

**TABLE QUÉBÉCOISE
DE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE
[QUÉBEC ROAD SAFETY TASK FORCE]**

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Summary

Despite a significant increase in the number of vehicles on the road, Québec's safety record has shown steady improvement since the early 1970s. However, the period from 2001 to 2006 was marked by an uptrend in the number of traffic fatalities. The various actors in the area of road safety were forced to conclude that conventional intervention techniques could no longer be relied upon to reduce the number of road accidents.

This was the context in which the Minister of Transport established the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière (TQSR – Québec Road Safety Task Force) in December 2005. This discussion forum, which includes approximately fifty members, has a mandate to make recommendations and proposals for action to the Minister of Transport.

Since its creation, the TQSR has delivered two reports of recommendations: the first in July 2007 and the second in November 2009. In just a few years, the fifty recommendations that it has made have led to the implementation of a wide range of significant measures dealing with many aspects of road safety.

These measures have been very advantageous. Not only has Québec's road accident record improved, but this improvement has been accompanied by greater public awareness and a higher level of commitment among all of the actors involved.

However, the gains that have been achieved remain fragile, and it continues to be difficult to build and maintain social consensus. In addition, there is still room for improvement in terms of Québec's record. Therefore, the concerted effort by the TQSR partners will continue, and a third work cycle will begin.

1 BACKGROUND FOR THE CREATION OF THE TABLE QUÉBÉCOISE DE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

1.1 – Trend in the road safety record

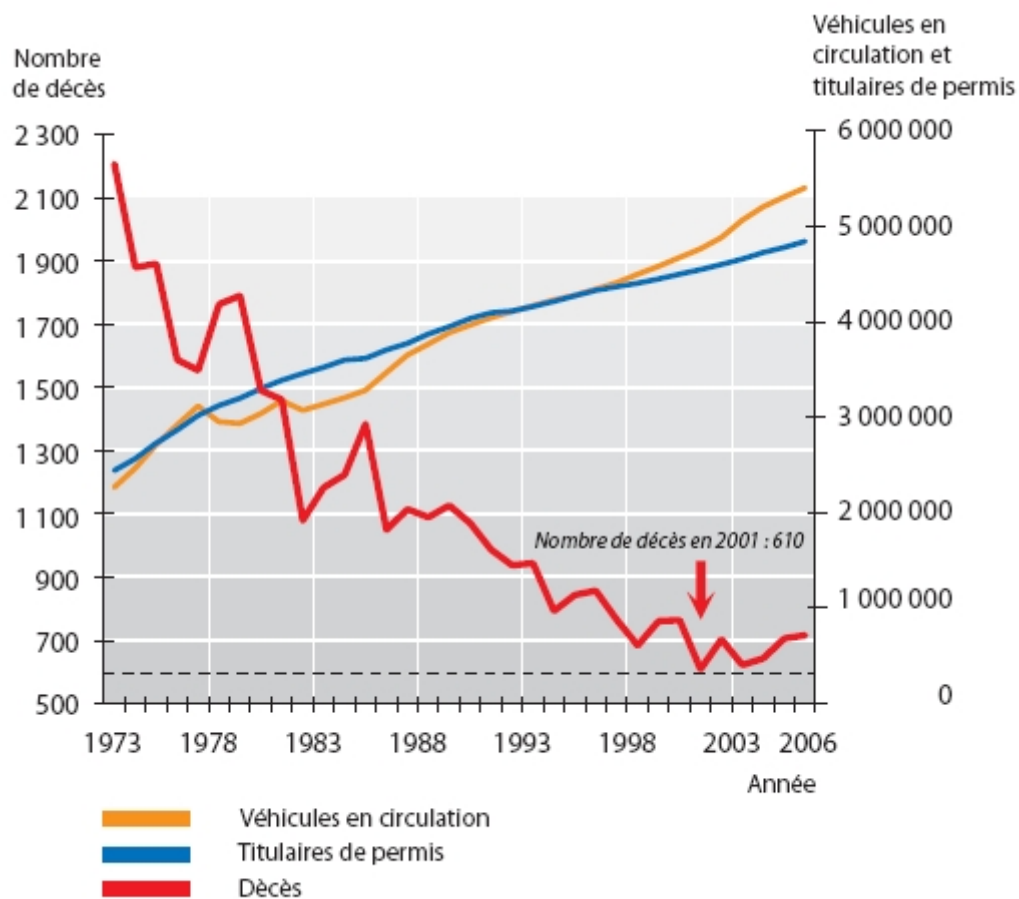
Over the last 40 years, Québec has experienced a significant improvement in its road safety record. As depicted in Figure 1, the number of traffic fatalities declined from 2,209 in 1973 to 610 in 2001, despite the increase in the number of vehicles on the road and the number of licenced drivers.

Among other factors, sustained action by the government and its partners should be credited for the steady improvement in the overall road safety record. It is worthwhile to note the awareness-raising activities that have been conducted, such as advertising campaigns aimed at combating unsafe driver behaviours. In addition, new laws have been introduced in order to penalize improper driver behaviour. It is also important to mention the control measures that have been deployed by police forces in order to enforce these laws.

In addition, efforts have been made over the years to maintain the integrity of infrastructures and to improve the physical characteristics of roadways, traffic management, the various types of road equipment, and roadsides. Vehicle safety has also seen steady improvement thanks to technological progress. Finally, significant advances have been made in the area of intervention methods employed by emergency response services at accident scenes and within the hospital environment.

However, the year 2002 saw an increase in the number of fatalities (up to 704). The situation remained difficult in the following years, with 721 fatalities on the roads in 2006, which represents a 9.0% increase over the average for the five previous years. The total number of victims also trended upward during this period.

Figure 1. Number of fatalities, number of vehicles on the road, and number of licenced drivers (1973-2006)



Source: SAAQ (2007), 2006 road safety record, media kit

1.2 – Launch of the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière

The various actors in the area of road safety were forced to accept the following conclusion: improvements in the road safety record were becoming more and more difficult to achieve, because conventional intervention techniques could no longer be relied upon to reduce the number of road accidents. Innovative measures were needed, which meant involving the public and all of the actors concerned with road safety.

Achieving this kind of increased commitment required a change in the attitudes toward road accidents, which do not usually stir much interest on the part of the public, and which are generally regarded as inevitable. However, changing values takes time, whereas the rapid deterioration in the road safety record demanded urgent action.

In light of this, a decision was made to bring together all of the actors concerned with road safety within a single body. The objective was for the consensus positions reached by a group such as this one, which represents the diverse needs of the public, to give rise to a new culture of road safety in which the public would buy into the measures generated from it.

In this context, the Minister of Transport launched the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière (TQSR) in December 2005. The mandate for this standing forum for interaction and discussion is to formulate recommendations and submit proposals for action and intervention to the Minister of Transport, with a view to improving the road accident record in Québec.

This decision marked a turning point for road safety in Québec, because it became possible for the first time for all of the partners concerned to exchange ideas within a single collaborative body and to work together to find solutions to improve the road safety record.

1.3 – Operation of the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière

The TQSR is chaired by Jean-Marie De Koninck, a Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at Laval University, and founder of *Opération Nez rouge*, which has worked to encourage responsible behaviour with respect to impaired driving during every Christmas season since 1984.

The Task Force consists of close to fifty members representing road users, road transport companies, the municipal sector, police forces, government agencies and departments, and other sectors of activity, such as universities and hospitals. It meets approximately three times per year.

In order to facilitate discussions within the Task Force, working groups have been created around themes defined by the Task Force. The groups meet regularly in order to share expertise related to their themes, to analyze solution paths, and to agree on draft recommendations, which are then submitted to the full membership of the Task Force for adoption. All of the recommendations are then gathered together in a report, which is submitted to the Minister of Transport.

2 REPORTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE TABLE QUÉBÉCOISE DE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Since its inception in December 2005, the TQSR has submitted two reports of recommendations to the Minister of Transport.

The initial report, which was submitted on July 5, 2007, represented the fruit of the labours of five working groups: Speeding, Behaviour, Vulnerable users, Road infrastructure, and Municipal partnerships. It contained 23 recommendations organized into eight themes: speeding, impaired driving, the use of cell phones while driving, the use of seatbelts, vulnerable users, road infrastructure, municipal partnerships, and heavy vehicles (see the recommendations in Appendix 1).

After it was submitted, all of the recommendations contained in this initial report received specific attention. Six of the recommendations were deemed to be particularly vital, and were fast-tracked by the Minister of Transport, who had tabled two bills in the National Assembly by November 2007: Bill 42 (An Act to amend the Highway Safety Code and the Regulation respecting demerit points) and Bill 55 (An Act to again amend the Highway Safety Code and other legislative provisions).

The Second Report of Recommendations was submitted on November 30, 2009. Four working groups brought this second phase of work to a successful conclusion, dealing with the following areas: Driver licensing and skills maintenance, Active and alternative transportation, Municipal speed limits, and Impaired driving and driver distraction.

The second report made 27 recommendations, organized into eight themes: youth, impaired driving, pedestrians and cyclists, speed-limit management in urban environments, driver health, penalized drivers, enforcement and penalties, and driver distraction (see the recommendations in Appendix 2).

After this second report was submitted, the Minister tabled Bill 71 (An Act to again amend the Highway Safety Code and other legislative provisions) in the National Assembly on December 3, 2009. This bill is under consideration (in May 2010). The Minister of Transport also took note of all of the other measures, and asked the Ministère des Transports and the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec to examine the possibility of implementing them.

3 MEASURES IMPLEMENTED

In just a few years, the fifty recommendations that have been submitted by the TQSR have led to the implementation of a wide range of significant measures dealing with many aspects of road safety.

3.1 Legislative measures

Bill 42, which was adopted in December 2007, introduced some significant changes to the Highway Safety Code.

More severe penalties for excessive speeding

In April and December 2008, more severe penalties came into effect for drivers guilty of excessive speeding. A driver is guilty of excessive speeding when he exceeds the speed limit:

- by 40 km/h or more in a zone where the maximum speed limit is 60 km/h or less;
- by 50 km/h or more in a zone where the maximum speed limit is over 60 km/h and no more than 90 km/h;
- by 60 km/h or more in a zone where the maximum speed limit is 100 km/h.

Drivers who are found to be in violation have their driver's licence immediately suspended for 7 days. In the case of a repeat offence, the duration of the licence suspension increases to 30 days. Repeat offences in zones with a speed limit of 60 km/h or less result in seizure of the vehicle for 30 days and a longer licence suspension. In addition, violators who are found guilty are assessed double the normal number of demerit points, and must pay double the actual fine.

The entry into effect of this measure seems to have had a considerable impact in terms of reducing excessive speeding. In fact, it is estimated that, during the period from 2003 to 2007, "excessive speeding" (as defined in the Highway Safety Code in 2008) accounted for 5.3% of all speeding infractions. In 2008, this proportion was only 3.1%, and it fell further in 2009, to 1.3%. In addition, there was a reduction in the number of fatalities in 2009 compared to 2008 and the previous years in the case of accidents where the police officer reported "Speeding" as the cause.

More severe penalties for impaired driving

Since December 7, 2008, more severe penalties have been in effect for impaired driving. The length of the immediate driver's licence suspension for a first impaired driving infraction was increased from 30 days to 90 days. In the case of a repeat offence, the vehicle is also seized for a period of 30 days. More severe penalties also apply to drivers with a blood alcohol concentration in excess of twice the allowable limit, (i.e.: 160 mg/100 ml) or who refuse to provide a breath sample.

These more severe penalties have a greater deterrent effect on drivers. However, gains in the battle against impaired driving are increasingly difficult to achieve. The percentage of drivers who lost their lives with a blood alcohol concentration above 80 mg/100 ml was 35.8% in 2008, which is higher than the average of close to 30% that was observed during the period from 2000 to 2007.

Other measures are under consideration in this area. In order to be effective, the battle against impaired driving must combine legislation, awareness-raising activities, and road checks. After having made a number of recommendations in its second report, the TQSR is continuing its work in this area

Tightening driver licensing regulations

The measures contained in Bill 42, which came into effect in January 2010, are intended to reintroduce a mandatory driving course for new drivers and to require probationary licences for new drivers aged 25 or over. The bill also provides for the introduction of a graduated demerit point allowance for licenced drivers under the age of 25. This measure will come into effect in the near future.

The content of the driving course underwent an in-depth review aimed at emphasizing the risk factors associated with driving and promoting safe and responsible behaviours.

The use of cell phones while driving

Effective April 1, 2008, no one is permitted to use a hand-held device with a telephone function while driving. Violators are subject to a minimum fine of \$80, and may have three demerit points entered on their driving record.

In addition to this ban, and as recommended by the TQSR in its second report, there will be an additional awareness-raising initiative to inform the public that the use of "hands-free" devices also entails risks.

Photo radar and red light camera pilot project

As provided for in Bill 42, a pilot project to install photo radar and red light cameras is currently underway. This project, which is scheduled to last 18 months, was launched on August 19, 2009 at 15 accident-prone locations on the road network. It was preceded by a 3-month trial period.

The Ministère des Transports is spearheading the project, with the support of the Ministère de la Sécurité publique and the Ministère de la Justice, including the Bureau des infractions et des amendes (BIA), the Sûreté du Québec, the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, municipal police forces, the Association des directeurs de police du Québec, Services Québec, the Centre de services partagés du Québec, and the municipalities concerned.

An evaluation report will be submitted to the government 12 months after the launch of the project, (i.e.: in August 2010), and will be presented to the National Assembly within 30 days.

So far, the project is going well. Initial results reveal that the installations have a very positive effect on driver behaviour in the vicinity of the sites. From August 19, 2009 to February 19, 2010, the following results were observed compared to the fall of 2008, before the devices were installed:

- A 12 km/h reduction in actual travel speeds
- A 63% reduction in speeding
- A very large reduction in excessive speeding (97%)
- A significant reduction in the rate of red light violations (83%)

The pilot project was accompanied by large-scale information campaigns, and has now gained the support of a large majority of the population. In 2005, 73% of Quebecers said they were in favour of using photo radar devices. By March 2010, this proportion had increased to 83%, with 88% of respondents in favour of using red light cameras.

Activation of speed limiters set to 105 km/h for certain heavy vehicles

As of January 1, 2009, speed limiters are mandatory and must be activated and set to 105 km/h for heavy vehicles weighing 11,794 kg (26,000 lbs) or more in operation on the Québec road network.

Requirement to equip certain vehicle with winter tires

In addition to the previous six measures, which were based on recommendations from the TQSR, and given the interest and concerns of the public with respect to road safety, the legislators included some additional measures in Bill 42, including a requirement to equip certain vehicles with winter tires.

This measure came into effect for the winter of 2008-2009. Vehicles that are affected include passenger vehicles registered in Québec, passenger vehicles that are rented in Québec, and taxis. This requirement applies during the period from December 15 to March 15.

Initial assessments of this measure are positive. The rate of use of winter tires increased from 89% in 2007 to 99% in 2009. In addition, comparing the data for the winter of 2008-2009 to those for the five previous years reveals that the number of road victims declined more significantly during the compulsory period (16%) than during the rest of the year (11%).

3.2 Other measures

In parallel with the implementation of the measures generated by the work of the TQSR, a number of its members, including the Ministère des Transports, the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec, municipalities, police forces, and highway controllers, have continued and intensified their awareness-raising and enforcement activities in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

In addition, the MTQ has begun implementation of its 2009-2012 Departmental Road Safety Action Plan (Road infrastructure component). Taking advantage of the Québec road network rehabilitation plan, which resulted in a substantial increase in annual investments allocated to roadwork, the MTQ has made a commitment to invest at least \$1 billion annually to improve the safety of its road infrastructures, with an emphasis on three approaches:

- Correction of sites that require improvement: At least 20 sites will be corrected each year.
- Conducting road safety audits: In accordance with departmental policy in this area, the MTQ will continue to conduct road safety audits on its major road projects. Almost 50 audits were carried out in 2009.
- Implementation of a range of safety measures of recognized effectiveness: Correction of rutting, paving of shoulders, guardrails, installation of rumble strips, etc.

3.3 Communications

Communications pertaining to road safety have been intensified since the TQSR was created, presenting a diversity of points of view on a subject that had previously generated too little interest among the public.

From this perspective, the year 2007 will have marked a milestone. In fact, the Québec National Assembly declared 2007 to be the "Year of road safety". To mark this occasion, many of the partners, including the members of the TQSR, joined forces to raise public awareness of the human, social, and economic consequences of accidents in order to mobilize public opinion and make the number of road victims unacceptable.

More than 70 public and private enterprises showed their support for this mobilization effort. Significant advertising and promotional efforts related to road safety were made in all media.

The Minister of Transport and the Chair of the TQSR also embarked on an information and awareness-raising tour of the regions of Québec in order to increase awareness among the public and to engage regional elected officials with respect to road safety.

In the following years, the announcement and implementation of strong measures that affect all road users have also resulted in a considerable increase in "media buzz" around the issue of road safety and have led to discussions.

It is important to mention that the TQSR chairperson plays an undeniable role in this productive public relations process. Even before his appointment as Chair, Jean-Marie de Koninck's talents as a communicator and unifying figure had earned him considerable public awareness. The founder and president of *Opération Nez rouge* and a passionate mathematician, he is regularly called upon by the media to comment on news in the field of science. He is now devoting his efforts to disseminating knowledge concerning road safety with a view to exposing the magnitude of the risks that everyone faces on the road, and in so doing, contributing to the improvement of individual behaviour.

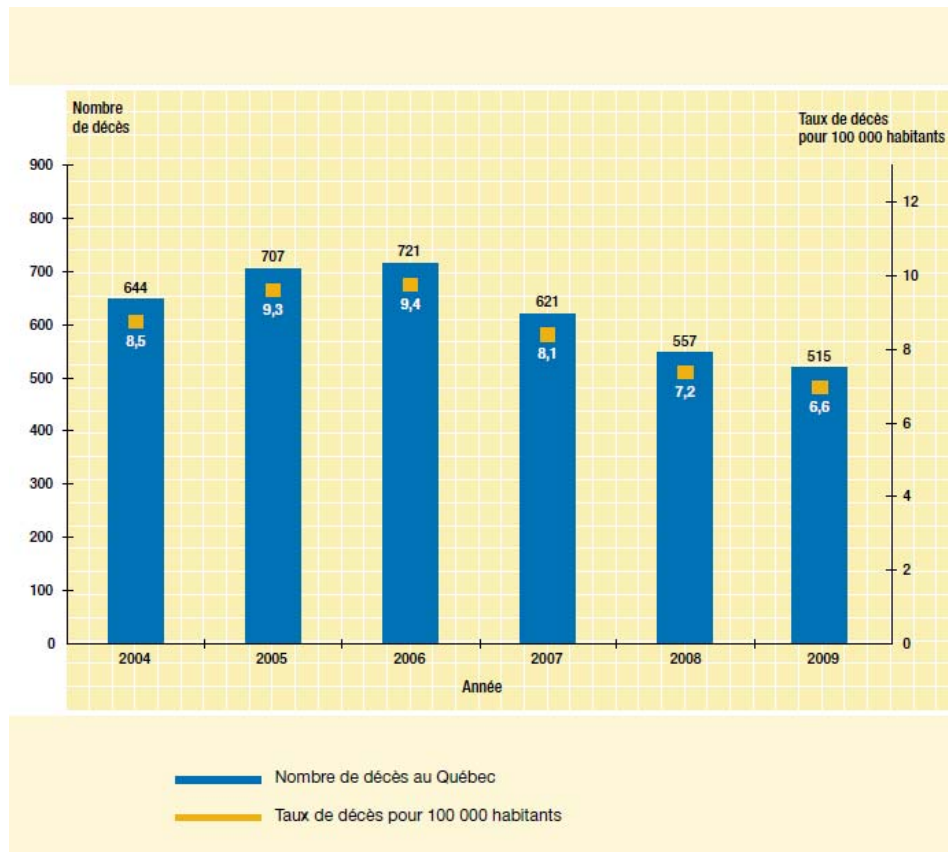
4. BENEFITS

The various innovative measures that have been introduced in recent years have been very advantageous. Not only has Québec's road accident record improved, but this improvement has been accompanied by greater public awareness and a higher level of commitment among all of the actors involved.

After experiencing a difficult period from 2001 to 2006, Québec has recorded progress over the next three years. Traffic fatalities decreased from 621 in 2007 to 557 in 2008 to 515 in 2009. Compared to the average for the previous five years, the death toll for the year 2009 is down 20.8%. The numbers of victims with serious injuries and minor injuries in 2009 were also significantly lower as compared to the average for the previous five years, down 32.3% and 9.4% respectively.

In addition, the death rate per 100,000 inhabitants dropped from 9.4 in 2006 to 6.6 in 2009. This is the best result in the past six years. During the previous five years, this rate varied between 7.2 and 9.4 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Number of deaths and death rate per 100,000 inhabitants in Québec, 2004 to 2009



Source: SAAQ (2010), 2009 road safety record

An increased awareness of road safety has also been observed. Among other things, the "Year of road safety" succeeded in putting road safety front and centre among the concerns of the Québec public.¹ In 2007, road safety moved from 5th place in January to 2nd place in July among the issues of concern to Quebecers.

Therefore, the various actions that have been implemented have contributed to making road safety a societal issue, which in turn has strengthened public acceptance of key safety measures.

¹ Léger Marketing (2008) Rapport d'étude sur la perception des Québécois relativement à la sécurité routière, Rapport d'étude omnibus présenté à la société de l'assurance automobile du Québec [Survey Report on the Perceptions of the Québec Public respecting Road Safety: Omnibus Study Report presented to the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec], 25 pages.

CONCLUSION

Only a few years after its inception, the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière has already generated significant benefits. The TQSR now plays an indispensable role in any discussion of road safety in Québec. Its recommendations are all the more valuable for having been adopted by consensus by members representing varied interests that, although they are sometimes divergent, reflect the values and concerns of Québec society in terms of transportation: safety, mobility, health, productivity, fairness, etc.

However, even though the efforts that have been put forth have allowed for a significant reduction in the number of deaths and accident victims on Québec's roads, the gains that have been achieved in road safety remain fragile, and it continues to be difficult to build and maintain social consensuses. In addition, as can be seen from a comparison with the highway administrations that deliver the best performances in terms of road safety, there is still room for improvement in terms of Québec's record.

Therefore, the concerted effort by the TQSR partners will continue. A third work cycle will get underway after a period spent preparing a summary of the TQSR's performance. This summary will reveal areas of strength and identify areas where improvement is required, so that any necessary adjustments can be made.

REFERENCES

Table québécoise de la sécurité routière (2007) *Improving Road Safety – Initial report of recommendations from the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière*, 50 pages.

Table québécoise de la sécurité routière (2009) *Ongoing Improvement of the Road Safety Record – Second Report of Recommendations from the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière*, 56 pages.

Website of the Table québécoise de la sécurité routière:
www.securite-routiere.qc.ca

APPENDIX 1

Table québécoise de la sécurité routière

Initial Report of Recommendations. Improving Road Safety (2007)

Summary of recommendations

Speeding	1. Heighten awareness with respect to the dangers and consequences of speeding.
	2. Oversee advertising by motor vehicle manufacturers – establish guidelines in order to ensure that their messages do not encourage risky behaviour.
	3. Introduce harsher penalties for excessive speeding and repeat offending.
	4. Implement a photo radar pilot project that includes terms to be developed in partnership to ensure that the project takes into consideration all of the issues and concerns addressed by the members of the task force.
Impaired driving	5. Request that public prosecutors be more severe in their recommendations to the courts regarding sentences that apply to repeat offenders and during bail hearings.
	6. Increase the perceived risk of apprehension.
	7. Heighten the awareness of the population regarding the dangers and consequences of impaired driving.
	8. Introduce mandatory training for waiters on the dangers and consequences of impaired driving.
	9. Increase the severity of penalties for impaired driving.
	10. Ask Transport Canada to study the possibility of including an alcohol ignition interlock device in the safety standards governing the manufacturing of road vehicles sold in Canada.
Cell phone use while driving	11. Encourage the introduction of new legislation designed to monitor cell phone use while driving.
Seatbelt use	12. Build awareness and police surveillance in order to increase the use of seatbelts.
Vulnerable users	13. Increase measures designed to ensure that motorists share the road fairly with pedestrians and cyclists.
	14. Strengthen gradual licensing rules by preserving the mobility of new drivers, but by being more severe with drivers who fail to comply with regulations.
Road infrastructure	15. Identify and find solutions for sites with an abnormally high accident concentration.
	16. Implement a camera pilot project at traffic lights that includes terms to be developed in partnership to ensure that the project takes into consideration all the issues and concerns addressed by the members of the task force.
	17. Improve shoulders and roadsides (in rural areas).
	18. Support actions designed to maintain equipment and other safety elements of the road network.
	19. Carry out road safety audits during the design phase of major projects.
Municipal	20. Share knowledge and road safety intervention tools with municipalities.

partnerships	21. Design consultation mechanisms tailored to local or regional realities.
	22. Establish financial assistance for road safety actions led by municipalities.
Heavy vehicles	23. Support the actions of the Table de concertation gouvernement industrie ² sur la sécurité des véhicules lourds [government-industry task force on the safety of heavy vehicles].

² Table de concertation gouvernement-industrie sur la sécurité des véhicules lourds: This task force, which was created in May 1998, comprises various government and industry partners. Its mandate is to improve the road safety record with respect to accidents involving heavy vehicles, using courses of action initiated mainly in the industry sector as a starting point. The goal is to develop a short-, medium-, and long-term action plan related to heavy vehicle safety.

APPENDIX 2

Table québécoise de la sécurité routière

Second Report of Recommendations. Ongoing Improvement of the Road Safety Record (2009)

Summary of recommendations

Youth	1. Apply the zero-alcohol rule to all new drivers.
	2. Encourage the school system (school boards) to appoint a Traffic Safety Officer in order to align the needs of schools with the available traffic safety activities.
	3. Formulate and implement a pilot project aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of road safety among secondary students.
Impaired driving	4. Impose an immediate brief (24-hour) administrative suspension of the driver's licence for any driver who has a blood alcohol concentration level of 50 mg/100 ml or more.
	5. Launch a campaign to increase public awareness of the new measures, and develop enforcement activities.
	6. Implement an integrated approach aimed at reducing road accidents caused by driver fatigue. This effort should include awareness-raising, training, and multi-faceted activities adapted to the level of understanding in this area.
	7. Consider amending the <i>Act respecting Roads</i> so that the "service areas" mentioned in Section 5 (and subject to a policy at the Ministère des Transports du Québec respecting the development of highway rest area) are designated as "rest and service areas".
Pedestrians and cyclists	8. Include the needs of all users of public roads in terms of safety, accessibility, and mobility in the planning, design, development, and maintenance of the road system.
	9. Develop and implement an integrated approach to urban and regional planning and transportation by emphasizing active and alternative transportation modes at both the municipal and regional levels.
	10. Develop design standards and integrated guides to best practices that promote the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and that are tailored to the hierarchies and functions of public roads.
	11. Develop and deploy, on a permanent basis, educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, accompanied by increased police enforcement.
	12. Introduce new provisions into the <i>Highway Safety Code</i> in order to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
Speed-limit management in urban environments	13. Define a global framework for speed-limit management in urban environments, and revise technical literature for municipalities and applicable regulations, where appropriate.
	14. Design analytical and awareness tools to ensure better management of residents concerns over speed in residential neighbourhoods.
Driver health	15. Continue to develop and implement educational and awareness-raising campaigns pertaining to highway safety aimed at seniors and their families and friends.

	16. Promote the inclusion of a medical assessment of the ability to drive in training for healthcare professionals, and continue to increase their awareness of healthcare professionals in this area.
	17. Increase awareness among drivers of the importance of reporting to the SAAQ any illnesses or disabilities that may affect their ability to drive.
	18. Determine methods for detecting medically at-risk drivers.
Penalized drivers	19. Encourage the development and use by police organizations of systems designed to detect suspended drivers and vehicles that are not authorized for use on the roads (e.g.: a licence plate recognition system).
	20. Following implementation of a new road safety education program (driver courses, learning tools, tests, etc.), update examination for drivers who are reapplying for a licence following revocation due to demerit points, along with appropriate awareness-raising tools.
Enforcement and penalties	21. Introduce more severe penalties for street racing and car surfing.
	22. Ask the Ministère de la Sécurité publique to enhance its efforts in the area of road safety training for police officer trainees.
Driver distraction	23. Inform drivers and employers of the dangers of distractions while driving and the importance of eliminating these distractions.
	24. Promote adequate enforcement of installation standards for traffic control devices.
	25. Produce a best practices guide in order to help the road authorities to more effectively consider all messages present within the driver's visual field (signs, advertising, etc.), with a view to eliminating interference with official traffic control devices and information overload.
	26. Promote the adoption of self-regulatory policies among employers aimed at reducing the likelihood of employees becoming distracted while driving.
	27. Set up a series of activities aimed at reducing the use of cell phones while driving.