

## Ontario introduces proposed changes to HTA

On Monday March 17, the Ontario Government introduced a number of proposed legislative and supporting regulatory amendments to the Highway Traffic Act as follows:

- Increasing the fine range from \$60 - \$500 to \$300 - \$1,000 for distracted driving
- Assigning three demerit points upon conviction of a distracted driving offence
- Making a distracted driving conviction a contravention of one of the licence conditions placed on novice drivers within the Graduated Licensing System
- Requiring drivers to yield the whole roadway to pedestrians at school crossings and pedestrian crossovers (not just the half of the roadway the pedestrian is occupying)
- Allowing cyclists to use the paved shoulders on unrestricted provincial highways to promote safer opportunities to cycle
- Increasing the fine range for convictions of “dooring” of cyclists from \$60 - \$500 to \$300 - \$1,000 and raising the demerit points from two to three
- Requiring all drivers to maintain a distance of one metre when passing cyclists
- Increasing the maximum fine from \$20 to a set fine amount that falls in the range of \$60 - \$500 for not using required bicycle lights and other reflectors/reflective material; and permit the use of flashing red lights as a safety feature on bicycles
- Requiring all drivers who repeatedly drive with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) exceeding any of the thresholds in the Highway Traffic Act to complete an alcohol education program followed by an alcohol treatment and monitoring program
- Clarify what medical conditions must be reported and allow additional medical professionals to report drivers with medical conditions that may make them unsafe drivers
- Allow B-train double trailer combinations to be extended from 25 metres to 27.5 metres to accommodate new technologies required to meet air quality and greenhouse gas emissions standards and include more comfortable sleep berths for drivers
- Expand the current '**Slow Down, Move Over**' requirement for motorists beyond only emergency vehicles with red or red and blue flashing lights to include tow trucks that are stopped and responding to roadside accidents and emergencies while their amber flashing lights are activated
- Allow the Motor Vehicle Inspection Station Program (MVIS) to move to a contractual model and enable the procurement of a third-party contract administrator. (*See next article below*)
- To address ambiguous wording and close the current enforcement loophole, require that only “school buses” can be painted school bus (chrome) yellow

Of course, these proposed changes must proceed through the legislative approvals process before becoming law, and with a spring provincial election being a strong likelihood, it remains to be seen if and when all or any of the above proposed changes will become law.