

# School board still pushing MTO for 'safety zone' at Crossroads

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The Rainy River District School Board once again is taking steps to try and implement a "community safety zone" in front of Crossroads School along Highway 613 North.

A meeting was held at the Devlin school Monday night to hear the concerns of parents and community members, as well as gather ideas to submit to the Ministry of Transportation.

Kelly Schmid (Northwestern Region Traffic Section) and Tom Marinis (Road Safety Regional Co-ordinator) of the MTO also were on hand to present some informations and answer questions about possible actions.

A "community safety zone" is a designation that would see more signs put up around the school and heavier fines for motorists committing traffic violations within it.

This was just one of the ideas presented to ensure safety in front of the school.

The discussion mostly focused on a speed reduction in front of the school, with attendees indicating the limit should be dropped to 60 km/h from the current 80 km/h—something the public board has requested in the past.

Some suggested drivers consistently exceed the posted limit in front of the school.

It was noted by school staff and parents that sometimes chil-

dren will walk down the road, vehicles will park along the highway during school events, and that the school entrances are used many times a day during the school year.

Schmid explained the ministry does three traffic counts a year every two-three years and its data has shown that generally drivers are following the posted speed limit there.

In fact, reducing the speed limit actually could make things more dangerous, she noted.

"You're not going to get drivers to reduce speeds by putting up reduced speed limit signs in an arbitrary place," Schmid stressed.

She noted there isn't much "friction" surrounding the school that makes a driver feel like they need to slow down; it is mostly open fields.

"Then what you get is law-abiding drivers going 60 and everyone else driving what they feel like," Schmid remarked.

"This makes it harder to judge gaps in traffic and studies have shown that it can actually make things more dangerous."

Marinis agreed it seems odd for them to admit that signs don't work in slowing people down when they are artificially low, "but that is the world we live in."

"My job is to make the highway safe and right now the posted 80 km/h is the safest," Schmid assured.

Schmid and Marinis both said it also would be unreason-

able to ask the OPP to watch that stretch all day, every day.

Currently there are five-sided, fluorescent yellow "school zone" signs located on either side of the school, warning drivers to drive with extra caution and watch for children.

It was pointed out by a community member during Monday's meeting, and confirmed by Schmid, that these signs do not force a vehicle to slow down, it only reminds drivers that a school is nearby.

Other ideas brought forward Monday included a yellow centre line, a radar speed sign, and more public education.

Board chair Dianne McCormack said she believes public education is a very important step, citing the recent push to prevent drivers from passing stopped school buses.

"We want people to think when they are driving down [Highway 613N]," McCormack noted.

Running the meeting and leading the inquiry into what can be done was Superintendent of Education Andrew Harris, who told those on hand that he will compile the suggestions, write a report, and send the ideas to the ministry.

He added anyone with ideas, or wishing to add their support, can drop a letter off at Crossroads School or send it to him at the board office in Fort Frances.