



For Immediate Release

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CAA Offers Cautious Support to New Brunswick Distracted Driving Legislation

The Province of New Brunswick has tabled new legislation dealing with Distracted Driving. CAA (Atlantic) has offered cautious support of this legislation. "This legislation represents a very positive step forward in dealing with the growing dangers of Distracted Driving", comments Gary Howard, spokesperson for CAA in Atlantic Canada. "If adopted this legislation will represent one of the more advanced programs in Canada and certainly a leader in Atlantic Canada".

The NB legislation would prohibit the use of any hand-held communications device and permit only voice-activated hands-free use of these devices. "This legislation is not unlike the legislation recently introduced in the province of BC, a government which clearly recognizes the dangers of all forms of distracted driving" said Howard. "It goes further than other provinces in recognizing that even hands-free use of devices must be treated with care and caution".

Both CAA and the NB Government have agreed that legislation and enforcement will only deal with the issue of Distracted Driving to a degree. What is equally important is public education and discussion around the issue to a point where the public comes to truly understand the dangers and acts accordingly. "Legislation alone will not solve the issue. Enforcement along with public awareness and education are required, as well as a change in how we as a society view the habit," said Mr. Howard. "It is a matter of our society making the practice of use of communications devices while driving socially unacceptable."

Evidence from a convergence of research has shown that driver distraction, of all types, is associated with approximately 25 per cent of crashes and results in a significant cost to society in terms of tragic loss of life, serious injuries and resulting monetary costs. Over 80% of all motor vehicle accidents can be voided with one more second in reaction time. "Even a moment's distraction can be dangerous. A second or two may not seem like much, but at 50 km/hr a vehicle travels 14 meters in one second. A moment's inattention could ruin your life, and the life of many others," Howard said.

In both simulated and real driving environments, the use of electronic devices has been shown to result in crashes and near misses. Drivers fail to process approximately 50 per cent of the visual information in their driving environment when they are using electronic communication devices. Evidence also concludes that there is no difference between the cognitive diversion associated with hands-free and hand-held cell phone use. E-mailing, text messaging, manipulating electronic devices and reading information on them are also behaviours at the end of the spectrum of activities that result in significant cognitive and visual distraction and that contribute to crashes.

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