

November 10, 2010

Background: Speed Reduction in School Zones and Child Play areas

I write to request the support of you/your organization for an issue that will increase road safety for some of our most vulnerable members of society, that of our children and youth. In recent years, national and international authorities have recommended speed limits in schools zones and child play areas be reduced to 30 km/h. Active & Safe Routes to School of the Ecology Action Centre is asking that the Province, through the Motor Vehicle Act, make the required legislative and regulatory changes to allow this to happen.

The Ecology Action Centre brought this issue to the attention of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal in October of 2009. On November 9, 2010, the Minister replied, saying the Department is conducting a comprehensive review of school zone safety. Now is the time to show support for reducing speeds in school zones and child play areas. We are garnering support from individuals/organizations that would also like to see this change in the Legislation.

The World Health Organization and UNICEF in their World Report on Child Injury Prevention (2008) recommend reducing speeds to 30 km/h in residential areas and around schools and play areas to protect pedestrians.

According to research, an increase in speed on our roads increases the risk of injury to pedestrians. A pedestrian hit by a car going 50 km/h has an 80 percent chance of dying. When hit by a car going 30 km/h that chance drops to only five percent (*Speed Management: A Road Safety Manual for Decision-Makers and Practitioner, World Health Organization, Global Road Safety Partnership, 2008*). These speeds are actually conservative when compared with the actual speeds motorists drive. In residential areas (which are most often 50 km/h zones), drivers travel seven km above the speed limit on average (*Driver Attitude to Speeding Management: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study – Final Report, Transport Canada, 2007*). Research further shows that areas with a posted speed limit of 50 km/h have the highest number of child pedestrian injuries and deaths (*Transport Canada Road Safety's Traffic Accident Information Database, 2007*). Even more supporting research is compiled in Safe Kids Canada's Child Pedestrian Injuries Report 2007-2008. The Child- and Youth-friendly Land-use and Transport Planning Guidelines for Nova Scotia also supports this move in its Guideline 18, which states, "Post and enforce much lower speed limits, particularly in urban areas."

There is sufficient research from reliable national and international sources to support the need for reduced speeds. Slowing down saves lives. No further research is required; action in changing our legislation and regulations is the next step.

Speeding is one of the top complaints received by elected officials and police throughout Nova Scotia. In 2005 and 2006, Active & Safe Routes to School of the Ecology Action Centre conducted research into the barriers to using active transportation to school. We found speeding on our streets was one of the top three barriers to parents allowing their children to walk or wheel to school.

Currently in Nova Scotia, the school zone speed limit is 50 km/h. We propose reducing the speed to 30 km/h only in areas where the speed limit is already 50 km/h. We are *not* proposing this change for areas where the regular speed limit is more than 50 km/h.

The Motor Vehicle Acts in other provinces allow for 30 km/h in school zones. This idea is not new and these provinces show it can also be done here in Nova Scotia.

Changing speeds in school zones and child play areas (and the resulting change to legislation and regulations of the Motor Vehicle Act) would strengthen and support many of the Province's priorities including that of:

- Increasing physical activity of our children and youth as laid out in the **Active Kids Healthy Kids Initiative** by making it safer for them to walk and wheel in their communities;
- Increasing safety for vulnerable road users – especially child and youth pedestrians – as described in the **Crosswalk Safety Task Force Final Report** and in the developing **Nova Scotia Road Safety Strategy**; and
- Increasing sustainable transportation in accordance with the **Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act** and the **Climate Change Action Plan** by promoting safe active transportation in communities.

Please back this move to change the Motor Vehicle Act to reduce speeds in school zones and child play areas. I ask that individuals call, write a letter to or email their MLAs as well as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal and ask for this change. Find your MLA's contact information at <http://electionsnovascotia.ns.ca/edf/edf.aspx>. Find the contact information for Bill Estabrooks, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, at http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/people/members/Bill_Estabrooks/. I ask that organizations write letters of support directly to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

Please send letters by March 31. Do let us know if you support speed reductions in school zones and child play areas and we will add your organization's name to a list of supporters for this change, which will be made public through means such as our website, a news release, etc. Please do so also by March 31. Thank you.

If you have any questions or concerns, I would be happy to discuss this issue with you. Please contact me at (902) 442-5055 or asrts@ecologyaction.ca.

Sincerely,



Janet Barlow,
Active & Safe Routes to School Coordinator, Ecology Action Centre

Optional Template:
Letter to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

[insert this template on your organization letterhead]

[insert date]

Honourable Bill Estabrooks
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal
P.O. Box 186
Johnston Building, 1672 Granville St.
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2N2
tirmin@gov.ns.ca

Dear Minister Estabrooks,

I write on behalf of *[insert your organization name]* to support a move to reduce speeds in school zones and child play areas to 30 km/h from the current 50 km/h (only in areas where the speed limit is already 50 km/hr). Such a move will increase safety for some of our most vulnerable members of society, that of children and youth.

The *[insert your organization name]* has a mandate of *[insert your mandate and explain how it connects to the issue of speed reduction in schools zones and child play areas]*

The World Health Organization and UNICEF in their World Report on Child Injury Prevention (2008) recommend reducing speeds to 30 km/h in residential areas and around schools and play areas to protect pedestrians. Our organization supports this recommendation.

[insert other supporting information here as you see fit]

Please seriously consider changing the Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act to reduce speeds in school zones and child play areas. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[insert your signature]

[insert your printed name, title and organization]