

New speed limits for St. John's this fall with new Community Safety Zone

Travellers on St. John's Sideroad will have to be mindful of new speed limits on St. John's Sideroad, between Yonge Street and Bathurst, this fall as the Region of York implements a new Community Safety Zone.

Currently designated at 60 km/h, the changes recently approved by Regional Council, will see these speeds reduced to 50 km/h from 210 metres west of Yonge Street and going westward for 1.3 km. in the vicinity of St. Anne's School, the new independent girls' school set to open in the 2023-2024 school year.

The changes will be in effect from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday from September to June.

A Community Safety Zone is a designation under the Ontario Highway Traffic Act and is intended to help change driver behaviour, including reducing speed and distracted driving, to improve safety, said Regional staff in a report before Council. Fines are also increased for traffic offences within a designated Community Safety Zone. Community Safety Zones are typically designed on roadways near schools, daycare centres, retirement residents or high-collision locations, to advise motorists they are within a zone where public safety is of special concern.

In May 2021, Council approved school zone speed limit reductions in all Regional school areas, in conjunction with use of a new school zone maximum speed sign with a reduced speed limit introduced by the Province. This resulted in a 10 km/h reduced speed limit at more than 60 school locations on Regional roads. The new sign facilitates use of automated speed enforcement through clear direction to motorists as to the day and time when reduced speed limits are in effect. School zone speed limits are in effect from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday, September to June. This helps enhance safety when school is in session as well as during the morning and evening commute periods where children are walking, cycling, being dropped off/picked up, and during after-school activities.

Reduced speed limits in York Region's school zones, staff say, help increase a motorist's ability to stop in time to avoid collisions, preventing serious injury or death to vulnerable road users and may also strengthen active school travel initiatives, promote safety of vulnerable road users in school zones and help implement automated speed enforcement.

Community Safety Zones are intended to help change driver behaviour, says the Region. In conjunction with school zone speed limit reductions, these measures strive to improve safety on roads where public safety is of special concern. School locations are reviewed annually.

To reduce administrative effort on [Regional] Council, delegated authority is requested for the Commissioner of Public Works to submit bylaws for Council approval to amend Community Safety Zones and speed limits for school zones in accordance with the respective Regional policies, without an accompanying report to Council. This will allow staff to deliver the program more efficiently, ensuring locations remain consistent with changes in land use and minimizing discrepancies identified through ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

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