



## ***NEWS RELEASE***

### **Canada's First Highway Safety Corridor Opens in BC's Fraser Canyon**

**Hope, B.C. – June 6, 2006:** A 192 kilometer section of BC's Fraser Canyon has been designated as Canada's first highway safety corridor. The Honourable John Les, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General, announced the opening of the Fraser Canyon Highway Safety Corridor today at a ceremony attended by members of the trucking industry, business, labour and local community groups.

Signs will advise drivers as they enter and leave the Corridor, and the RCMP and the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Branch of the Ministry of Transportation will increase enforcement activity along the Corridor.

More commercial vehicles travel along the Corridor than on any other major highway in BC's interior and north. Steep hills and tight curves combined with changeable or severe weather and road conditions frequently result in motor vehicle crashes, injuries and fatalities.

"Vehicle crashes along the Fraser Canyon Highway are a major concern to everyone," said Les. "Our government is committed to making roads safer in BC, and it's encouraging to see industry, local communities, and road safety organizations working together to improve safety along this stretch of highway."

The highway is a major route for trucks hauling goods and equipment to the province. When a collision occurs, both truck and passenger traffic can be affected for a minimum of four hours.

"Many people believe that trucks are responsible for most of the serious car-large truck crashes, but research shows that car drivers are responsible for fatal car-truck crashes over 70% of the time and it is essential that this message gets across," said Paul Landry, President and CEO of the BC Trucking Association. "The Corridor is part of the TruckSafe program part of which is to improve the public's understanding of the importance of sharing the road with this industry which will improve safety for all drivers on BC's highways," said Landry.

According to WorkSafeBC, provincially, in the five years from 2001-2005, there were 22,300 time loss claims, including 105 fatalities and 516 serious injuries. More than 1.2 million productive work days were lost to the trucking industry. These injuries and fatalities also cost the trucking industry \$314 million in workers' compensation costs.

Betty Pirs, WorkSafeBC's Executive Director, Prevention Services said, "BC's trucking industry and the public cannot afford the continuing human and financial cost of these injuries and fatalities. WorkSafeBC and our

partners are committed to a strategy of safety with the Fraser Canyon Corridor and other areas which will help to create safer highways for all users.”

Safety on the highway became a key focus in 1997, when the Fraser Canyon Traffic Safety Committee was formed to obtain input from communities and agencies along the highway. One of the Committee’s major findings was that aggressive driving was a significant cause of serious and fatal collisions. As a result, the Fraser Canyon Watch program was formed in 2000. The Canyon Watch program encourages safer driving in the Canyon area by proactively placing information posters and stickers in phone booths, truck stops, restaurants and points of business along the highway. Motorists are encouraged to record and report aggressive driving behavior to police at: 1-888-801-8884.

An increasing number of truck crashes resulted in the formation of the Fraser Canyon Truck Crash Review Committee (FCTCRC) in 2004. The partners of the FCTCRC committed resources to improve safety for all drivers in the Canyon area, including:

- The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) provided funding for road improvements and commissioned studies for engineering improvements at specific collision sites. For instance, rumble strips were added to stretches of the highway where fatigued drivers are known to run off the road.
- The RCMP Fraser Valley Traffic Services and Southern Interior Traffic Services in Ashcroft increased enforcement, focusing on speed and aggressive driving in critical areas.
- The Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Branch of the Ministry of Transportation increased the number of vehicle safety checks in critical areas with collision history.
- The Ministry of Transportation relocated and altered speed advisory signs and completed roadwork funded by ICBC.
- WorkSafeBC, RCMP, ICBC and BCTA members coordinated the development of a Canyon Hazards survey for truck drivers, a Sharing the Road with Trucks–Drive Smart brochure and Fraser Canyon Highway Safety Corridor Professional Driver Bulletins.

For more information contact:

Gladys Johnsen  
Prevention Public Affairs Manager  
WorkSafeBC  
604 214-5441 or toll-free in B.C. at 1 888 621-7233, local 5441



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