

## County to reduce speeds in construction zones

At a special meeting Wednesday evening, Lanark County Council passed a by-law authorizing the director of public works or designate to reduce speed limits within county construction zones as a preventive measure to protect the safety and well-being of workers and motorists.

Terry McCann, director of public works, explained there have been occurrences in the county and throughout the province over the past few years where serious safety concerns, such as speeding, have been identified. In some jurisdictions, incidents have resulted in injuries and deaths.

“This by-law will help to reduce the risk of traffic hazards for county employees and contractors working in construction zones by increasing deterrents for unsafe driving, and it will reduce the risk of collisions and injury through enforceable temporary speed limits where appropriate during construction,” Mr. McCann said.

The Highway Traffic Act gives municipalities authority to designate construction zones on roads in their jurisdictions and provides the ability to double fines for speeding in designated construction zones when workers are present. This makes it easier for municipalities to reduce enforceable speed limits. Once designated by an authorized individual, a construction zone must be marked with signs in accordance with the regulation.

Mr. McCann explained he works with the public works manager to approve traffic control plans for all construction projects. Once a construction zone has been designated, signs would be erected to indicate the beginning and end of the zone and that speed fines within that zone will be doubled.

The county has not historically designated construction zones or reduced speed, but Mr. McCann said the number of incidents creating safety concerns has risen over the years. “Speeding and aggressive driving within construction zones creates risks for both workers and travelling public. Narrowed lanes and lane shifts are often necessary, and even though measures are taken when laying out a work zone to promote safety and reduce risk, construction zones can be visually complex and unfamiliar for drivers, creating less margin for driver error than in normal circumstances.”

Statistics from the Ministry of Labour indicate six workers died at Ontario construction projects in 2014 “after being struck by a vehicle or mobile construction equipment. Of those, two were killed by vehicles they were directing.” As well, between 2009 and 2011, “four workers were killed or injured on construction sites and roadwork projects and 15 workers were seriously injured.”

“Safety is a very serious issue,” added Warden Bill Dobson (Montague Reeve). “Any opportunity we have to provide a safe working environment for both Lanark County workers and contractor personnel should be considered.”

– 30 –

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