

Priorities Committee Meeting_Nov26_2024

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Immediate Roadside Sanctions Pilot Project

Report Purpose

To inform Priorities Committee that Enforcement Services will be implementing an Immediate Roadside Sanctions (IRS) pilot project for impaired drivers beginning in the first quarter of 2025.

Our Strategic Goals

Goal 2 - Healthy and Safe Community

Goal 2 Priority - A diverse, welcoming, inclusive, and an accessible community for all

Report

Public engagement surveys have consistently identified impaired driving as an area of concern for our residents. As the role and scope of our Community Peace Officers continues to evolve, additional authorities for Immediate Roadside Sanctions are consistent with Strathcona County's strategic goal of creating a healthy and safe community. Obtaining this advanced authority also aligns with the vision of Strathcona County Traffic Safety Strategic Plan, which seeks to ensure no one is seriously injured or killed while travelling on the County's road network.

Background

Mandatory Alcohol Screening

In December 2018, the federal government enacted several changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada*. One of the new measures, Mandatory Alcohol Screening or MAS, allows authorized peace officers (which includes any police officer) to obtain an immediate roadside breath sample from the driver of any motor vehicle once the individual has been lawfully stopped, regardless of the reason. Detecting and deterring impaired driving is crucial for ensuring the safety of our roadways.

Impaired Driving Laws

- Impaired driving is the primary criminal cause of death and injury in Canada. The safety of Canadians on our roadways by targeting impaired driving behaviour is a priority of all levels of government.
- Traffic safety research has indicated that as many as half of the drivers exceeding the legal blood alcohol concentration limit might go unnoticed during roadside check stops.
- Implementing mandatory alcohol screening has been shown to be an effective traffic safety strategy that discourages and more effectively identifies alcohol-impaired drivers.
- In several other jurisdictions where mandatory alcohol screening was enacted (i.e. New Zealand and Australia), studies have shown the rates of impaired driving and fatal road collisions were substantially reduced.

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- Alberta’s *Traffic Safety Act* already allows for administrative penalties (i.e. fines, temporary suspensions, etc.) to be applied in cases of non-criminal impaired driving.
- Changes to the *Criminal Code of Canada* that facilitate MAS provide a legal pathway for Community Peace Officers to target impaired driving behaviour with additional training and an updated appointment, without the need for investigative authority under the Criminal Code, which remains the preview of sworn police officers.
- The changes enacted under the *Criminal Code of Canada* offer the following improvements:
 - Clearer and more coherent impaired driving laws;
 - New enforcement authorities;
 - Increase deterrence;
 - Easier impaired driving detection;
 - Simplified investigations and proof of impaired driving offences; and
 - Reduced delays in the criminal justice system.

Statistics – Strathcona County Detachment

	2021	2022	2023	2024 (Jan – Sept)
CCC impaired charge files	7	7	8	1
IRS suspension files	162	248	188	131
Fatal collisions with CCC impaired charges	0	2	0	0
Major injury collisions with CCC impaired charges	1	2	1	1

Pilot Project Goals

The primary goal of this pilot project is to implement an IRS alcohol-impaired driving enforcement strategy that benefits all users of Strathcona County roadways. The Strathcona County RCMP and Alberta Sheriffs Highway Patrol are already engaged in applying immediate roadside sanctions for impaired drivers. Full-scale implementation in 2026 following the pilot phase in 2025, will substantially increase efforts by empowering County Peace Officers, who are already the primary traffic enforcement authority in Strathcona County.

Pilot Project Implementation

Strathcona County Enforcement Services intends to initiate the IRS program with an eight-member Community Peace Officer project team with support from the local RCMP and regular reporting to the Law Enforcement Oversight Branch of Alberta Public Safety and Emergency Services. Upon conclusion of the pilot program, expected after one year, this work will be expanded to all Strathcona County Community Peace Officers, who will be expected to incorporate this authority into their daily duties and responsibilities. Officers will receive classroom training in addition to scenario and field confirmation training.

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Following this, officers will be issued roadside screening devices. While the MAS policy will be followed, officer discretion will continue to be exercised in extenuating circumstances. Strathcona County is the first and only authorized employer in Alberta to be provided this authority/opportunity.

Other Impacts

Policy: New policies governing Community Peace Officers have been developed and approved by the Province's Law Enforcement Oversight Branch.

Financial/Budget: \$32,235.94 to purchase 28 Alco-Sensor Devices.

Legislative/Legal: Updated Community Peace Officer provincial appointments.

Interdepartmental: RCMP to provide ASD training and confirmation of officer field readiness with the support of Alberta Sheriffs Branch and the Alberta Government's Law Enforcement Oversight Branch.

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Communication Plan

Strathcona County will be implementing a public awareness campaign consisting of a comprehensive communications plan that combines print and online tactics and a media release to the public which will commence approximately one month before the pilot launch to inform the public about SafeRoads Alberta and this new authority. Information will continue to be shared regularly throughout 2025 to ensure a high level of public awareness. This awareness campaign aims to support officer safety and reduce roadside hesitation and conflict with drivers and provide open and transparent information sharing with the public.

Enclosures

- 1 Immediate Roadside Sanctions Pilot Project presentation
- 2 Immediate Roadside Sanctions Pilot Project FAQ document