

For Information Only

Community Safety Zones

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Recommendation

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Background

On September 1, 1998, the Highway Traffic Act was amended to permit municipalities to establish Community Safety Zones by By-law on public roads under their jurisdiction.

Community Safety Zones are intended to be established in areas of special concern, which may include schools, day care centres, playgrounds, parks, hospitals, senior citizens residences and may also be used for collision-prone areas within a community. Traffic related offences committed within a Community Safety Zone are subject to increased fines. Many set fines are doubled, such as speeding and traffic related offences. Parking related infractions are not subject to increased penalties, and demerit points of offenders are not increased.

The Provincial legislation does not specify limits on the size of a Community Safety Zone, only that the designation applies to parts of a roadway. The designation of the entire municipality is not an intended application of the Community Safety Zone concept.

In 1998, meetings were held between representatives from the former Regional Municipality of Sudbury and lower tier municipalities to discuss the implementation of Community Safety Zones. The following concerns were raised at the meetings:

- Community Safety Zones will not increase driver's level of adherence to existing legislation.
- Community Safety Zones without a high level of enforcement will have little or no effect in increasing safety within zones.
- Provincial legislation prohibits the designation of either large areas or entire municipalities as Community Safety Zones.

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Division Review

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- That the creation of Community Safety Zones will place additional public pressures and expectations on the Police for increased enforcement without the additional resources to target these areas.
- That to be effective, criteria for the implementation of Community Safety Zones be limited to a narrow choice of localized locations.
- That the implementation of Community Safety Zones be implemented with an effective publicity campaign to inform motorists of this new initiative.
- The implementation of Community Safety Zones will be at a substantial cost to the taxpayers.

This legislation falls under the jurisdiction/authority of the Highway Traffic Act. Therefore, four information/notification signs must be installed on both sides of the road because the signs must be bilingual. Motorists are informed that they are entering a Community Safety Zone through the required regulatory sign. As motorists enter the established zone, the sign will display a “Begins” tab posted beneath; as they exit the zone the sign will display an “Ends” tab.

In 1998, 305 local school and park areas were considered for designation as Community Safety Zones, which would have required the manufacture and installation of over 2,500 signs. The estimated cost for this number of signs in 2012 is over \$500,000.

Due to the concerns outlined above and the significant costs, Community Safety Zones were not implemented in the former Region and municipalities.

Experience of Other Municipalities

The City of Hamilton, City of Ottawa, and City of Toronto have found Community Safety Zones generally ineffective in changing driver behaviour and as a result are no longer implementing them.

York Region has five Community Safety Zones, approved prior to 2005. York Region recently recommended against a blanket assessment of all school areas to York Region’s established warrants for Community Safety Zones.

The City of Kingston has undertaken extensive speed studies and research in Community Safety Zones, and has determined that signage alone is not an effective traffic calming measure. The City of Kingston states that without constant and aggressive enforcement by police, motorists continue to drive at the speed that they are comfortable with, despite the regulatory signage. For these reasons, the City of Kingston’s Engineering Division does not recommend the installation of any new Community Safety Zones or reduced speed limit areas other than in school zones.

The City of Mississauga installed six Community Safety Zones in May 1999, and to date only four have been retained.

The City of Niagara Falls recently approved the installation of their first Community Safety Zone. The area was chosen because of multiple significant pedestrian generators directly abutting the roads. Speed control devices were not recommended as an alternative at this location as both roads are classified as arterial roads, and speed control devices, such as speed tables or humps, are not appropriate for arterial roads.

Conclusion

The vast majority of municipalities are not approving additional Community Safety Zones as the concerns raised by Staff in 1998 have been realized in practise. These municipalities are generally recommending increased police enforcement in areas of concern.