



Peel Regional Police
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The Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators
Police Partnership Award

“Police Vehicle Conspicuity Enhancements - The Blue Light Initiative”
Constable Ken Wright, # 946
Constable Gary Carty, # 896

Submission prepared by: Inspector M. Grodzinski, # 834

This nomination is supported and endorsed by
H.M. Metcalf, Chief of Police

NOMINATION OUTLINE

“Police Vehicle Conspicuity Enhancements - The Blue Light Initiative,” was spearheaded by Constables Ken Wright and Gary Carty, of the Peel Regional Police in Brampton, Ontario.

In 2005 Constable Wright was selected as a member of an internal committee tasked with replacing the aging roof lights on the service’s fleet of over 300 cruisers.

In January of 2006 Constable Wright, a police officer with 26 years experience, teamed up with Constable Gary Carty, also a 26 year veteran with Peel Regional Police. Both officers are experts in motor vehicle collision reconstruction and have spent many years in the Service’s Major Collision Bureau. The Blue Light Initiative originated from the extensive research undertaken by Constables Wright and Carty into issues surrounding police vehicle collision reduction and prevention, including the role of police vehicle markings and emergency lighting in enhancing the visibility (or conspicuity) of police vehicles.

Constable Wright, assisted by Constable Carty, examined many studies and reports on complex scientific issues relating to flashing lights and light colour assignment from experts in fields of; human factors, psychology, and vision and optics. Fellow police officers, road safety engineers, and vehicle and light bar manufacturers were also consulted and their input was solicited.

All provinces in Canada and all states in the United States were canvassed for information in order to better understand how light colour was being assigned to specific road tasks. Lighting experts provided information and research into the importance of flashing light patterns and rates, and the role of light colour assignment in road safety.

The research into light colour assignment identified several realities concerning police vehicle conspicuity. First, a police officer is 49 % more likely to be injured or killed in a motor vehicle collision than by any other means. Second, a police officer drives 10 times as often as the average motorist during the day, 20 times more often at night and is 1000 times more likely to be stopped in a live lane of traffic than the average motorist. Third, the human eye reacts to coloured light differently during the day than at night. There is an enhanced conspicuity or awareness to blue light at night time and red light during the day. Finally, Ontario was the only jurisdiction in North America that restricted the use of blue lights away from police vehicles.

This research was compiled into a multi-media presentation. The goal of this presentation was twofold; first to bring the issue of police vehicle traffic safety to the attention of policing professionals and government within the Province of Ontario, and second to lobby the Provincial Government to amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow police vehicles to add blue roof lights to their emergency lighting equipment to enhance the police vehicle’s conspicuity and ultimately reduce police involved motor vehicle collisions. A reduction in police involved collisions will have a positive effect on road safety in Ontario – as police involved collisions usually involve other motorists on the roadway.

During the 16 month period between February 2006, and May, 2007, the “Blue Light Initiative” was presented by Constables Wright and Carty on 15 occasions. The initial

presentation was made to the Peel Regional Police Chief's Management Group. This initiative, which sought to change the light colour assignment from exclusively red and white to now include blue lighting, was endorsed by Chief Metcalf. A subsequent presentation to the Regional Municipality of Peel Police Services Board resulted in the Board's full endorsement.

Both officers continued externally, presenting to various committees within the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, including the Police Cooperative Purchasing Group, the Traffic Sub-Committee, and eventually presented to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Board of Directors.

The Blue Light Initiative was presented twice within the Ministry of Transportation, once to the Safety, Policy and Education Branch, and then to the Joint Provincial Highway and Policy Directors' Committee. It was also presented twice to the Ontario Traffic Conference, once to the Legislation and Enforcement committee, and then to the Engineering Committee.

Any proposed legislative change that affects policing in Ontario must also be considered by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Policing Services Division. The "Blue Light Initiative" was presented to the Policing Standards Advisory Committee. A working group that included Constables Wright and Carty was struck and the initiative was supported by the Ministry.

Other presentations included, and support was received from, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ministry of Health, Occupational Health and Safety Committee, and the Office of the Chief Coroner.

The "Blue Light Initiative" was immediately and whole heartedly embraced not only by the police and law making community. Through presentations by the two officers the initiative gained the consensus of a number of committees and organizations in Ontario, such as the Ontario Good Roads Association which represents winter maintenance vehicle operators, and the Council of Driver Trainers of Ontario.

On April 12, 2007, the Minister of Transportation for Ontario, the Honourable Donna Cansfield, introduced Bill 203 to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The Bill, called the '*Safer Roads for a Safer Ontario Act*,' included the amendments to the Highway Traffic Act which would be necessary to achieve the goal of the "Blue Light Initiative" that all police vehicles in Ontario display a combination of red and blue emergency lights.

Bill 203 received swift passage in the Legislature, was considered by a provincial government Standing Committee, and on June 4, 2007, received Royal Assent, thereby enacting into law the amendments proposed by the "Blue Light Initiative."

Previous campaigns seeking blue lights had been launched by other police officers over the years but none had garnered the level of support and attention of Constable Wright and Constable Carty's presentation, nor had they been successful in implementing a change. Not only did the "Blue Light Initiative" influence policing across the Province and accomplish its mission, the dedication and professionalism of Constables Wright and Carty reiterated the leadership role of the Peel Regional Police in Ontario.

Immediately following Royal Assent the Peel Regional Police introduced Ontario drivers to the combination of red and blue lights. Since June the transition to red and blue by other police services has been steady, including the Ontario Provincial Police, Toronto Police, Hamilton Police, Niagara Police, Peterborough Lakefield Police, North Bay Police, Halton Regional Police, London Police, and Barrie Police with the majority of the remaining police services in Ontario in the transition process.

The legislative changes, as written, provide the option to add blue light to the colour scheme of police vehicle lighting in Ontario. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Policing Services Division, Policing Standards Advisory Committee, is considering mandating red and blue emergency lights on all marked police vehicles in Ontario.

The addition of the colour blue to police emergency lights will increase the visibility of police vehicles in Ontario, particularly those stopped at the side of the road at night during traffic stops, and it will increase police officer and public safety.

The amendments to the Highway Traffic Act that are now in effect because of the hard work of Constable Wright and Constable Carty and the "Blue Light Initiative," will prevent collisions, reduce injuries, and save lives.

Since the inception of the "Blue Light Initiative," and in addition to other Police Traffic Safety initiatives undertaken by Peel Regional Police, we have realized a reduction of 52 collisions or 23 %. This is the first year in our history that we have seen such a dramatic reduction in police involved collisions.

The efforts of Constables Wright and Carty have, no doubt, contributed to overall road safety in Ontario. This commitment to road-safety and the reduction in police-involved traffic collisions has a positive effect on all motorists in the Province. Many of these collisions involved other non-police road users. The benefits to the community extend to enhancing road-safety to all users.

Award recipient on behalf of the Peel Regional Police will be:

Constable Kenneth Wright # 946
Constable Gary Carty # 896 (alternate)