



Upcoming Ontario law banning the use of Cellular phone while driving a motor vehicle gets the support of the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Oakville, January 5, 2009. A private member's bill proposing a ban on the use of cellular devices and other handheld equipment while driving on a highway received second reading in Ontario's Legislative Assembly on Oct. 28. Bill 118, originally Bill 40, would amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of a cellular phone and car phone while a person is driving a motor vehicle:

78.1 (1) No person shall drive a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using a hand-held wireless communication device or other prescribed device that is capable of receiving or transmitting telephone communications, electronic data, mail or text messages.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) commends the Ontario government for taking action on the serious road safety issue of distracted driving such as holding a cell phone while driving.

Don Forgeron, Vice-President, Ontario, IBC, says: "IBC agrees with Transportation Minister Jim Bradley on the total ban on the use of all hand-held communications devices while driving."

He adds: "To show our support, IBC employees will begin to comply with the legislation immediately rather than wait until it becomes law. Further, the restriction will apply to employees all across the country, not just Ontario."

IBC has been at the forefront of this issue for the past three years, promoting awareness of the dangers of distracted driving through research, ad campaigns, and community outreach featuring the D.U.M.B. Car (Distractions Undermining Motorist Behaviour).

THE IBC Spokesperson also pointed out: "Legislation is most effective when there is a public acceptance of it. We have made great strides over the past three years in changing attitudes about driver distraction, but these efforts must continue. IBC is hopeful that the government of Ontario will follow this legislation with its own campaign to raise awareness on driver distraction generally, including safe and responsible hands-free cell phone use while driving.

Research has found that distraction is a factor in as many as eight out of every 10 collisions. Using a hand-held communication device -- whether for the purpose of talking, texting or Internet surfing -- is one of the most common driver distractions on our roads today.

These activities are particularly dangerous because they can simultaneously distract a driver visually (eyes off the road), cognitively (mind off the road), and physically (hands off the wheel).

The wireless headset technology has been available for several years. With prices starting from as low as \$35.00 for a good quality device there is no reason that justifies not turning bad driving habits into life saving behaviours and not acting right away.

A single accident at fault usually results in major insurance premium increases that go far beyond the cost of the purchase of a hands-free device. Why wait for disaster to strike? Isn't it better to be proactive rather than reactive? Once we all focus on the road and eliminating preventable distraction, there will be fewer accidents, less road rage and our roads will become much safer.