



TOWN OF WASAGA BEACH

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Council Continues to Strengthen Town's Emergency Preparedness and Improve Highly Coordinated Response to Illegal Car Rallies

Town of Wasaga Beach creates new Downtown Community Safety Zone to help protect areas that have been targeted by illegal car rallies, adopts new emergency framework that includes proactive, full-scale road closures and a highly coordinated, tiered emergency response in cooperation with Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)

WASAGA BEACH – The Town of Wasaga Beach has taken another big step to strengthen its approach to dealing with illegal car rallies. Today, Council has approved a new **Downtown Community Safety Zone** that will cover residential and commercial areas targeted by illegal car rallies in the past. This is in addition to last week's announcement that will see the Town adopt a proactive, coordinated municipal emergency response, in partnership with the OPP.

The Town's Strict but Fair approach to illegal nuisance events will continue to focus on prevention-first. It will now also adopt a proactive, tiered municipal emergency response plan that includes:

- Greater Town-OPP coordination and information sharing
- Activating an Incident Management Team that will determine the risk to public safety and a tiered-level of response to any potential or active, illegal event

Key parts of the new, tiered emergency response include, but are not limited to:

Proactive, Tiered Emergency Response Plan

At the lowest tier, when the Town and OPP become aware that an illegal event is likely to occur, the coordinated response will include:

- Activating the Incident Management Team
- The Town issuing orders to cease and desist to organizer(s) of illegal car rallies under the authority of the Municipal Act with the intent to pursue maximum penalties in all cases

At a higher tier, when there is a high level of risk to public safety or an illegal event is imminent, the coordinated response may also include:

- Activating the Emergency Operations Centre
- Vehicle inspection stations where unsafe vehicles will be towed and impounded
- Maximum "illegal car rally" towing and impound fees in effect
- Proactive, full-scale road closures that would see the Town's main access points limited to local traffic only

The longest freshwater beach in the world.

- Traffic diversion zones in effect
- Parking lot closures
- Beach Drive open to pedestrian traffic only (especially on long weekends or during special events)
- Coordinated Town-OPP communications on Town and OPP social media channels, and through local media, to keep local residents, businesses and visitors informed

At the highest tier or highest level of risk to public safety, the coordinated response would include all of the above, plus:

- Increased OPP presence
- Additional road closures and traffic diversion zones in effect

Community Safety Zone

The Town is adopting this highly coordinated, tiered emergency response plan in addition to pursuing new measures – including a **Downtown Community Safety Zone** that would impact specific areas of concern.

While the emergency response plan aims to prevent illegal events from taking place by issuing orders and conducting vehicle inspections on organizers and participants outside the municipality – the proposed **Downtown Community Safety Zone** will make it easier for law enforcement to fine and charge anyone that is speeding or stunt driving within the Town of Wasaga Beach. It will also double minimum fines and penalties for speeding and stunt driving.

Quotes

Mayor Brian Smith: “Today, we are taking further action to protect the public interest, our residents, visitors and businesses from people who break the law and threaten public safety. The Town of Wasaga Beach is home to the world’s longest freshwater beach. We are a beautiful, safe, coastal community in South Georgian Bay that welcomes millions of visitors from across Canada and around the world each year. Tourism and special events are what we do best, and Wasaga Beach has a storied history of love for cars – fast ones, old ones, rare ones, you name it. I’ve seen all the Fast and Furious films, I know what [Fuel Fest](#) is, and I can tell you the Town is interested in exploring opportunities to organize an event that [Vin Diesel](#) and [Cody Walker](#) would want to show up to. But illegal events, and illegal car rallies organized by people that do not have permits and do not respect the law, are not welcome in Wasaga Beach. They threaten the safety of our residents, visitors and local businesses. They damage our brand as a safe, iconic tourist destination as well as our economy, municipal infrastructure and private property – and they risk people’s lives.”

Craig Williams, Fire Chief, Town of Wasaga Beach: “The Town, in cooperation with first responders including the OPP, has adopted a proactive, highly coordinated and tiered Emergency Response Plan to deal with illegal car rallies. Should an illegal event occur, this will help to ensure a safe environment for first responders to do their jobs as we work to ensure the safety of residents and visitors.”

Leah Gilfoy, Detachment Commander, Huronia West OPP: “The safety of our communities remains a top priority for the OPP. We are proud to partner with the Town of Wasaga Beach, By-Law and our partners in public safety in a coordinated response to those who choose to jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the Town. Officers will be actively patrolling and anyone who participates in unlawful behaviour may be charged and their vehicle impounded.”

Kenn Voss, Owner, Wasaga Beach Canadian Tire: “We support the Town and Council in taking this proactive, coordinated approach to dealing with illegal car rallies. These large nuisance events damage private property, threaten the safety of our customers and local residents, and are completely unnecessary.”

Dave Cubitt, Co-owner, BeachBar: “As a beachfront business owner in Wasaga Beach, BeachBar supports the Town’s proactive, strict but fair approach to illegal events that threaten the fun, safe vibe of our community and our beachfront commercial area. It’s one thing to come here and participate in an event that is authorized and organized to deliver an amazing, thrilling and safe experience. It’s another thing to come here and rip up our Beach Drive, municipal roads, parking lots and interfere with the events and nightlife we offer our tourists and local residents on long weekends and throughout the summer. These types of illegal events are not welcome in Wasaga Beach – they damage and disrupt our business, our customers and this beautiful community we call home.”

Mark Crowe, President of Stonebridge Building Group Inc.: “As a developer and community builder in Wasaga Beach, I completely support the Town’s proactive, strict but fair approach to illegal events and car rallies that threaten to disrupt the community and its businesses. In the past, municipal and private property has been damaged because of these illegal car rallies and these large, illegal events disrupt our wonderful community. The organizers do not have permits. They break the law, and they damage and disrupt our business, our customers and our community.”

Paul Frederico, President of Sterling Homes: “As a proud community builder in the Town of Wasaga Beach, Sterling Homes supports the Town’s strict but fair, proactive approach to dealing with illegal car rallies and any other illegal events. We appreciate the strong level of cooperation between the Town and OPP. We know that ultimately, the goal is to protect residents, visitors and local businesses – and to deter and prevent these illegal events from targeting our community in the first place. They are not welcome in Wasaga Beach.”

Peter Gibbins, President of the Wasaga Beach Rate Payers Association: “The Wasaga Beach Rate Payers Association supports the Town’s proactive, strict but fair approach to illegal events that threaten our residents, visitors and businesses. We appreciate the strong level of cooperation between the Town and OPP. These illegal and often volatile events damage municipal and private property and put lives at risk. They cost the municipality and local businesses money by disrupting the flow of traffic, and threatening pedestrian safety in public spaces and private parking lots. We know the goal is to protect our full-time residents, valuable visitors and local businesses – and to deter and prevent these illegal events from targeting our community in the first place.”

Quick facts

- The proposed Downtown Community Safety Zone would impact the main arterial roads in the Downtown area. These would include:
 - River Road West: East of Blueberry Trail to Village Gate Drive
 - Mosley Street: East of 18th Street North to Main Street
 - Old Mosley Street: East of 18th Street North to 13th Street South
 - Main Street
 - Beach Drive

- 3rd Street North
- Spruce Street
- River Road East: East of Main Street to Zoo Park Road
- Recently, the Town also passed a new bylaw to unlock additional powers under Bill 128 of the Municipal Act, that permits it to close roads and enact other measures during declared nuisance events that typically, municipalities cannot do.
- The maximum penalty for violating the [Town of Wasaga Beach Car Rally Bylaw](#) is \$25,000

Additional resources

B-roll, other visual assets available upon request.

- 30 -

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