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Niagara Regional Police Service

Chief of Police Wendy E. Southall

Application for the 2010 CCMTA –Police Partnership Award

February 28, 2011

Endorsement by:  A/Supt. Richard Coulis

Representative who would accept award: Chief Wendy E. Southall

Overview

The Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee (RNRSC) has shared responsibility and worked collaboratively since 2004 to improve the well-being of Niagara road users by reducing motor vehicle collision (MVC) related injury and death on Niagara roadways. This application provides an overview of the collaborative work of the RNRSC, the impacts of our local work to date and our contribution to Canada's Road Safety Vision of having the safest roads in the world.

Regional Niagara Road Safety Committee (RNRSC) Strategic Partnership

Background

The RNRSC was formed as a result of community consultations and a stakeholder forum held by the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS) in 2003 to address the perceived public outcry over a dramatic increase in the number of serious MVCs occurring on Niagara roads.

RNRSC members include CAA Niagara, Niagara Emergency Medical Services (NEMS), Niagara Parks Police (NPP), NRPS, Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH), Niagara Region Public Works (NRPW), Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO), and Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). As a committee, we focus on road safety initiatives that address the driver, the vehicle, and the driving environment with an emphasis on community partnerships and effectively sharing road safety related information.

In 2004, MVCs caused 43% of all transport related injury deaths in Ontario. At that time local data indicated that the Niagara region had one of the highest numbers of fatal and serious injury MVCs per capita compared to other Ontario regions. RNRSC analysis of this NRPS MVC data collected from 1999 to 2003 indicated that speed, impairment, and driver error were the most common contributing factors involved in serious and fatal MVCs. (See: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/roads/pdf/Motor%20Vehicle%20Collision%20Data.pdf>). Most of these collisions occurred on rural roadways and involved male drivers aged 16 to 40 years. Analysis of NRPS MVC data collected from 1998 to 2007 indicated results that paralleled the baseline data.



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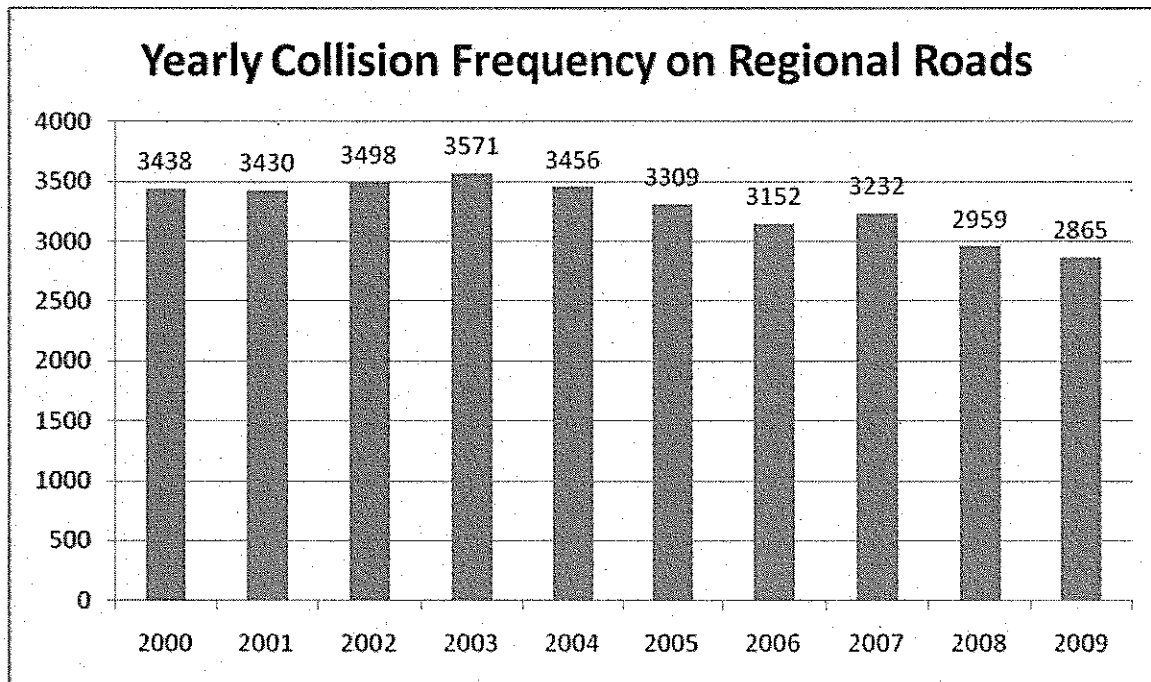
Between 2000 and 2008, there was an average of 3340 reportable MVCs annually on Niagara regional roadways. These MVCs consisted of an average of 15.7 fatal MVCs, 674 personal injury MVCs, and 2626 Property damage only MVCs per year. The estimated annual social cost of these collisions; including direct and indirect costs is 323 million dollars per year.

The RNRSC originally developed a five-year (2004-2008) strategic plan focused on community partnerships and information sharing to reduce the number of fatal and serious injuries from MVCs by 10% (See: http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/roads/pdf/Strategic_plan.pdf). The current plan (2009-2013) aims to further reduce all reportable motor vehicle collisions and lessen the burden of these preventable injuries on individuals, families and the Niagara community.

Impact of our RNRSC Partnership

Since our formation, the RNRSC partnerships and collaborative approach have contributed to an over 12% reduction in reportable MVC on Niagara regional roadways.

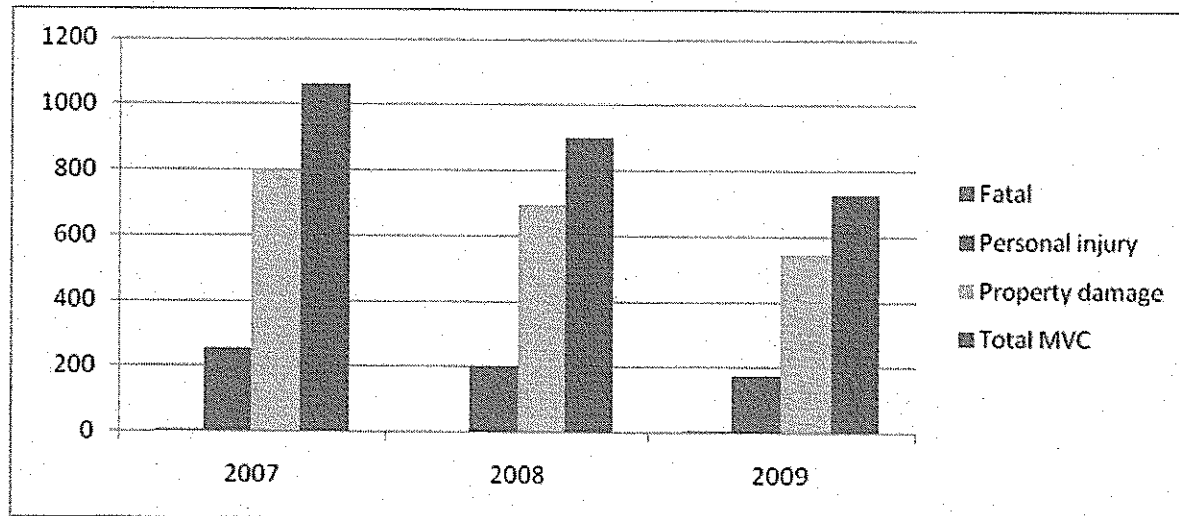
From 2000 to 2004 there was a baseline average of 3,480 reportable MVC on Niagara regional roadways annually. Had nothing been done to address this trend, a steady increase in the number of reportable MVCs per year was forecasted. Since the collaborative work of the RNRSC began, there has been a 12% decrease in the number of reportable MVC on regional roads (an average of 3071 reportable MVC from 2005 to 2009).



Reductions in the number of MVCs on regional and municipal roads alone equates to a minimum annual savings in social cost of \$3.272 million dollars, including costs related to property damage, emergency response, hospital and medical care, insurance, traffic delays and costs related to human consequences such as victim disability, workdays lost and pain and suffering of victims and their families. Additional savings not part of this estimated include decreased demand on related Public Works staff savings, reduced hospital

emergency off-load delays and improved health and well being of those who were not affected as a result of improvements.

Reportable MVC on Niagara OPP jurisdiction roadways (2007 to 2009) have also shown significant decreases due to the traffic enforcement efforts of our OPP partners as indicated below.



Reportable MVC on Niagara OPP Jurisdiction Roadways 2007-2009

Our current plan (2009 to 2013) is focused on reducing all reportable MVCs on Niagara roadways by implementing a safety network screening management system to move us to a higher level of data analysis sophistication to better inform the engineering, enforcement and health education practices of all RNRSC partner agencies.

Innovation

National statistics show that 85% of motor vehicle collisions are a result of driver error - Niagara is no different. The RNRSC created a unique Niagara-focused "Think and Drive" community-based communication and enforcement campaign. Think and Drive was developed to reach the driver and influence drivers by: raising awareness about the road safety problem in Niagara, educating drivers about how they can make a difference, influencing driver attitudes to ultimately change driving behaviour and thereby reducing the Niagara crash problem.

Think and Drive was based on local NRPS MVC data such that it addressed the key areas causing serious collisions on Niagara roads: speed, impairment, driver inattention and rural roads. It employed best practice evidence of successful community-based road safety communication campaigns – combining educational media campaigns with enforcement. It was targeted primarily to male drivers aged 16 to 40 years and secondarily to all Niagara drivers.

A comprehensive approach was used throughout the campaign including: education and awareness raising through marketing and communications and media events; skill building whereby community partners spread road safety messages on our behalf through presentations, events, meetings, resource distribution, newsletters, publications, website links, etc.; environmental supports through enforcement initiatives by

the Niagara Regional Police Service Special Enforcement Unit and consistent messaging from all RNRSC partners; policy development through support of Provincial Highway Traffic Act (HTA) legislation and a focus on sustaining Think and Drive beyond the 15-month campaign by aligning with local road safety groups (i.e. Safe Communities, local road safety task forces, OSAID, MADD) and through sustainable resources such as the Think and Drive website www.thinkanddrive.net, "Think and Drive Niagara" Facebook group, road signs, decals on trucks, regional vehicles, Road Watch programs in area municipalities and ongoing resource distribution and community support.

Think and Drive achieved its objectives as shown in the evaluation summary at:
<http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/roads/Pdf/TD-SummaryFinal.pdf>

Capacity and RNRSC Partner Contributions

The significant reduction in reportable MVCs on Niagara roadways is an outcome of the RNRSC comprehensive road safety strategy, information sharing among partner agencies, and contributions of individual and joint RNRSC partner agency programs. These contributions are combined with external policy supports through enhancements in traffic legislation, safety improvements in automobile manufacturing and improved emergency response times.

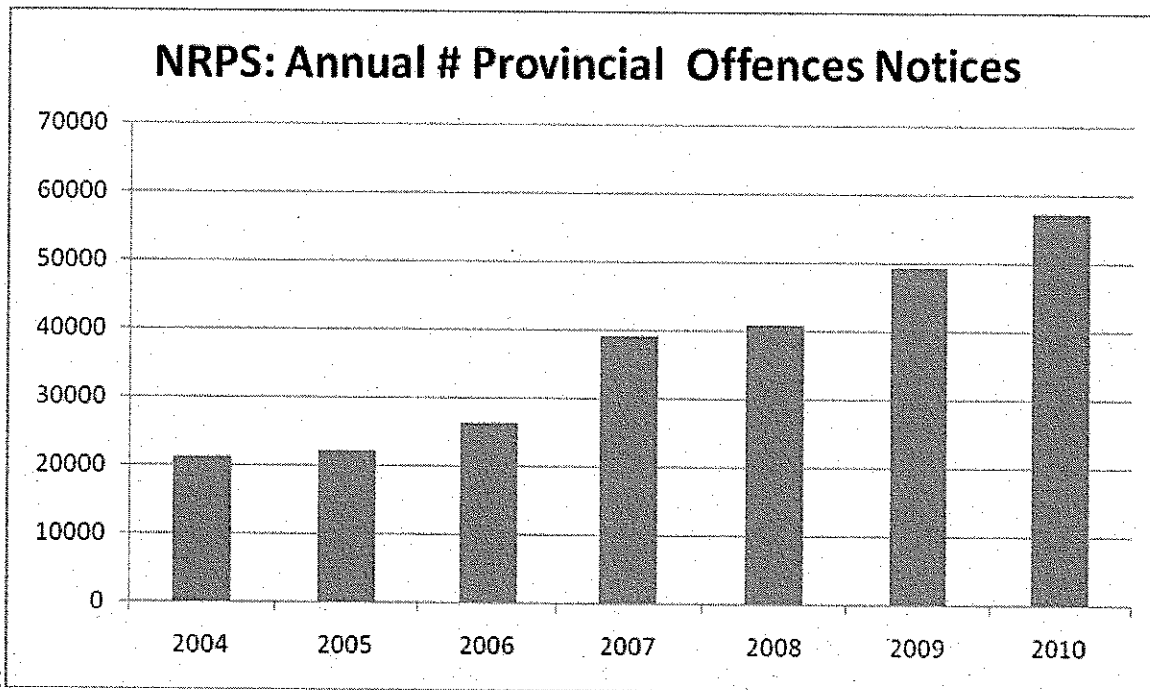
The RNRSC's Think and Drive campaign, led by NPRH increased awareness of Niagara's driving issues in 48% of Niagara respondents, over one third of Niagara drivers were aware of the campaign, and 37% indicated they intended to change their driving behaviour as a result of the campaign.

Think and Drive is a signature education program of the RNRSC that continues to be sustained throughout Niagara. Additional joint educational programs include mock crash events, community and school road safety programs, mock crashes, and media coverage of MVC countermeasures. Think and Drive helped shift the thinking of Niagara drivers to understand their behaviour is part of the solution to safer roads and enhanced community readiness for other RNRSC safety initiatives.

NRPW Transportation Services have been encoding collisions for both regional and municipal roadways since January 2009 in order to have better statistics for all collisions across the Niagara region. Having data for municipal roadways as well as regional roadways results in greater analysis of collision data and will inform the efforts of all RNRSC partners in the years to come.

NRPW Transportation Services also undertakes Road Safety Operational Reviews at strategic locations based on collision experience, which results in short and long-term recommendations to improve road safety and reduce potential collisions.

NRPS, OPP and NPP traffic management and enforcement programs include yearly increases in Provincial Offences Notices issued, ongoing yearly increases in spot-checks for drivers who had been drinking through enhanced R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) and NRPS coordinated Festive Season R.I.D.E. involving six law enforcement agencies, vehicle safety inspections and educational programs. An indication of the commitment to traffic enforcement by the NRPS is demonstrated by the annual increases in the annual number of Provincial Offences Notices (PONs)



The Ontario Ministry of Transportation's movement toward tougher sanctions for impaired driving and street racing, enhancements in graduated licensing, improved child car seat and school bus safety laws, and hands-free legislation has supported the ongoing efforts of the RNRSC to make Niagara's roads safer.

CAA assists in MVC reduction by providing road safety information and programs to its members in over 75,000 Niagara homes and through ongoing advocacy for Ontario motorists.

NEMS consistent emergency response times to Niagara collisions continues to assist with the survivability of those involved in serious MVCS.

Benefits of the RNRSC related to CCMTA's Road Safety Vision 2010

The RNRSC partners each represent one component of a comprehensive "4E" injury prevention approach to road safety: education / evaluation; NRPH and NEMS, enforcement; NRPS, NPP, and OPP; engineering; NRPW, and encouragement / advocacy; CAA Niagara and MTO. We use a systems approach to road safety by addressing the vehicle, the driver, the driving environment.

Partner member initiatives that align with the Road Safety Vision 2010 include; annual seatbelt campaigns, R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) programs throughout the year and during the festive season, an emphasis on risky driving behaviours (speed, impairment and driver inattention) through enforcement and education programs, focus on rural road safety and high-risk drivers through the Think and Drive campaign, youth driver initiatives through educational "Drive Safe" programs within secondary and post-secondary schools, and "Back to School Day" throughout the Niagara community where over 100 NRPS officers are reassigned from regular duties to traffic enforcement, a young driver focus through a Youth Think and Drive project running in several Niagara secondary schools and supported by a special section on the Think and Drive website at <http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/roads/td-youth.aspx>, an intersection focus through our NRPW ongoing operational reviews to identify and improve priority locations.

The RNRSC's Continuous Commitment to Partnership

Our common mandates enable the RNRSC partner members to align our work and retain our commitment to the RNRSC partnership. Each of us have identified road safety as an ongoing agency priority as evidenced by the following examples:

- NRPS identified road safety as one of the four top priorities for their 2010 to 2012 business plan. Road safety and enforcement initiatives comprise a key goal to optimize public safety through community mobilization and engagement.
- NRPH has identified road safety as a Niagara priority. MVCs are the leading injury priority for those aged 15 to 59 years, and the second leading injury priority for those over 60 years old.
- The Niagara Region Council Business Plan (2007-2011), traffic safety is an overarching component in two of their five goals including; 1) Integrated Transportation System for Niagara including a NRPW Transportation Strategy and 2) Proactive Marketing and Communications of which our RNRSC Think and Drive program is an example.

The RNRSC partnership and their shared the responsibility for road safety in Niagara was recognized when they received the *2007 MTO Road Safety Achievement Award for Road Safety Partnerships* and the *2009 Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Traffic Safety Initiative of the Year Award (Services over 500)* for their Think and Drive initiative. Their commitment to community partnerships and effective sharing of road safety related information has led to successful cross-organizational road safety outcomes since their formation in 2004.

The RNRSC continues to build community capacity through grass-roots involvement of the road safety stakeholders across Niagara and Ontario who are committed to continuous road safety improvement. The RNRSC collaborates with provincial, regional and municipal governments and services, local media, business associations, employers, schools, community groups, individuals and other stakeholders to support, implement and promote safety on Niagara roadways.

Several Ontario Ministries have endorsed the RNRSC's comprehensive road safety strategy as a model for other road safety stakeholder as shown by; the Ontario Ministry of Transportation meeting facilitation for interested road safety groups across the province interested in adopting the Think and Drive campaign, the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport using the RNRSC road safety strategy as an example in the Ontario Public Health Guidance Documents; and the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion's illustration of the injury prevention health program planning. Regions throughout Ontario look to Niagara for advice on road safety partnerships.

The success of the RNRSC is a result of synergies created between the RNRSC members, data analysis informed joint practices, combined efforts, and shared road safety budgets and resources. We would not have been able to achieve this success without ongoing partnership and collaboration.