

Bill 38

The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Traffic Safety Measures)

April 2025



The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is the province's central labour body, made up of more than thirty (30) affiliated unions representing 130,000 unionized workers from the public sector, private sector, and building trades.

Workplace health and safety is a key priority for the MFL and our affiliated unions. The MFL conducts health and safety research, provides health and safety education and training to our members, and lobbies and advocates for stronger laws, stricter enforcement, and greater investment in injury and illness prevention to keep all workers safe and healthy.

Therefore, while we are supportive of any measures that increase safety for motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and others on our roadways, our main interest in this bill is the potential to improve safety for workers who operate winter maintenance vehicles such as snowplows, and roadside vehicles including tow trucks.

Regarding winter maintenance vehicles, the positive measures contained in this bill include:

- Increasing the distance other drivers must maintain behind these vehicles on the highway.
- Prohibiting passing a winter maintenance vehicle in certain circumstances.
- Specific requirements when meeting a winter maintenance vehicle on a roadway or in an intersection.

The amendments also allow the operator of a tow truck or other vehicle providing roadside assistance to set out traffic control devices to safeguard them as they go about their work.

When we need the services of plow and tow-truck operators, it is often when weather conditions are the worst, and anything we can do to better protect their safety and their lives as they provide these vital services is something we should all support.

As I read the provisions proposed in Bill 38, I was reminded of the last time, just over a decade ago, when the *Highway Traffic Act* was substantively amended to better protect workers on our highways.

Those changes were made in the aftermath of the death of a flagperson killed by a vehicle travelling through a construction area. One of the key weaknesses identified in the system governing traffic through road construction zones at the time was a lack of clarity on exactly what the rules were regarding speed limits in these zones.

As the MFL noted at that time, the vast majority of drivers want to follow the law and do the right thing. It is incumbent upon lawmakers and traffic authorities to make sure the rules are clear, and that people know what they are. Therefore, considerable resources were dedicated to areas such as highway signage and public education to highlight and reinforce the new rules.

It is important that the changes proposed in Bill 38 be similarly communicated and reinforced.

I encourage the Department to use all available means to accomplish this. That includes highway signage and notices as well as public education. MPI and SAFE Work Manitoba both regularly run campaigns on traffic safety, and I encourage you to collaborate with them and any other partners you can identify to help build awareness of the new rules. We look forward to seeing those education initiatives rolled out in conjunction with the proposed changes taking effect.

On behalf of the MFL and particularly the workers directly affected by these changes, I commend the government on bringing them forward and thank you for this opportunity.

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