

June 5, 2025

Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Transportation and Transit
Via email: TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Farnworth,

Re: Improving Response of Road Contractors for Traffic Control at Accident Scenes

The Ministry of Transportation and Transit (MOTT) is responsible for providing traffic control at emergency scenes on highways and rural roads when required. It is understood that MOTT contracts this work out to various contractors, including AIM Roads, Yellowhead Road & Bridge (Kootenay Boundary) Ltd, Emil Anderson Maintenance Co Ltd, who provide traffic control services within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RDOS.

When an emergency incident occurs, the responding Fire Department(s) are notified and attend immediately. To ensure a safe work environment for all present at the response the Firefighters conduct Emergency Scene Traffic Control (ESTC), which they have been certified to do through the BC Municipal Safety Association.

It is the responsibility of the Fire Departments to notify the local MOTT traffic control contractor, via fire dispatch, when traffic control is required.

WorksafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Part 18: Traffic Control, only allows firefighters to do ESTC for a maximum of 2 hours as per sections 18.6.1 Emergency Management and 18.6.2 Traffic Control Person Training. To provide ESTC beyond 2 hours requires trained Traffic Control Persons or RCMP, however, RCMP are typically short staffed and unable to support the response.

RCMP are the only other agency that has authority to close the highways and rural roads; however, their resources are already stretched and are not always available to assist with Traffic Control.

Historically traffic control contractors within the jurisdictional boundaries of the RDOS often take far longer than 2 hours to arrive on scene. This leaves the Fire Departments in a difficult position from the standpoint of liability and scene safety. If the Fire Department stays past the 2 hours, WorkSafeBC coverage no longer exists for the Firefighters. If the Fire Department stops providing traffic control on scene it may create a dangerous situation for personnel and travellers.

The RDOS Fire Departments have reached out to MOTT, AIM, RCMP and other agencies for a solution to this problem. All agencies agree that there is a definite problem identified, but this argument continues as no one offers a solution.

In future events when the traffic control contractors do not arrive on scene by the time 2-hours have elapsed the Fire Department will close the road by placing apparatus across the roadway on both sides and keep all personnel within that area to secure the scene.

Following the incident, the RDOS will invoice MOTT for the time beyond 2-hours, for all fire engines required to make the scene safe, at the rate dictated by the Emergency Management and Climate Readiness Road Rescue Agreement.

Our preference would be that the Ministry of Transportation and Transit would provide a long-term solution by enforcing an equipped response from the contracted road maintenance contractors within the first 2-hours of the report from the Fire Department.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Mark Pendergraft

Chair

CC

Ministry of Transportation and Transit, Southern Interior Regional Office

AIM Roads

Yellowhead Road & Bridge (Kootenay Boundary) Ltd.

Emil Anderson Maintenance Co Ltd.