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For immediate release

CAA MANITOBA CALLS ON PROVINCE TO BE TOUGHER ON DISTRACTED NEW DRIVERS

New drivers cause over one-third of distracted driving related collisions

Just like it may be hard to teach an old dog new tricks, it is harder to break a habit than to prevent it from starting in the first place. That's why on the fifth anniversary of the distracted driving ban, CAA Manitoba is encouraging the Government of Manitoba to be firm with new drivers: drive safe, or be at risk of not driving at all.

According to Manitoba Public Insurance, **38 per cent** of all collisions caused by distracted driving were from drivers in the GDL program between July 2010 and December 2013.

"New drivers are at a higher risk of collision even before adding a cellphone to the mix," says Mike Mager, President and CEO of CAA Manitoba. "Knowing that even with one distracted driving offence could cause you to lose your license will help prevent this dangerous behaviour from becoming a habit, the same we have done for drunk driving."

Ninety-six per cent of CAA Manitoba members would support a zero-tolerance policy for distracted new drivers if introduced in our province.

Mager notes this societal change is similar to when seatbelts become mandatory. "Many drivers nowadays couldn't imagine not wearing a seatbelt in a car, but there was a time it wasn't commonplace."

In the five years since distracted driving has been outlawed in Manitoba, the province has continuously improved the legislation. In 2011, two demerits were added to the penalty and earlier this month, those demerits upped to five, giving Manitoba one of the harshest penalties in all of Canada. Still, CAA Manitoba says, there is much more to be done.

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