

# Improve winter road safety in Canada to decrease number of deaths

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The annual deaths that occur each winter in Canada due to poor road conditions can be reduced with a multipronged strategy, argues an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*)

Canada's [road fatalities](#) on a per-capita basis are twice those in Sweden, another country with inclement winter weather.

"This is unacceptable," write Dr. Diane Kelsall, deputy editor, *CMAJ*, and Dr. Donald Redelmeier, professor of medicine at the University of Toronto and a physician at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, Ontario. "Are the measures to keep us safe on snowy and icy roads insufficient, or are our expectations around winter unrealistic and our behaviour dangerous?"

There is substantial variability in standards for winter road maintenance across Canada and within regions, depending on the type of road. For example, major highways are required to have bare pavement after eight hours whereas minor highways do not have the same requirement. In 2015, Ontario's Auditor General released a report highly critical of winter highway maintenance, detailing a drop in standards for road salting and clearing.

## **The authors recommend the following measures:**

- stringent road maintenance standards tailored to local weather

conditions

- government oversight of road service companies to ensure adherence
- mandatory legislation requiring winter tires in specific provinces, as in Quebec
- seasonal speed limits and enforcement
- public education about safe winter driving.

"Hundreds of deaths each [winter](#) is not a reasonable price for living in a snowy country," state the authors.

Canadians should not be complacent and accept lower [standards](#). They should also be responsible as drivers and exercise caution about [road](#) conditions at all times.

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*,  
[www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160100](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160100)

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