



Ontario Provincial Police Police provinciale de l'Ontario

news
release
communiqué

777 Memorial Ave.
Orillia, Ontario
L3V 7V3

FROM/DE: Corporate Communications Bureau

RELEASE: January 3, 2007

Traffic Safety – An Equal Priority... A Shared Responsibility

(Orillia, ON) – “In the hands of an irresponsible person, a motor vehicle is no less dangerous than a loaded firearm in the hands of an equally irresponsible individual. In reality, the potential trauma is tragically similar and the consequences equally unacceptable,” says Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Commissioner Julian Fantino.

“And yet,” he adds, “the public seems to be strangely complacent, passive and even accepting of what is a serious criminal public safety threat.”

Too often, traffic safety initiatives take a back seat to what are perceived as more important public safety issues and concerns, such as gun and gang violence, the threat of terrorism, organized crime and more. “All are legitimate law enforcement priorities and on balance, traffic safety must be included as an equal priority,” he says.

The leading criminal cause of death in Canada is alcohol and drug induced impaired driving, not murder. Eighty percent of all vehicle crashes are caused occurrences, not accidents and virtually all are preventable. Vehicle crashes cost approximately \$10-billion annually in Ontario and result in untold trauma and anguish from the loss of life and the short and long term consequences of injuries.

Commissioner Fantino is especially concerned about the unabated impaired driving revealed during this year’s five-week, OPP Festive RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) program. In all OPP jurisdictions throughout Ontario, officers ramped up their efforts to detect and apprehend impaired drivers, checking more than 800,000 vehicles, compared to almost 577,000 in 2005.

more...

More than 800, 12-hour licence suspensions were issued and 339 persons charged with alcohol related Criminal Code driving offences. In the same period last year, 671, 12-hour licence suspensions were issued and 278 persons were charged with impaired driving.

During the same five-week period this year, 43 people died in traffic collisions in OPP-policed jurisdictions and many more injured in over 1,730 personal injury collisions. In all, OPP officers attended more than 11,500 motor vehicle collisions, up substantially from the same period last year.

“Alcohol and drug induced impaired drivers continue to be an extremely aggravating public safety menace that must be tackled with the same vigour, commitment, dedication and resources expended on other serious criminal public safety threats,” says Fantino.

“Of all the things we can’t prevent, traffic safety in all of its many dynamics is the one thing where, but for the human condition, prevention is not only available to us, it is absolutely in our control.

“It’s time to make traffic safety a public safety priority and to deal with it as a shared public responsibility among the public, the police and the judicial system,” he concludes.

Contact:

Sgt. Robert Paterson
OPP Media Relations
Tel 705-329-6878

Editors Please Note:

Go to www.opp.ca for a full text of Commissioner Julian Fantino’s Open Letter to the Citizens of Ontario entitled: Traffic Safety: A Shared Priority and a Shared Responsibility