



**CITY OF PRINCE ALBERT**  
**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

SUBMISSION TO THE  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

JUNE 05, 2013

PRESENTED BY:

COLIN INNES, *Director of Public Works*  
SCOTT GOLDING, *Manager of Capital Planning and Strategic Services*

PUBLIC WORKS  
1084 Central Avenue  
Prince Albert, SK S6V 7P3  
PHONE: (306) 953-4900  
FAX: (306) 953-4915

June 05, 2013

Kathy Burianyk  
Committee Clerk, Special Committee on Traffic Safety  
Room 7, 2405 Legislature Drive  
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

### **Special Committee on Traffic Safety – Stakeholder Recommendations**

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#### **Executive Summary:**

The City of Prince Albert requests that the Government of Saskatchewan consider the following initiatives:

1. Work Zone, Crosswalk, and School Zone Safety Provisions:
  - a. Application of "Orange Zone" Work Zone violations equally to urban jurisdictions;
  - b. Application of 30 KPH "Orange Zone" speed limits to lower-speed local roads;
  - c. Increase specified fines for violations of Section 223(1) of *The Traffic Safety Act*;
  - d. Increase speed violations occurring within School Zones to triple the base rates, to be consistent with "Orange Zone" violations.
2. Development of a Provincial Strategy and Best Practices governing the approval and placement of Electronic Billboards at the municipal level.
3. Implementation of compulsory headgear usage for all cyclists under the age of 18 Years.

Dear Ms. Burianyk:

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Thank-you for the opportunity to present Stakeholder Recommendations to the Special Committee on Traffic Safety. The methodical consultation across a broad variety of

stakeholders and agencies is a good and proactive measure which will indubitably contribute to our collective goal of improving the safety of the travelling Public within the surface transportation system. Provincial guidance is essential to make meaningful improvements that reduce traffic-related accidents, injuries, and fatalities, and it is thus optimistically anticipated that these hearings represent the first step in an ongoing consultative process designed to implement regular incremental improvements on an ongoing basis in an area that our autocentric culture tends to be rather complacent in.

The City of Prince Albert is responsible for the operation and oversight of over 300 KM of roadways within our corporate limits, including almost 250 KM of improved pavement surfaces. Our network has grown by approximately 10 percent over the last decade, which is indicative of the current favorable economic climate experienced within Saskatchewan. Traffic counts over the same period are up across virtually every neighborhood and arterial road network; in the most extreme example by approximately 100%. These trends are mirrored or even exceeded in many other Saskatchewan Cities, which illustrates that clearly more people are in motion at any given instance than ever before.

The list of potential discussion items that the Public Works Department could potentially present to your attention is as large and diverse as our community itself. For practicality, the City of Prince Albert would like to focus on a small number of issues that represent:

- Concerns that have been consistently raised at City Council and in the local media.
- Concerns that have broad applicability and support across many demographics of our community (and are thus not “fringe group” or “boutique lobby” interests).
- New or emerging trends being encountered within our community, and thus are not stagnant, unsolvable, humdrum, or cliché.

- Problems that are clearly definable, relatively non-polemical, and manageable.
- Situations where consistent practice across all Saskatchewan communities would be seen as highly beneficial.
- Situations where leadership and direction at the provincial level is viewed as essential to make meaningful progress.

Public Works would like to take this opportunity to thus present the City of Prince Albert's discussion items:

1. Work Zone, Crosswalk, and School Zone Safety

In a rather troubling theme, many enforcement agencies across the country are reporting observable decreases in the General Public's adherence to the rules of law. This inclination is likely tied to an erosion of overall civility, patience, and personal responsibility across our society, which in general is beyond the scope of the current discussion, but has an unquestionable impact upon traffic safety – success of the system depends on all users looking out for and caring for the wellbeing of each other.

This megatrend is best illustrated through the related issues of Work Zone, Crosswalk, and School Zone Safety.

The design parameters governing the establishment of Work Zones, Crosswalks, and School Zones have been exhaustively reviewed at an academic level, with best practices perfected over years of study and experience. Uniformity and optimization have long been solidified through national technical standards and universally

referenced design guides, and motorists can generally expect universality and consistency amongst many different precincts.

Inexplicably, there appears to be increasingly greater disregard from many motorists for the traffic laws pertaining to Work Zones, Crosswalks, and School Zones with some drivers blatantly ignoring them completely – at times with salient and highly tragic consequences. Vehicles must yield the right of way to children and other pedestrians within cross walks, and must obey the posted speed limitations within work zones and school zones. Simply put, many people don't do this.

The City was very pleased to see the Government of Saskatchewan change its laws related to speeding in construction zones on November 1, 2012, and particularly impressed with the measure that triples the base fines for speeding. This action appears to be in response to non-compliance trends encountered within work zones. In an interesting observation, however, it was noted that while the meaning of “highway” as described within *The Traffic Safety Act* is defined in the context of any public vehicle corridor, regardless of location (excluding parking lots), the new speed limitation provisions appear to be tailored specifically to high speed rural expressways under the exclusive mandate of the Provincial Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure. Elsewhere the legislation does not differentiate a rural roadway administered by The Ministry as being of elevated or otherwise special significance.

The Public Works Department respectfully requests that the “fines-multiplier” measures and “power-to-direct-traffic” granted to rural MOHI flag persons be applied to all road corridors within the sphere of applicability to which *The Traffic Safety Act* pertains, in order to protect the wellbeing of road workers that are operating within the confines of a

municipality. The most effective way to do so could be to simply mirror the existing new provisions with another more suitable to the urban setting and citing the relevant municipality, authority, or university jurisdiction. While some high-speed roads do exist within these areas, most are not major corridors, and would be better served by a lower standard threshold that represents a meaningful reduction of speed from the posted limit -- a 30 KPH benchmark would probably suit many communities. The existing language could also simply be augmented to ensure that high-speed urban thoroughfares are included within the 60KPH limitation, under those applicable cases.

The City also asks that the Government intensify the severity of Crosswalk violations and impose more severe fines. Under *The Traffic Safety Act*, and its corresponding cross-reference under the *Summary Offences Procedure Regulations*, a motorist's failure to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians at a highway intersection, or marked pedestrian crossing, in the required manner, constitutes a \$180 fine. This is not a sufficient enough deterrent, and until there is a substantial economic loss imposed on non-complaint drivers, all pedestrians, and especially children, remain at risk of being mowed down by the inattentive, impaired, and indifferent.

As a final consideration under this section, the City would like the Government to apply the same triplicate-penalty Work Zone principle to School Zone speed violations, which are currently double the conventional base rate. Consistency with Work Zone provisions would provide a greater deterrent to excessive speeds, and provide more clarity and understanding for the General Public. Advertising would also prove beneficial under such an initiative – it is not a widely-known amongst drivers that speed violations occurring within School Zones are treated differently.

Provincial action on this subject is important. Although the City could unilaterally implement more stringent bylaws on its own in isolation in an attempt to achieve the same effect, the penalty sums to which a Municipality has discretion are described within Table 5 of the *Summary Offences Procedure Regulations*, and violations for the aforementioned contraventions remain established by the Crown. The City does not currently have the jurisdiction to change the penalty sums for speeding violations, or impose penalties for crosswalk violations that are inconsistent with the *Traffic Safety Act* and/or *Summary Conviction Regulations*.

Aside from the jurisdictional complications, it would be far better practice for the City of Prince Albert to enact rules that are standard, advertised, understood, and practiced equally across the entire Province – and thus Public Works urges you to consider and implement these considerations for the benefit of all Saskatchewan residents.

## 2. Provincial Strategy for Electronic Billboards

Driver distraction is considered to be a causal factor in a significant number of motor vehicle accidents. A major category of distraction involves the diversion of the vehicle operator's attention from the roadway corridor, and thus there has long been concern from researchers and administrators over outdoor advertising, which by design seeks to attract that focus as effectively as possible. A number of communities are grappling with the implications and impacts of electronic billboards, which due to technological advancements and price reductions are only recently becoming more prolific. Such installations present a more intense source of distraction because of the brightness and animation of the displays, as well as their prominence in nighttime and low-light conditions.



New research from the University of Alberta published in the February 2013 edition of the Journal "Accident Analysis and Prevention" has concluded that, in an addition to the advertising medium, the message itself may also be distracting – evoking an emotional response within the driver that can modulate attention, affect decision making abilities, and adversely impact driving behavior.

Due to the cutting-edge nature of this issue, there have been a number of studies completed in recent years, sometimes with conflicting findings, and others in various states of progress. It is difficult for a small municipality to remain current with the literature and with emerging apparatus conventions, particularly since "best practice" standards and administrative oversight policies have not yet emerged at a national level.

It is noteworthy that it will also be politically difficult for a smaller entity such as the City of Prince Albert to universally adopt minimum specifications, luminosity criteria, and placement restrictions that are more stringent than other similar communities, particularly the larger centers of Saskatoon and Regina. Standardization is thus key to asserting order and control within the urban right-of-way corridor (and the transitional boundaries beyond it), and this regulation should be enacted before the haphazard and virtually unrestrained placement practices in effect across the province become so ubiquitous that this issue will be impossible to control.

City of Prince Albert would thus very much like to see the Government of Saskatchewan analyze this issue and develop a basic framework which addresses acceptability parameters such as, but not limited to: brightness; animation; text and font; acceptable and non-provocative content; flashing and effulgence; frame rate and image transition; offset distance from roadway lanes; screen height, size, shape and angle of orientation;



and spacing / density. City Councils could then use these benchmarks to assist in evaluating the applications that they receive for new devices, or for the conversion of existing fixtures.

### 3. Cyclist Safety and the Mandatory Use of Bike Helmets

The issue of Cyclist safety, and the corollary debate related to mandatory use of bike helmets, is in itself not new; however the subject appears to be re-gaining prominence as health agencies develop targeted child fitness programs, fuel prices rise, and environmental concerns become more prevalent in the population. Combined, these factors appear to be reversing a long-term decline of cycling activities within our community. Anecdotally, this trend appears to be reflected in other cities, and it is presumed to be of provincial significance.

In Canada, Saskatchewan is one of only a few provinces that have not enacted legal restrictions related to bike helmets (the other provinces, which are not generally esteemed for groundbreaking policy development, include Quebec, Newfoundland, and the three territories).

According to ThinkFirst, a national non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of brain and spinal cord injuries, helmets are effective for cyclists of all ages and for all types of crashes. When worn properly, helmets reduce risks for brain injury by 88%.

British Columbia became the first jurisdiction in North America to enact an all-encompassing helmet law in 1996, and studies from Canada's Traffic Injury Research Foundation indicated that helmet use increased 50% after enactment (with 7 out of 10

cyclists complying with the measure soon after implementation). Alberta and Ontario have laws protecting cyclists under the age of 18, and helmet use is Mandatory in all of Atlantic Canada, except for Newfoundland.

Of arguably the most significant, however, is Manitoba, which just enacted on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 new legislation making cycling helmets compulsory for all cyclists, passengers, or towed persons under the age of 18. The Manitoba model is based on education and is not meant to be a punishment – people receiving their first contravention citation [parents and guardians are deemed to be responsible for ensuring children wear bicycle helmets] can have the fines waived completely after completing a bike helmet safety course.

There is clear precedent and good timing to follow our neighboring province now, and it would be prudent to move on this topic while there is strong momentum for this endeavor. As with the other discussion items, leadership and consistency at the provincial level is essential to ensure that this undertaking is a success.

In conclusion, the City of Prince Albert has identified a number of issues related to road safety where pioneering provincial policy and regulations would provide profound benefit at the local level, and can be expected to prevent accidents, injuries, and fatalities on a go-forward basis. Public Works strongly encourages the Special Committee on Traffic Safety to act decisively and firmly on these topics, and is prepared to support and champion the ensuing measures in any way that we can to develop a new and effective prevention program.

Please contact the undersigned if you have any questions, or require any further information.

Yours truly,

 05/06/2013

Scott Golding

**Manager of Capital Planning and Strategic Services**