yes, I mean it's the practice for crosswalks, it's pretty much emerged pretty consistently now in the major cities. And like driver handbooks, you know, SGI puts out resources for drivers, and what you'll find in our city is the same in what you'll find in the others. And motorists generally have a pretty good idea what to expect at those zones. At least in Prince Albert, it's not going to be any different.

Mr. Innes: — Further to that, Mr. Chairman, with what we refer to as the TAC standards, the Transportation Association of Canada, we routinely go to those standards when making, you know, a layout of signage and all that. And so we try to follow that because we've seen those as being best practices that are being put forward across the country.

The Chair: — Great. I don't see . . . Oh, we have a question. Ms. Jurgens, go ahead.

Ms. Jurgens: — I'm Victoria Jurgens. I'm filling in for one of the MLAs here. And I am wondering about the public awareness. Does the city and SGI work on, and maybe school boards, all get together to work on a common public awareness, maybe at the start of the school year, at the end of the school year, that kind of thing?

Mr. Innes: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well I know that the schools have come forward, as you're getting on to the school year, with putting out information that's circulated. I believe that our council just made a commitment to be part of that as far as bus safety goes as we move into the fall. Now the city has in the past had a joint committee where we met with the school

boards to talk about things like this. I mean, there was more than just traffic safety issues, but that was certainly one of the items of discussion at those meetings.

But yes, there really is, especially as you're coming into the fall. Everyone I guess gets used to the kids not being in school and the school zones maybe not being as busy, but I definitely think there is value in promoting that, because certainly if we can prevent an accident from happening in the first place I think that that's really where we want to be at.

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much. I don't see any other questions from committee members, so your recommendations will be taken as along with our other stakeholder, and we'll be talking about this at the end of June. And the committee thanks you for your time today. If we have any further follow-up questions after we read the documents, I'd ask the members to get a hold of myself as the Chair and we'll direct those questions in a letter to you, Mr. Innes, for any more follow-up. But for now, thank you very much for your time. Have a great, safe summer.

And for committee members, I need a motion of adjournment because we are done for today's hearings. Mr. Cox. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — So moved. We will now not meet until Monday when we travel up to Pelican Narrows and La Ronge. So thank you, committee members, for your time this week. Take care.

[The committee adjourned at 11:22.]