

Think and Drive Article |

Think and Drive road safety campaign aiming to make Niagara region's roads safer

The Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee (RNRSC) launched *Think and Drive*, a region-wide, 15-month road safety campaign in October 2007. With support from the *Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO)*, Think and Drive is targeting drivers and road users who live and work throughout all of the 12 area municipalities of Niagara Region.

The campaign's goals are: (1) to increase awareness about the Niagara region's high crash-rate problem; (2) to increase knowledge about road safety skills; and (3) to change driver attitudes and behaviours in order to reduce fatal and serious motor vehicle collisions (MVCs).

"Niagara region has one of highest number of fatal and serious injury MVCs per capita as compared to other cities and regions in Ontario," says Niagara Regional Police Service Chief Wendy Southall.

"Having safe roads throughout the Niagara community is in everyone's best interest – drivers, passengers and pedestrians alike. It is critical that we raise awareness of the serious collision situation in Niagara and really encourage safe driving practices."

Education is key to the Think and Drive road safety campaign – particularly educating drivers about the three main MVC risk factors: speeding, impairment, and distracted driving. At the centre of the campaign is an information-rich website – www.thinkanddrive.net – and the *Niagara Road Safety Challenge* that invites drivers to evaluate their own personal driving behavior relating to these three issues.

"Our campaign ads and communication resources are beginning to appear throughout Niagara – in local media, on transit, in utility bills and in many of our partners' offices," explains Committee chair Linda Beyer. "The Niagara Regional Police Service, one of the campaign's key partners, will be using Think and Drive flyers and key chains in its RIDE program this year. The main objective is to get people to stop and think about what they're doing before and while they're behind the wheel."

To ensure the campaign reaches the largest possible audience, Think and Drive has also launched a *Facebook Group* (www.facebook.com – *Think and Drive Niagara*), to provide residents of Niagara with a forum for voicing their road safety concerns and experiences.

"One of primary audiences is males between the ages of 16 and 40," says Linda Beyer. "Social media is one of the most effective means of getting our message out to this group, among others. And our membership on Facebook is growing by the day. It is truly exciting and encouraging to see the high level of interest in road safety throughout the Niagara community."

The RNRSC partner agencies include CAA Niagara, Niagara Regional Police Service, Niagara Region Public Health Department, and Niagara Region Public Works Department, MTO and the 12 municipalities of Niagara Region.



Motor Vehicle Collisions | Top 3 Primary Causes — Niagara Region

Total Number of Serious and Fatal Collisions by Year, excluding Niagara regional highway data

| Year | Speed | Driver Error | Impairment | Combined | Total Collisions (all causes) |
|------|-------|--------------|------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| 1999 | 2 | 33 | 20 | 55 | 68 |
| 2000 | 5 | 35 | 21 | 61 | 77 |
| 2001 | 6 | 24 | 12 | 42 | 57 |
| 2002 | 5 | 17 | 12 | 34 | 62 |
| 2003 | 11 | 15 | 22 | 48 | 54 |
| 2004 | 13 | 16 | 21 | 50 | 70 |
| 2005 | 18 | 17 | 23 | 58 | 67 |

SOURCE: Niagara Regional Police Service

Fatal and Serious Injury Collisions — Per Capita for Ontario Cities/Regions (2004)

| Region | Population (000s) | Fatal | Serious Injury | Total | Per Capita |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Durham | 572 | 29 | 46 | 75 | 0.13 |
| Halton | 380 | 13 | 18 | 31 | 0.08 |
| Hamilton | 503 | 17 | 15 | 32 | 0.06 |
| London | 337 | 12 | 8 | 20 | 0.06 |
| Niagara | 431 | 30 | 40 | 70 | 0.16 |
| Ottawa | 774 | 31 | 47 | 78 | 0.10 |
| Peel | 989 | 26 | 15 | 41 | 0.04 |
| Waterloo | 498 | 16 | 23 | 39 | 0.08 |
| Windsor | 210 | 12 | 8 | 20 | 0.10 |
| York | 759 | 39 | 48 | 87 | 0.11 |

SOURCE: Niagara Regional Police Service