

# City of Mississauga Memorandum



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Date: 2024/11/19

To: Road Safety Committee

From: Erica Warsh – Vision Zero Program Lead

Meeting Date: 2024/11/26

Subject: Report to Road Safety Committee regarding mascot concept

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The purpose of this memo is to provide the Road Safety Committee with information related to the use of mascots for road safety messaging. This memo will provide some research-based insight on why organizations choose to use mascots and some examples of road safety mascots from other communities. This memo is an update to a previous memo dated June 28, 2022, to the Road Safety Committee about the logistical considerations for developing a mascot and associated brand (**Appendix 1**).

## Why Do Organizations Use Mascots?

Research was conducted to explain the fundamental reasons why some organizations and communities may choose to utilize a mascot to promote and share their messages.

Typically, mascots are intended to remind us of happy memories from our childhood and evoke a feeling of comfort and familiarity. This is especially true for mascots that have been around for decades and have become iconic figures in their own right. Mascots offer visual engagement opportunities, enhancing brand awareness. These characters help consumers identify, remember, and understand the brand. Mascots must strongly associate with the brand, product, or service to be effective marketing tools.

Research has shown that mascots are most effective when they take on human characteristics and the closer a person can relate to the actions of the mascot, the more likely they are to remember it. When advertisers dream up talking tigers or even a giant pile of tires to be their spokes-things, they tend to begin by picking an animal, or some marshmallows look-alikes, and making it fun, relatable, and ultimately, more physically human. A marketing study compared anthropomorphized bears and lions, as well as bears and lions in their original forms. It found that people preferred the bear, given that it can stand on two legs and has a higher physical similarity to a human than a lion.

A mascot should be designed to be approachable, inviting the audience's trust and empathy. The humanized flagship species mascot acts as a campaign representative to which the target audience can relate. It assumes the identity of a fellow community member and often demonstrates the new target behavior itself with a direct slogan. The mascot gives people a tangible, approachable embodiment of the flagship species, fostering the same kind of concern and emotional attachment members of the audience would have for a fellow human being.

A mascot helps draw attention to community events and engages individuals of all ages but tends to be most effective in person among children. Local community members often take photographs with the mascot and share the campaign slogan on social media, helping to spread central messages to wider audiences.

Mascots are often used to communicate messaging to children. With their cartoon like nature, and the fact that they often take the form of an animal or fictional character, they often convey a serious topic to children in a way that they absorb. For an adult population, mascots are more about brand recognition and people tend to forget the content of the messages these mascots provide as they get older.

In a study of Sparky the Fire Prevention Dog, the following was observed in a study about the overall effectiveness of the mascot at conveying a message.

1. *Sparky's Effectiveness Diminishes as the Audience Ages*: A study by Johnson et al. (2018) found that while 70% of children aged 5-7 could recognize Sparky and recall basic fire safety messages, this number dropped to 30% for children aged 8-12. Furthermore, only 15% of surveyed adults could recall any specific fire safety message associated with Sparky.
2. *Recall Rates*: According to a study by the NFPA (2019), only 25% of adults could recall specific fire safety messages associated with Sparky. This contrasts sharply with campaigns using modern digital platforms, which have significantly higher retention rates.
3. *Retention Rates*: Research by the Fire Protection Research Foundation (2018) showed that children exposed to digital fire safety content retained 50% of the information, compared to 30% retention from traditional content featuring Sparky.

## **Mascots From Other Municipalities**

Below is a selection of mascots for road/transportation related messaging from other communities. From this research, there are a few mascots that represent and share road safety messaging, but the number of existing mascot was minimal. It should also be noted that a number of these mascots may be historical and not longer actively used. For some, there was no recent content to indicate that these images are still being used for promotional purposes.

### ***Safety Cone Sam - Newmarket***

Safety Cone Sam is the official mascot for the Town of Newmarket's *Safety Driven* campaign. His goal is to spread the word about traffic safety in Newmarket and to encourage residents to make a positive change in their neighbourhood and community. Safety Cone Sam attends events in the City as seen below.

*Social Media*: Safety Cone Sam has a Twitter account (@SafetyConeSam) with 185 followers. Posts on this account average approximately 200-400 views, with some posts receiving more in the range of 600-900 views.



### **GO Bear - GO Transit**

<https://www.gotransit.com/en/about-go/go-bear>

The GO Bear mascot has been a fixture at GO stations, stops, concerts, sporting and special events since 1993.

From GO Transit's website; "GO Bear loves nothing more than to meet and mingle with his fellow GO passengers. Whether meeting them on GO Transit, at a special event or his favorite place; Union Station before a Blue Jays game (GO Jays!), GO Bear is always ready to remind people that GO Transit is the fastest and safest way to get around the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas."

*Social Media:* GO Bear does not have his own social media channels. He is promoted through GO Transit's main accounts. GO Bear has most recently been used by GO Transit to launch their "Kids on the GO" club that provides travel tips, kids activities and special offers to kids who register with their guardians.



### ***Elmer the Safety Elephant –***

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death and hospitalization for Canadian children up to age 19. The role of Elmer the Safety Elephant is to teach young children how to stay safe. From the day he first appeared over 50 years ago, he was an instant hit with kids. Over the years, his image has changed to maintain his positive impact on young children. The character and his message are as relevant (and as much needed) today as ever.

Elmer's original safety rules were based on a study of collisions involving children 5 to 9 years of age. The study showed that the vast majority of mishaps could be traced to six hazards. Running was usually a contributing factor.

Lack of knowledge of safety rules was not the only reason for these incidents. Momentary excitement could make the child forget to be careful. This study resulted in the slogan "Elmer and I never forget" and six traffic safety rules. Elmer now has seven traffic safety rules, and addresses many aspects of child injury prevention, including playground, fire, school bus, railway, home and Internet safety.

*Social Media:* There does appear to be a twitter account for Elmer (@CSCElmer), although it has only made one post in April 2024 and has minimal followers. No other social media account was found for Elmer.



### ***Mr. Zebra - Singapore***

In support of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety, Singapore Road Safety Council, Traffic Police, Automobile Association of Singapore and People's Association joined hands to organize a nationwide pledge gathering campaign from March to September 2011.

To distinguish Singapore's efforts from the larger UN mission, the campaign identity 'Safe Roads Singapore' was recommended, accompanied with the call for action tagline 'PLEDGE.BELIEVE.ACT'. A mascot "Mr Zebra" was also introduced as the campaign ambassador and a life-size mascot which made its appearance at the various campaign related events was also fabricated.

A wide variety of advertising and promotion collaterals including pop-up posters, car decals, bookmarks, leaflets, folders were produced to help propagate road safety messages and raise road safety awareness among road users. A dedicated website and Facebook fan page were set up for wider engagement online.

The campaign's strategy also focused on reaching out to the young. Specially designed fun school pledge packs were distributed to 360,000 students from 180 schools who also participated in the pledge campaign.

*Social Media:* Mr. Zebra has a YouTube account with 6 cartoon videos posted 5 years ago that have a total of 9300 views. The Singapore Road Safety Council has it's own Instagram account (@singaporeroadsafetycouncil) with 1,194 followers and 132 posts.



### ***Zebra Mascot from Indian Youth Secured Operations***

The Indian Youth Secured Operations Organization has a mascot that is used to promote road safety messaging. Finding additional information and resources on the origins of this mascot and how it is utilized was challenging.



### ***Izzy the Lizard – Australia***

Izzy is a road safety mascot who knows how to stay safe in the traffic environment. Izzy features in three storybooks, games, songs, stories and cooking activities, and also visits early childhood centres and schools to share road safety education messages with young children. There are infographics and activity pages that target youth through high school. Izzy is a virtual presence but there is also a physical mascot costume that attends children's events.

Izzy represents the School Drug Education and Road Aware group funded by the Department of Education of West Australia.

Key road safety messages for children in the early years:

- Hold hands with an adult before you cross the road.
- Stop! Look! Listen! Think! before you cross the road.
- Buckle up, every time you go for a ride in the car.

Social Media: After scanning social media, no accounts for Izzy were found.



## Logistical Considerations

There are a number of logistical considerations related to the development of a mascot. These have been previously explored in a memo to the Road Safety Committee on June 28, 2022. That memo is attached for reference (**Appendix 1**). The logistical considerations have not changed and are briefly summarized below.

Those considerations include:

- **Cost** – There will be costs associated with design, purchasing and costume which may need to be custom made, and operational costs for a mascot
- **Image** – needs to reflect the type of messaging and be appropriate for all modes
- **Tone** – RSC and the City typically develop road safety campaigns with a serious tone and mascots are not always viewed as serious
- **Target Audience** – Mascots often cater to children
- **Professional Services** – Design needs to either be done in-house by staff if capacity allows or paid for through professional services
- **Digital Presence** – The City typically contains all social media messaging to the formal City channels. Separate accounts are not preferred
- **Policy and Procedures** – A Policy and Procedures document would need to be developed for this mascot and managed/followed by the committee
- **Storage** – Should a physical costume be explored, consideration needs to be made for where it will be stored
- **Transportation** – Taking a physical mascot costume to and from an event requires a large vehicle like a cargo van
- **Cleaning** – Any physical costume must be dry cleaned after every use. Consideration for this cost must be accounted for
- **Staffing** – A physical mascot costume required two people to attend an event. One to be inside the costume and a handler to help them navigate their surroundings and talk to people
- **Training** – Anyone involved in attending events with the costume will need to undergo training

## Road Safety Campaigns in Comparable Municipalities and Mississauga's Road Safety Frame

Staff undertook a benchmarking exercise of the road safety campaigns conducted by other municipalities (**Appendix 2**) as a part of a separate request from the Road Safety Committee. As presented to the Committee, the results show a focus on speeding and dangerous driving with the target of the campaigns being the driver, not other road users like pedestrians. In Mississauga, the focus of the City's road safety campaigns has been on aggressive driving behaviour.

In 2023, there were 5590 collisions on Mississauga's roads, of which 597 caused injury or death. This is a significant number of collisions that speaks to the need to focus on driver behaviour. These figures speak to driver behaviour being the cause of the vast majority of

collisions and why road safety campaigns need to focus on driver behaviour, not on pedestrian or children's behaviour.

It is recommended that Mississauga focus its limited road safety resources on addressing driver behaviour, not on developing a mascot for children, who are not the root cause of the majority of collisions.

**Attachments (optional)**

Appendix 1: Memo re: Mascot Development, June 28, 2022

Appendix 2: Benchmarking – Road Safety Campaigns in Comparable Municipalities

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[Click here to enter name and title...](#)



Date: 2022/06/28

To: Road Safety Committee

From: Rob Trewartha – Director, Strategic Communications and Initiatives  
Susan Tanabe – Acting Director, Infrastructure Planning and Engineering Services

Meeting Date: 2022/06/28

Subject: City of Mississauga Road Safety Committee Mascot Request

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## **Context**

The Road Safety Committee has been in discussion about the development of a mascot concept. The discussions have focused on some preliminary concept ideas, but presently, no formal concept has been established. In advance of the upcoming municipal election and the term for Road Safety Committee coming to a close, there has been some discussion about staff taking the lead on the development of the Committee's mascot.

The following memo outlines considerations for the development of a City mascot and the complexity of the logistics of both a digital and physical mascot, especially one dedicated to a serious and sensitive subject like road safety and Vision Zero.

## **Concept**

**Image** – The image used for the mascot needs to reflect typical messaging shared with the public by the Road Safety Committee. Road safety is a serious topic and therefore, any mascot developed to represent the Road Safety Committee should be done with careful and serious consideration on how the public will receive it.

**Tone** – In the past, campaigns and messaging shared with the public regarding road safety have been serious in nature and targeted all road users with specific emphasis on driver responsibility. Mascots tend to be an animated version of a static object, which can often read as cartoonish. Mascots have typically been used to cater messaging to children by catching their attention. Consideration needs to be given for how and if these goals can work together.

**Target Audience** – As stated above, mascots tend to be used for campaigns and messaging targeted to children and their families. Currently, the Road Safety Committee and Road Safety and Vision Zero staff at the City do not focus their messaging and content to children. A mascot for the Committee should resonate with an older audience. Based on the target audience, a calendar or schedule of events that are appropriate to that audience would need to be developed.

## **Design Considerations**

**Professional Services** – The City’s Creative Services team has limited capacity to develop a mascot concept and artwork prior to the close of the Road Safety Committee. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration and the existing preliminary concepts would need to be refined prior to developing the concept for the mascot. The development of a formal mascot concept will also require consultations and assistance from an external vendor who specializes in mascot design, especially if the intention is to ultimately purchase a costume of the same likeness.

## **Digital Presence**

There has been some discussion regarding this mascot having its own digital presence on social media. City practice is to focus messaging to the City’s corporate social media accounts for maximum reach. It takes significant time and effort to build a social media following for a new account. As an example, the City of Mississauga’s corporate Twitter account has more than 84,000 followers. In comparison, the current Traffic Management mascot for the Town of Newmarket (Safety Cone Sam) has approximately 190 followers for an account that was initiated in May of 2012. That Twitter account last posted road safety messaging in March 2022.

A dedicated social media channel would also require an individual or multiple people to manage and schedule frequent posts to build and maintain that following. Responding to any comments or replies on social media posts also requires a large time commitment. This would also require capacity from the City’s graphic design staff to consistently develop content using the mascot’s image.

## **Logistics**

**Development of Policy and Procedures** – Existing mascots used by the City have a Policy and Procedures document developed that outlines the process for booking the costume, the type of training that needs to be completed before someone is permitted to use the costume, procedures for borrowing the costume and what each borrower is responsible for while in possession of the costume.

**Storage** – Mascot costumes are large and typically very heavy. They need to be stored appropriately to ensure they are not damaged and at a secure location that is also accessible for pick-up and drop-off. At the moment, no plan for storage of a costume has been developed. The City’s transition away from dedicated work spaces and a hybrid model of staff work locations also adds a new level of complexity to where and how a costume could be stored.

**Transportation** – Mascot costumes can be large and heavy. For example, the Parks, Forestry and Environment tree mascot and its accessories are stored in a bag that weighs approximately 35 pounds and is so large that it can only be transported in a flat-bed pick-up truck or a large cargo van. Appropriate transportation to and from any event or photo session needs to be arranged for each use.

**Cleaning** – There are many levels to keeping a mascot costume clean and each has its own financial implications. For example, the Parks, Forestry and Environment costume has an undergarment that is used that must be dry cleaned every time someone wears the costume (sweat) (\$75+); however, with COVID-19 – the recommendation would be to have the entire unit

cleaned for hygiene and safety measures. Alcohol wipes would also need to be used near the mouth area as there would often be a spit/breath smell from the previous user.

In addition, a rug company in Etobicoke has been used to fully clean the costume (\$400) – it is time consuming to co-ordinate transport and delivery. This is even more complicated during a busy time of year with several events within close timeframes.

Specific costs for a Road Safety Committee mascot would need to be determined based on the final design and costume.

**Staffing** – Each mascot appearance would require one individual to be inside of the costume as well as a handler to help them navigate around the event and also speak to people. Mascots do not speak and rely significantly on their handler. The more frequently the mascot makes appearances at public events, the more human resources will be required – to wear the costume, be a handler and transport the costume.

**Training** – The individual inside of the costume as well as the handler need to go through appropriate training, which also needs to be developed before a mascot could be deployed at public events. Training includes information about how to interact with the public, how to be a handler, how to put on and take off the costume, etc. This training exists for the Parks, Forestry and Environment mascot, but a specific session related to the ultimate Road Safety Committee Mascot needs to be developed.

**Waiver** – If the individuals in the mascot costume are not employed City staff, there may be a need for a waiver to be completed. This is something that would require consultation with the City's legal and risk management department.

**Events** – A plan is required for which events the mascot will attend. Allowance for costume cleaning between events and appropriate transportation is also required.

Mascot appearances are limited to 30 minutes to avoid the person inside from overheating and suffering from exhaustion while wearing the costume. The individual inside also needs to be provided with cooling packs and a fan to ensure they do not overheat.

## **Financial Implications**

**Cost of design** – As stated above, the City of Mississauga's Creative Services team does not have the capacity or in-house expertise to take on the sole responsibility of developing a concept and design for a mascot. This means that the City will need to seek assistance from external vendors to develop a concept and graphic for the Road Safety Committee mascot. At this time, staff do not have an estimate of what that cost would be.

**Cost of costume** – The cost of purchasing a costume is also something that staff need to research further. Staff have been advised that previous mascot costume purchases cost between \$3,000 - \$8,000. Given current inflation, those costs have likely risen to approximately \$5,000 - \$15,000. It should also be noted that if a custom costume needs to be made to align with the ultimate mascot design, this cost would likely be significantly higher. At this time, staff do not have an estimate of that cost.

**Operational costs** – In addition to costs for designing and purchasing of a physical costume, staff have been advised about the operational costs associated with a physical mascot. As stated above, there are potential costs for staffing both the individual inside the costume and the handler for each event the mascot is scheduled to attend. There are also storage, cleaning, transportation and other miscellaneous costs that must be accounted for. Staff would need to develop a plan for each of these requirements to determine an estimated annual operations costs.

Based on consultation with Clerks Division staff, **it is estimated that the funds allocated for all of the City's Advisory Committees would not be sufficient or appropriate to cover the costs of designing and purchasing a mascot costume.** Annual operational costs also need to be accounted for when moving forward with mascot development.

## **Recommendations:**

1. That staff take a phased approach to mascot concept and design by costing out the development of a digital concept that is appropriately branded with the assistance of City of Mississauga's Marketing and Creative Team and an external vendor who specializes in mascot development, to be used in future Road Safety Committee communication campaigns.
2. That based on availability of funds in the Committee Support budget (Clerk's Division), staff be directed to commence the first phase by having a digital mascot concept developed.
3. That staff explore the start-up and operational costs and logistics of transitioning a digital mascot into a physical costume to be used at future events by the Road Safety Committee.
4. That staff report back providing the ultimate estimated cost of a physical mascot and that a formal budget request be brought to Council for consideration.

# Communications Environmental Scan

Road Safety Committee  
November 26, 2024

## Context

- Strategic Communications was asked to bring a presentation about road safety campaigns from other organizations

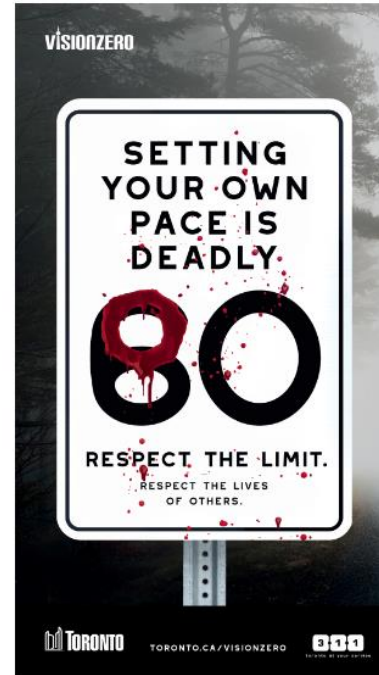
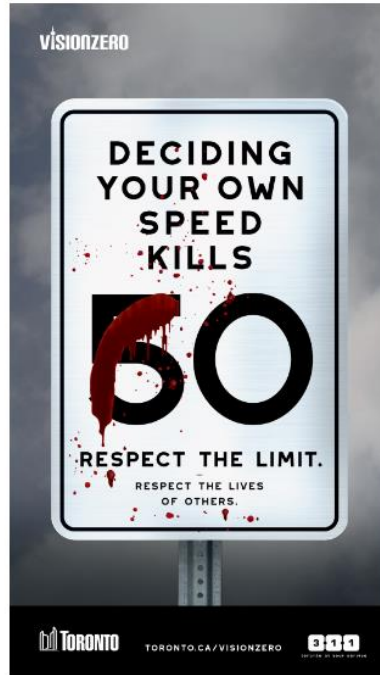
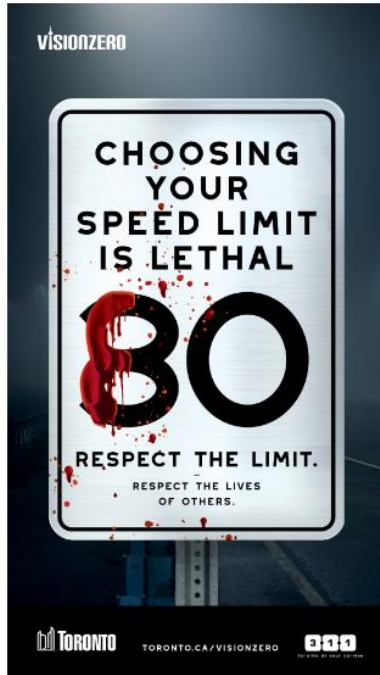
## Environmental scan focus

- Neighbouring municipalities, local organizations
- Road safety campaign
- Graphic-focused vs photo-focused

# City of Toronto | Daylight Saving



# City of Toronto | Speeding





# City of Toronto | School zone safety



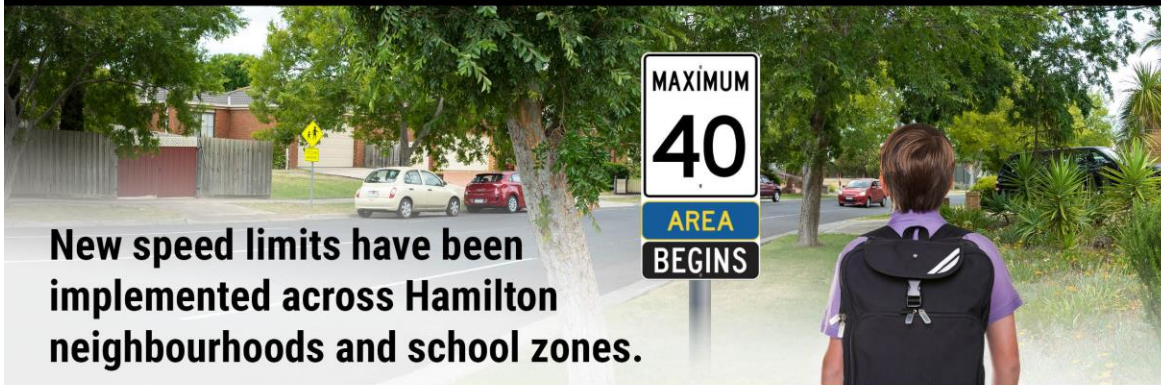
Digital transit shelter ads as part of the City's 2024 public education campaign.

# City of Hamilton | Daylight Saving



# City of Hamilton | Speeding

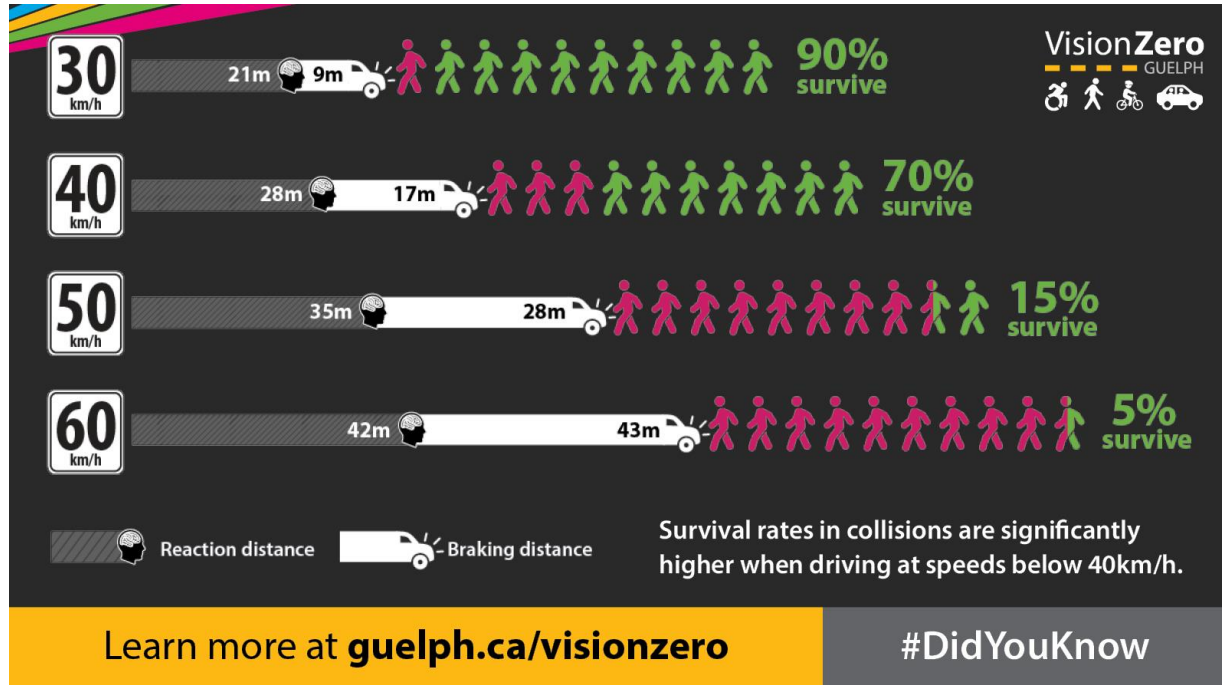
## Slower Speeds, Safer Communities



**New speed limits have been implemented across Hamilton neighbourhoods and school zones.**

Find out when changes are coming to your neighbourhood:  
**[hamilton.ca/speedreductions](https://hamilton.ca/speedreductions)**

# City of Guelph | Speeding



# City of Guelph | School zone safety



**VisionZero**  
GUELPH



**Safe streets  
save lives**

Learn more at [guelph.ca/visionzero](https://guelph.ca/visionzero)

MAXIMUM  
30  
COMMUNITY  
SAFETY  
ZONE  
FINES  
INCREASED

# City of Brampton | Speeding



**SLOW DOWN**  
FOR SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

The speed limit in Neighbourhood Speed Safety Zones is **40 km/hr.**

**MAXIMUM**  
**40**  
**AREA**  
**BEGINS**

[www.brampton.ca/SpeedLimitProject](http://www.brampton.ca/SpeedLimitProject)

 **BRAMPTON**

# City of Brampton | School zone safety



# Ministry of Transportation | Speeding





# Peel Regional Police | Pedestrian Safety



Stop Signs  
Stop Cars.

STOP

Hands  
Don't.

SCREEECH!

WATCH  
OUT!

A car is traveling too fast to stop with a wave of your hand.  
Please use a crosswalk to cross the road.

  
PEEL REGIONAL  
POLICE

PeelPolice.ca/RoadSafety



# City of Edmonton | Speeding



# Seattle Transportation Department | Speeding



Drivers, please help Slow the Flock Down! Graphic: SDOT.

# City of Mississauga | Daylight Savings/Pedestrian Safety



**Less daylight hours =  
Higher risk for collisions**

Be aware of your surroundings  
when using roadways

# City of Mississauga | Speeding

There is a **90% chance of survival** if hit by a driver travelling 30 km/hr or lower

**30** km/h 

At 50 km/hr, the survival rate **drops to 15%**

**50** km/h 

The **faster** you drive, the **longer** it takes to stop

**30 km/h** 

**50 km/h** 

# City of Mississauga | Distracted Driving



# City of Mississauga | Impaired Driving



# Impaired Driving Campaign

- Impaired driving continues to be a big problem in Mississauga.
- Develop an impaired driving campaign for December 2024



**Thank you!**