

The Ontario Legislature recently passed the *Burden Reduction Act, 2017* (Bill 27) which contained amendments to the *Highway Traffic Act* that authorize the introduction of over-dimensional vehicle escorts. In preparation for the proclamation of the legislation into force, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is considering introducing a new supporting regulation and amending Ontario Regulation 366/09 (Display Screens and Hand-Held Devices)

Under the legislation, the authority to appoint over-dimensional vehicle escorts must be provided for in regulation. The Ministry proposes that the regulations name the Registrar of Motor Vehicles as the appointing authority for escorts.

The Ministry considers it important that escorts have adequate knowledge of Ontario's traffic safety laws and of safe practices for the movement of overweight and over-dimensional vehicles. Therefore, the Ministry is proposing that escorts must successfully complete a training course before being eligible for appointment. The course would need to be one approved by the Ministry.

The Ministry is considering options with respect to course delivery. One option under consideration is that the course would be approved through a process similar to the Ministry's Driver Certification Program (DCP) and delivered by a ministry approved provider. . The DCP program is a voluntary program under which organizations are authorized by MTO to train and test employees/students.

Driver Licencing

The Ministry wishes to ensure that escorts have a record of compliance with highway traffic laws, including any rules around escorts. To be eligible for appointment escorts will need to have maintained a valid full driver's licence for at least four years and must not have accumulated more than six demerit points.

Escorts will need to be identifiable. It is proposed that escorts be required to provide proof of their appointment upon request.

Private Escort Vehicle Signage and Lighting

Escorts will be required to use vehicles that are highly visible and easily identifiable. MTO proposes that escort vehicles should be required:

- To display signs with the words “OVERSIZE LOAD” either on the front and the rear or on the roof facing both the front and back of the vehicle
- To display signs with the words “Certified Escort” on the both sides and the rear
- To display blaze orange marker flags on each side
- To have amber lighting on its roof visible on a 360 degree basis consisting of either of a rectangular bar positioned across the width of the vehicle or of two warning lamps, one on each side of the roof, that qualify as Class 1 warning lights, according to Standard J845, published on June 10, 2013 by SAE International, as amended from time to time

Private Escort Persons Clothing and Signage

For safety purposes in directing traffic, it is important that over-dimensional vehicle escorts be dressed in clothing that makes them visible to motorists and that they use signage that conforms to prevailing standards. The Ministry proposes to use many of the standards applicable to construction workers directing traffic in construction zones.

An escort’s garment would be required to meet these standards:

- It covers at least his or her upper body and has the following features

- It is fluorescent blaze or international orange in colour.
- On the front and the back, there are two yellow stripes that are 5 centimetres wide. The yellow area must total at least 500 square centimetres on the front and at least 570 square centimetres on the back.
- On the front, the stripes must be arranged vertically and centred and must be approximately 225 millimetres apart, measured from the centre of each stripe. On the back, they must be arranged in a diagonal “X” pattern.

If an escort uses a hand-held stop sign to direct traffic, it will need to meet these requirements:

- It must be octagonal in shape, measure 450 millimetres between opposite sides, and be mounted on a pole that is 1.2 metres long.
- It must be high-intensity retro-reflective grade red in colour, with the word “STOP” written in legible high-intensity retro-reflective grade white letters 150 millimetres high in a central position on the sign.
- It must be maintained in a clean and legible condition.

Communication Devices

Ontario Regulation 366/09 (Display Screens and Hand-Held Devices) under the *Highway Traffic Act* contains a number of exemptions from the prohibitions in the Act against display screens and hand-held devices. Specifically, various classes of commercial drivers are exempted and permitted to use two-way radios while engaged in their duties. It is proposed that over-dimensional vehicle escorts be added to the list of exempt persons since they may need the use of a two-way radio to properly perform their duties.