

## **Drive to Stay Alive**

### **A Road Safety Initiative in the Region of Waterloo**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Road Safety Initiative in the Region of Waterloo**

In 1996 Transport Canada adopted its inaugural Road Safety Vision to make this country's roads the safest in the world. The vision was adopted by the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) and officially endorsed by all ministers of Transportation and Highway Safety throughout Canada. This vision was recently updated with the adoption of Canada's Road Safety Targets to 2010. It is believed that the inclusion of targets will garner broad buy-in from road safety stakeholders and the general public alike as well as provide Canada's road safety community with the impetus to achieve its vision of having the world's safest roads. The targets are directed at a reduction in the number of persons either killed or seriously injured in motor collisions<sup>1</sup>.

The Region of Waterloo, the local municipalities, and the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS) are concerned with road safety, and particularly with the increase in the number of collisions occurring in the area. More than 12,000 collisions occur annually on Regional and local roads, of which approximately 9,000 are of a reportable nature. Staff from the Region, the WRPS and the local municipalities has developed a traffic safety program to reduce the number of collisions and to address the targets established by Canada's Road Safety Vision.

A working group was established and it developed a vision statement, objectives, and sub-targets to achieve a reduction in the number of collisions on the region's roads.

The following specific sub-targets will be benchmarked against comparable 2000 to 2002 baseline data:

- a 5% decrease in the number of road users killed or injured in collisions involving a drinking driver;
- a 5% reduction in the number of road users killed or injured due to aggressive driving, including speeding;
- a 5% decrease in the number of road users killed or injured not wearing their seatbelts or using safety restraints; and
- a 5% decrease in the number of collisions involving drivers over the age of 55 that result in people being killed or injured.

In order to achieve these results an aggressive social marketing campaign was developed in partnership with the local media. This paper will outline the need for this initiative and present the campaign development process, including collision data, campaign messaging, focus group testing, and partner negotiations and advertising plan detail.

## **Drive to Stay Alive – A Road Safety Initiative in the Region of Waterloo**

### **Background**

Although considerable improvement has occurred on our roads over the past 3 decades travel on the road system can still be made much safer. Some of the notable milestones that have been adopted in Canada during the past 30 years, due to the efforts of the road safety community, include drinking and driving laws, mandatory seat belt laws, and new motor vehicle standards such as front occupant crash protection and daytime running lights. These road user and vehicle initiatives combined with jurisdictional road infrastructure improvements and less obvious factors such as improvements in the field of health care have contributed largely to a reduction of more than half the number of fatalities despite an almost doubling of vehicles on the road.

However, the level of road safety has recently stagnated and has even regressed in some areas. Driver attitudes have changed. Aggressive driving is becoming more prevalent. According to a National Highway Transportation Safety Administration survey in the United States on aggressive driving attitudes, more than 60 percent of drivers see unsafe driving by others as a major threat to themselves and their families. More than half admitted to driving aggressively on occasion.

To assist road safety professionals in making our roads safer, Transport Canada in 2001 adopted Canada's Road Safety Targets to 2010, which addressed such areas seat belt use, aggressive driving, intersection collisions, collisions in rural areas, collisions involving young drivers and vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists, and commercial motor vehicle safety. The national target calls for a 30% decrease in the average number of road users killed or seriously injured by 2010.

The general consensus among road safety professionals is that tough but achievable quantifiable targets are extremely useful devices that help elicit a broad buy-in from both politicians and the general population for the initiatives being developed. Idealistic goal statements or visions, which are sometimes regarded with cynicism, serve as flash points for actions to help raise awareness of the road safety issues and in the establishment of quantifiable targets to achieve goals.

To assist in meeting Transport Canada's goals and to address the issue of an increase in the number of collisions occurring on roads in the region, on both Regional and local roads, a working group consisting of technical and public relations staff from the Region, the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS), and the seven local municipalities with the Region of Waterloo was created to develop a road safety initiative. The goal of the working group was to develop realistic and achievable targets to reduce the number of collisions occurring on all roads in the region in order to elicit the necessary broad buy-in from both politicians and the general population.

## **Region of Waterloo**

In the Region of Waterloo there are approximately 9,000 reportable collisions annually. Over 1,800 of these collisions result in personal injury or death. Since 1998 there has been more than a 30% increase in the total number of collisions in the region per 1,000 population. In 1998 there were approximately 11.2 collisions per 1,000 population on Regional roads. In 2002 this rate increased to 14.9 collisions per 1,000 population.

Based on the cost of collisions identified by the Ministry of Transportation of the Province of Ontario<sup>2</sup> the 2002 factored societal cost of collisions in the Region was approximately \$408,000,000.

In 2002, Regional and WRPS staff undertook a detailed review of the collision history on Regional roads and was unable to identify any specific trend in the increase in collisions. It was determined that a joint effort between the engineering and enforcement communities was required to address the increase in collisions.

Effective traffic management is more complex than simply conducting enforcement. It involves the planned application of public education, engineering and targeted enforcement. As important as ongoing enforcement and engineering are to road safety, comprehensive public education campaigns that focus on injury prevention, collision reduction and behavioral modification are imperative.

Since 1999, the WRPS through the development of its annual “Traffic Management and Road Safety Plan” has recognized the importance of such enforcement and public awareness campaigns. The WRPS has been engaged in strategic, enforcement and public awareness campaigns targeting such driving behaviours as aggressive driving, impaired driving and seatbelt compliance.

Up until that time, the engineering community was only involved in the implementation of infrastructure and operational measures to address collisions which were occurring on roads in the region. The time had come for the engineering community to become involved in the public education and awareness component of traffic safety.

In the fall of 2002 the working group was established. The purpose of this group was to develop a social marketing campaign for the Region and area municipalities, including the police. The working group’s initial steps were to develop vision and goal statements and strategies to achieve the goals.

Vision Statement:

To achieve the safest roads in the Province of Ontario through education, enforcement and engineering.

## Goal Statement:

Reduce by 5% annually the number of road users killed or injured during the period January 2004 to December 2006.

## Strategies:

The working group established what were felt to be 4 realistic strategies to meet the vision and goal. These strategies are as follows:

- Reduce by 5% the number of people killed or injured as a result of drinking and driving;
- Reduce by 5% the number of people killed or injured as a result of aggressive driving including speeding;
- Reduce by 5% the number of people killed or injured not wearing their seatbelts or using safety restraints; and
- Reduce by 5% the number collisions involving drivers over the age of 55 that result in people injured or killed.

If the goals of the campaign are met societal savings of approximately \$20,000,000 will be attained.

## Political Support

The goals and strategies of the working group have been endorsed by Regional Council and the 7 local municipalities as well as the WRPS. In 2003, \$127,500 in funding was approved for this initiative. In 2004, it is hoped that \$160,000 will be provided by these agencies for this campaign.

## Social Marketing Campaign:

What is Social Marketing?

Social marketing is the art changing behaviour. How do you get someone to stop smoking? Or stop polluting the environment? Or wear their seat belt? Instead of selling a product, you are trying to break habits or encourage positive behaviour. Because of the very nature and difficulty of changing a person's behaviour, social marketing requires more finesse than traditional marketing campaigns. The principle concepts are:

- Result: What value or behavior do we want people to adopt?
- Strategy: What message will convince people to adopt this value or behavior?
- Hook: What will the target group have to give up? What rational, financial or emotional benefits are there to changing their behavior?

- Tactics: How and where will we promote our message?

In order to achieve the desired results, social marketing campaigns must convince people that there is a personal benefit to changing their behaviour. If the campaign is to be effective, you must understand the target audience and design strategies based on their wants and needs.

### **Identifying the target audience**

In order to identify your target audience you must first understand and research your issue thoroughly. The first thing we did was look at patterns and trends in order to better understand our target audiences and then determine effective timing and media for the campaign.

The following were our findings upon reviewing regional and national statistics:

- ◆ Friday has the highest traffic collision occurrences compared to other days of the week
- ◆ December has the highest traffic collision occurrences compared to other months
- ◆ Alcohol related collisions account for only 2.9% of all collisions -- down from previous years
- ◆ Most common hours of collisions: 3 pm - 6 pm
- ◆ Drivers between the ages of 20-34 are the most likely to speed or exhibit aggressive driving tendencies

Upon completing the research, and through discussion with the police and members of our working group, it became apparent that we needed to target our campaign to men and women from the age of 16 to 55+.

Because this is too large a demographic to target with one campaign, using one set of traditional media, a multi-layered campaign was developed. We divided our target audiences into sub-target audiences: men and women between the ages of 28-45; youth 16-28; seniors 55+.

Seniors 55+: Due to the nature of the driving issues involving seniors we recommended that they be separated from the overall campaign in order to isolate their issues and focus on specific strategies for dealing with them. Funds were allocated separately and partnerships with such organizations as CARP and CAA were examined. A sub-committee was developed to identify the issues, possible solutions and a go-forward strategy.

After further analyzing our target audiences we realized that for men between the ages of 28-45, saving their own life affected them. For women, while saving their own life also resonated, the thought of killing a child because of their own behaviour had a more powerful impact and created stronger aversion to the act. For youth between the ages of

16 and 28, the thought of killing a friend affected them slightly more than killing themselves. This demographic seems to have a stronger belief that they are invincible, while the thought of killing a friend seemed more realistic and therefore would have more impact on changing their behaviour.

### **The Message**

There is a prevailing misconception that the general population receives messages in the same manner. They don't. Different people react in different ways to the same message. To develop effective messages to reach all of them, you need to understand people, know about their level of knowledge, attitudes and practices. Simply put, what do they know, how do they feel, and what do they do? Our messages had to take all of these questions into account.

While messaging is critical, it is vital that it be supported by effective and appropriate scripts and visuals. Municipalities and government agencies must also ensure that their campaigns are sensitive to public opinion without losing their impact. There is a very fine line of tolerance for all of the audiences and these must not be overstepped if the campaign is to be effective.

Messaging must clearly define the appropriate behaviour, the action required to achieve the behaviour and the benefit that ensues. In the case of the Drive to Stay Alive campaign, the following are the key messages, the actions required and their benefits.

BUCKLE UP - 2 campaigns that target different demographics and audiences.

1. Targets all demographics
2. Targets parents buckling-up children

SPEED KILLS - targets youth (primarily boys) and deals with the concept of “racing”

SLOW DOWN - Aggressive driving message that targets adults - a rural campaign is also being developed to address the specific needs of these municipalities

IT WON'T KILL YOU TO STOP – Red Light campaign included under the aggressive driving campaign

The entire campaign runs with the tag line Drive To Stay Alive and the supporting statement:

The life you save could be your own; or

The life you save could be your/a child's

### **Focus Group research:**

Because behaviour modification campaigns are the toughest campaigns to develop, it was decided that we would use focus groups to ensure that our messaging worked for the different target audiences.

To analyze the entire ad campaign and messaging, a consulting firm was hired to conduct focus groups, which were broken down based on demographics. The groups were assembled according to age with men and women in all groups. The younger group was comprised of 20-30 year olds, with the older group comprised of 30-45 year olds. Further testing with 16-24 year olds was done following the initial sessions. This is the most difficult group to impact as they have been desensitized to violence and bombarded by media campaigns for both product and social behaviours.

The groups were presented with all the creative. Their comments were registered and creative was changed where necessary. For example, in the aggressive driving ad the script originally had the driver running a red light. All members of the group reacted negatively to this statement, claiming to “never” run a red light. They all admitted that they ran yellow lights. It became apparent that while red light running is a major issue that has resulted in incidents resulting in death or serious injury, the perception of the majority of people is that they are not actually running a red light but a yellow light.

Focus group ratings of 5-10 would be considered favourable. A rating over 7 is exceptional. All creative received a rating better than 6, while most were rated 9 to 10.

### **Media placement strategy:**

Once your target audiences have been identified and the messaging developed, consideration must now be given to the most appropriate media forum and the development of a schedule.

In the case of Drive to Stay Alive and the issue of multiple messages it was decided that in order to be effective the campaign must run 12 months of the year. However, to safeguard against overuse of creative and the potential to create apathy from our audiences, each month would be devoted to a particular message.

At this stage, we analyzed the data and determined that certain times of day, days of the week and even months could be attributed to increases in negative behaviour patterns (aggressive driving, speeding and drinking and driving).

A schedule was created in order to match the corrective messaging with the most frequent period of negative behaviour.

Due to the nature of the issue, local media have been extremely supportive in providing not only production assistance at a reduced or no cost, but also sponsorship of actual



media buy spots and times. To date, the committee has succeeded in securing over \$125,000 annually in media sponsorship support.

It is important to note that in order for these campaigns to be effective, enforcement activity must increase or follow the same schedule.

**Final Creative (samples)**

(The following creative are protected under copyright to the Region of Waterloo, Cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Townships of Wilmot, Woolwich, Wellesley and North Dumfries and the Waterloo Regional Police Service. These ads may not be reproduced in part or whole by any other group without the written permission of the aforementioned municipalities or police.)

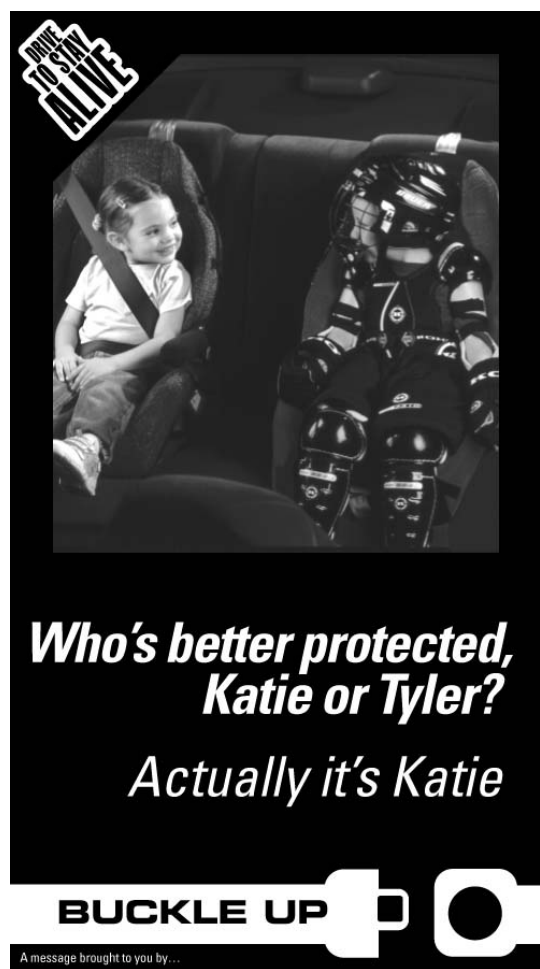


**Three-year-old Katie**  
*accidentally killed*  
**her Mom today,**

- when she flew out of her car seat,
- smashed into her mother
- and snapped her neck.

**BUCKLE UP**

A message brought to you by...



**Who's better protected,**  
**Katie or Tyler?**

**Actually it's Katie**

**BUCKLE UP**

A message brought to you by...





**Who said  
bunnies can't fly?**

*They just don't go as far as  
their unbuckled owners*

**BUCKLE UP** 

A message brought to you by...




**Ryan is finally wearing  
his seatbelt**

**BUCKLE UP** 

A message brought to you by...



In order to ensure that the entire campaign is recognizable as a campaign, the tag line voice-overs were done using the same nationally recognized voice. Jim Van Horne, a nationally recognized sports anchor, volunteered his voice for both radio and television. His voice is authoritative and immediately recognizable. This lends credibility and authority to the messages. His voice is particularly effective with the younger demographic, which is more difficult to impact.

**DRIVE TO STAY ALIVE**



**Wanna Die?  
then let's race**

**SLOW DOWN**

A message brought to you by...



**DRIVE TO STAY ALIVE**



**Ryan is finally wearing  
his seatbelt**

**BUCKLE UP**

A message brought to you by...





## Next Steps

This is a 3 year campaign. However, the working group will be evaluating the effect of the first year of the campaign in May 2005 when the Region's 2004 Annual Collision Report will be produced. Based on the analysis of this report, the focus of the initiative may be changed.

The working group is also partnering with several municipalities in southern Ontario to expand this campaign. If successful, the campaign may reach the entire "Golden Horseshoe" of southern Ontario.

As well, members of the corporate community in the region will be contacted regarding their possible participation in this initiative.

## Conclusions

Road safety is a "Quality of Life" issue requiring the positive interaction and commitment of law enforcement personnel, traffic managers, local government officials, corporate leaders and groups of committed community leaders. In Waterloo Region, all of these groups are working collectively and we are optimistic that this initiative will make a difference and will be effective in making the roadways our region safer for everyone.

**References:**

1. CCMTA (Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administration, Transport Canada, "Road Safety Vision 2010:2001 Update".
2. Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Safety Research Office, Safety Policy Branch, "The Social Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes in Ontario", March 1994, SRO-94-101, ISBN 0-7778-2616-X