



RAC Radio Amateurs of/du Canada

*Member Society of the
International Amateur Radio Union
Membre de l'Union
Internationale des Radioamateurs*

Mr. Jim Bradley, MPP
Minister of Transportation,
Government of Ontario
Queen's Park,
Toronto Ontario

1 August 2008

Re: Proposed "Distracted Driver" Legislation

Dear Minister Bradley:

I am writing to you in my role as the President of the Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC), the national organisation representing the interests of Canada's 55,000 federally-licensed Amateur Radio Operators, some 20,000 of whom reside in Ontario. My purpose in writing to you is to ask you to ensure that your proposed bill does not inadvertently restrict the activities of Federally-Licensed Radio Amateurs while operating their equipment in their vehicles.

I understand and agree with the general intention of your proposal: when drivers use hand-held cellular telephones while their vehicles are in motion, they are much less likely to devote sufficient attention to road safety. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has similar legislation in effect since 2002, and there is similar legislation in Nova Scotia and Quebec either enacted or in development. Those laws and bills all include sections which clearly define activities that are excluded from enforcement. In those three provinces, Amateur Radio operation in vehicles is in no way restricted.

I request that your bill include an explicit exemption for Federally-Licensed Radio Amateurs operating their Amateur Radio equipment in their vehicles. My request is based on the following:

- Radio Amateurs (also known as Ham Radio operators) have passed demanding examinations set by the Federal Minister of Industry to earn their authority to operate radio equipment. Federal radio regulations specifically permit Radio Amateurs to establish mobile stations.
- By tradition, Radio Amateurs are public-spirited citizens, who regularly volunteer their time, skill, equipment and energy to the public for everything from public events to providing communications in time of emergency. Radio Amateurs are often at their most useful in emergency situations when using their equipment installed in their personal vehicles. I personally participated in such communications: during the 1998 Ice Storm, I assisted the Red Cross in providing communications to coordinate the re-supply of emergency shelters in eastern Ontario. Without the assistance of Radio Amateurs using equipment in their vehicles, the task of the Red Cross would have been much more difficult.
- Radio Amateurs' value to the public has long been recognised by the Government of Ontario, and your Ministry in particular: since 1976, we have been accorded the opportunity to obtain own-choice vehicle

licence plates bearing our federally-issued Amateur Radio Call Signs (beginning VE3 or VA3) for only a small administrative fee. These licence plates are not administered in the same way as vanity plates. An amendment such as I propose would be completely consistent with over thirty years of Ontario government practice.

- As public-spirited, responsible citizens, Ontario's Radio Amateurs are not part of the problem you seek to correct.

Minister Bradley, I hope you will consider seriously my request. By doing so, you will still be able to pursue your primary objective of improving road safety in Ontario, but you will recognise the value of a group of public-spirited citizens who stand ready to assist their neighbours in time of need, and you will do so in a manner consistent with practices in other provinces.

I would be very pleased to discuss this further with you at your convenience. Thank you for your attention.

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