



## **Safer Roads Canada launches to advocate for improvements to Canada's commercial licensing and training system**

***Transport Canada needs to do more to make Canada's roads safer, says Humboldt Broncos parent***

**Edmonton, Alberta (March 6, 2020)** – Today marks the official launch of Safer Roads Canada, a new non-profit advocacy group dedicated to improving Canada's commercial licensing system and making our roads a safer place for everyone to travel. The founding members of Safer Roads Canada are families who have lost loved ones in crashes involving semi-trucks, including some of the Humboldt Broncos parents, as well as experts in transportation engineering, occupational health and safety, first responders, and educators.

"We believe everyone deserves to come home safe, and that means ensuring drivers are well trained," said Executive Director Pattie Fair of Alix, Alberta, whose husband Steve Babij was killed in a crash involving a semi-truck driven by an inexperienced driver who lost control in Rogers Pass, B.C., and hit his truck head on. According to Transport Canada statistics, 400 fatal crashes a year in Canada involve heavy vehicles like semi-trucks. Canada aims to represent all victims of these crashes, including the countless number of loved ones who are left behind."

"Our goal is to spare others the hardship of losing someone they love to a senseless crash that could have been prevented," said Carol Brons of Lake Lenore, Saskatchewan, a Director of Safer Roads Canada. Carol and Lyle Brons' daughter Dayna was the Athletic Therapist for the Humboldt Broncos, and died from injuries sustained in the 2018 crash.

"We commend Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario for already implementing mandatory entry-level training (MELT) programs, but more needs to be done. A driver trainee in any other province or territory can still obtain a Class 1 license and be insured without completing a mandatory training program and may operate extra-provincially across the country with trucks pulling multiple trailers, in complex weather and road conditions, all under the sole jurisdiction of Transport Canada," said Ginny Hunter of Kaleden, British Columbia, Chair of Safer Roads Canada. Ginny and Lawrence Hunter lost son Logan in the Humboldt Broncos tragedy.

In December, Fair and Hunter expressed their concerns about British Columbia's commercial licensing system to B.C.'s Attorney General David Eby and Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Claire Trevena since B.C. is lagging behind Ontario and other Western provinces in introducing MELT legislation. Notably, B.C. roads – including Rogers Pass and the Coquihalla Highway – are some of the

most treacherous roads in Canada for heavy vehicles, demanding a high level of driving skill and training particularly in adverse weather conditions.

The launch of Safer Roads Canada comes following Transport Minister Marc Garneau and the Council for Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety's announcement, on February 14, 2020, of the approval of a National Safety Code standard for entry-level training of Class 1 commercial truck drivers.

"As we approach the 2-year anniversary of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, Canada has not announced a time-line to implement this national standard, nor announced a date beyond which new drivers who have not completed a mandatory training program would be prohibited from operating extra-provincially," said Chris Joseph of St. Albert, Alberta, a Director of Safer Roads Canada. Chris and Andrea Joseph's son Jaxon was fatally injured in the Humboldt Broncos crash. "This should be a priority and we deserve some answers."

Safer Roads Canada appreciates and recognizes that progress has been made at the national level, however, the requirement of 103.5 hours training falls short of what is needed to improve the safety of Canadian road users. Fatal crashes involving medium and heavy trucks are all too common on our roads at approximately 1 in 5 of all fatal road collisions.

"In the past year, Minister Garneau and Transport Canada moved much more swiftly to address threats to rail and air safety, such as the Boeing 737 MAX and oil train derailments, sometimes acting within hours or days," said Ahmed Shalaby, Professor and Municipal Infrastructure Chair in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Manitoba, and a Director of Safer Roads Canada. "We demand that road users be offered the same protections as users of other modes of transport by enacting MELT on a national scale, and by conducting a comprehensive investigation into many other safety measures, including considering truck driving to be a skilled trade, adopting graduated commercial licensing, and tracking the performance of driver training instructors and schools."

More information about Safer Roads Canada can be found at [www.saferroadscanada.ca](http://www.saferroadscanada.ca). We are pleased to speak with media about our initiatives.

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