



OFFICE OF THE
SENIORS ADVOCATE
BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 15, 2016

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Sent by email only

To All Mayors and Councils in BC

Dear Mayor and Council,

As British Columbia's Seniors Advocate, I am writing to all municipal governments in BC asking for consideration of increased safety initiatives targeted at senior pedestrians, including the lowering of speed limits in appropriate areas.

My colleague Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer highlighted the vulnerability of senior pedestrians in his report, *Where Rubber Meets the Road: Reducing the Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes on Health and Well-being in BC*. This report points out that there were 2,200 motor vehicle accidents involving at least one pedestrian in BC in 2013. These resulted in 2,300 injured pedestrians and 52 pedestrian fatalities.

Dr. Kendall's report further highlights the fatality rate for pedestrians aged 76 and up is more than twice the MVC fatality rate for pedestrians 66-75 and that overall, those over 76 had the highest rate of fatalities per 100,000 population. Dr. Kendall found that there were a number of contributing factors that cause these accidents, including pedestrian error or confusion (31%), distraction on the part of the driver or pedestrian (29.3%), alcohol (19%), driver failing to yield the right of way (9.5%), and speed (8.8%). The impact of these pedestrian accidents to the individual, their families and the system at large is obviously significant. In the case of seniors, injury is much more likely to lead to a permanent decrease in overall function.

As the Office of the Seniors Advocate continues to monitor transportation issues relating to seniors, I would like to personally encourage you to consider pedestrian-focused enhancements in your communities that help ensure the safety of older citizens is a priority and these enhancements include: mechanisms to decrease crossing distances, increasing crossing times, improving pedestrian lighting, and modifying roadways, especially intersections, where most pedestrian accidents occur.

Appropriate speed limits must also be a priority, particularly in areas that have a high number of pedestrians. Research shows that pedestrians have a 10% risk of dying when hit at 30 kilometres per hour, but an 80% risk of dying when hit at 50 kilometres per hour.

The continued education of both drivers and pedestrians is something I will continue to encourage. Age-friendly initiatives should continue to focus on as much safe pedestrian access as possible, ultimately improving the overall health and well-being of our elderly population.

I look forward to your continued collaboration on this most important issue.

Sincerely,

Isobel Mackenzie
Seniors Advocate

pc: Dr Perry Kendall
Honourable Terry Lake
Stephen Brown