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February 26, 2018

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MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CORONER

Ms. Lisa Lapointe, Chief Coroner
Ministry of Justice
Office of the Chief Coroner
Metrotower II Suite 800 - 4720 Kingsway
Burnaby BC VSH 4N2

RE: Child Death Review Panel and Recommendations

Dear Chief Coroner Lapointe:

I am writing you in follow up to Mark Blucher's letter of March 12, 2015, committing the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) to respond to Recommendation 1 of the Child Death Review Panel.

Recommendation 1: Review of the Graduated Licencing Program

That the Insurance Corporation of B.C. (ICBC) conduct a review of B.C.'s Graduated Licencing Program (GLP) to identify potential opportunities to improve its effectiveness. The review should include a consultation with young drivers and the parents and guardians that support young drivers.

I am pleased to report that ICBC has completed its review and has identified several potential GLP enhancements that may aide in improving the program's effectiveness. We began by surveying other Canadian jurisdictions through the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) and conducting a literature review of international graduated licensing best practices. The potential crash reductions experienced by other jurisdictions were then modelled onto BC fatal crash data to help demonstrate how such changes might affect young driver crash rates in a BC context. ICBC also surveyed new drivers and the parents/guardians who support them to gain insight into potential implementation challenges and opportunities for proposed program changes.

The key research findings show that BC has a strong graduated licensing system, containing many of the components supported by empirical evidence and best practice frameworks. Overall, graduated licensing is effective in reducing risks for younger teens and Learner drivers (i.e., ages 16 & 17); however results for older teen drivers are more mixed, as much of the GLP crash reduction benefits result from the supervised Learner stage.

Based on our research, we identified and analyzed the following potential GLP enhancements:

1. Novice stage nighttime driving restriction

Research shows that fatal crashes are higher at night, especially for young, inexperienced drivers. Unlike most jurisdictions in North America, BC does not restrict its Novice drivers from driving at night. This is in contrast to practices in other parts of Canada, New Zealand, some Australian states, and most of the United States (US).

In US nationwide studies isolating for other factors and graduated licensing components, jurisdictions with nighttime driving restrictions reported average crash reductions of 8-19% in drivers aged 16-19, depending on the time of night the restriction went into effect.



Despite the potential for crash reductions, the introduction of a Novice stage nighttime driving restriction ranked low in perceived effectiveness for new drivers and parents, with both groups citing logistical issues related to attending work and school, as well as a lack of viable public transportation options.

2. Hazard perception testing & training

Hazard perception is a driver's ability to anticipate a driving hazard in time to modify their actions to avoid a crash. The United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand and Australia employ computerized hazard perception tests (HPT) as part of their driver testing regimes. In a typical HPT, a new driver is shown a series of short, interactive videos, taken from a driver's first-person perspective, and is then required to touch the screen or click the mouse to indicate when they perceive a potential road hazard (e.g., a child chasing a ball on a sidewalk, a cyclist, another driver exiting a parked car).

Road safety research suggests that speed at which the hazard is identified directly correlates with the likelihood that a young driver will be involved in a crash. A UK study in particular demonstrates that the inclusion of an HPT in the UK driver licensing process has been estimated to reduce new driver crash rates by 11.3-17.4%, in the year following their test. As in other jurisdictions, implementation in BC would include a training component.

Implementing HPT was perceived as the most effective potential GLP enhancement by both new drivers and parents.

3. Enhanced driver training model

ICBC is responsible for overseeing the quality of the ICBC-approved GLP course, which is currently optional, as it is in all other Canadian jurisdictions, except for Saskatchewan and Quebec. It is interesting to note that Quebec has had mandatory driver training since 2010 and preliminary reporting shows a significant decrease in new driver crash rates.

A review of BC violation ticket and at-fault crash data confirms that new drivers who took an ICBC-approved GLP course in 2012 or 2013 are 4.3% less likely to be convicted of a driving offence and 13% less likely to be involved in an at-fault crash than new drivers who did not take the course.

Both new drivers and parents ranked mandatory driver training as a potentially effective measure in lowering new driver crash rates (second and third, respectively). Notwithstanding, the availability of driver training outside of major population centers and cost of training present logistical and fairness issues in making driver training mandatory. Alternatives such as incentives (e.g., subsidized training, insurance discounts, test waivers, etc.) and/or a mandatory curriculum should also be considered.

4. Lower ignition interlock thresholds and other alcohol-related sanctions

Like many jurisdictions, BC employs an Ignition Interlock Program (IIP) as part of its driver remediation programs for those with a history of impaired driving. Currently, a conviction-free GLP driver who receives an Immediate Roadside Prohibition will likely not be subject to IIP. This appears to be inconsistent with the spirit of GLP's zero blood alcohol content restriction.



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Other jurisdictions have different sanctions, such as demerit point thresholds lower than BC and interlock requirements for any new driver that receives an alcohol-related sanction. While these sanctions are under the purview of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles, there may be an opportunity to work with RoadSafetyBC to review current penalty point and IIP thresholds, expand the Responsible Driver Program, as well as look at expanding IIP to drug-related offences, as drug-related interlock technology becomes available and reliable.

New drivers felt that increased use of alcohol screening devices would be an effective program enhancement.

5. Electronic cell phone blocking technology

Like many jurisdictions across North America and Australia, BC bans Learner and Novice drivers from using electronic devices: including hands-free. Notwithstanding, fatal crashes in which distracted driving is a factor are on the rise in BC. Additional study is required before adopting cell phone signal disabling technology as a mandatory feature of GLP. ICBC has recently announced a distracted driving pilot for this type of technology, in concert with vehicle telematics, for both new and experienced drivers. Consideration of whether to incorporate this into GLP will be given once these pilots are complete.

Both new drivers and parents perceived mandatory electronic cell phone restrictions as the fourth most effective potential program enhancement.

6. Vehicle telematics

Vehicle telematics is the integrated use of communications and information technology to transmit, store and receive information from telecommunications devices to vehicles over a network. A recent environmental scan of North American practices, as well as a symposium with international licensing experts and stakeholders, failed to identify any jurisdiction employing vehicle telematics with a road safety focus as part of their graduated licensing program.

Both new drivers and parents rank telematics low as a potential GLP program enhancement. This is consistent with the concerns that many studies have raised with respect to privacy issues, the lack of trust such technologies convey to young drivers and also the eventual drop off in use by new drivers and vigilance by parents. ICBC will consider the results of the distracted driving pilot and how vehicle telematics might be applied to GLP for road safety purposes.

Conclusion

Based on this research, ICBC will work with government to conduct further study into the feasibility of a Novice stage nighttime driving restriction, hazard perception testing and training, an enhanced driver training model and potential new thresholds for enhanced alcohol sanctions for GLP drivers. ICBC will also consider the results of the distracted driving pilots before considering electronic cell phone blocking technology and vehicle telematics into GLP.

Once again, thank you for helping advance the important work of reducing young driver deaths in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicolas Jimenez', is written over a light grey circular stamp or watermark.

Nicolas Jimenez
Interim President & CEO