

Highways 11 & 17 Pilot Introduces Enhanced Winter Maintenance Services

New maintenance standard achieves bare pavement goals four hours faster!

Ontario's Highways 11 and 17 are a strategic link in the Trans-Canada Highway system connecting eastern and western supply chains in Canada and serving local communities across Northern Ontario.

Following a detailed technical review of winter service levels on Highways 11 and 17 in Northern Ontario, in 2020-21, Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO) launched a winter pilot project to identify opportunities for enhancing the Hwy 11 and 17 winter maintenance standards, and to identify areas where contractors have difficulty meeting bare pavement standards. The pilot's review area extends over 3,274 kilometres of Highways 11 and 17 from the Minnesota/Manitoba border to Ottawa.

The pilot involved extensive data analysis of more than 10,000 bare pavement data records, complimented by maintenance staff field work, spanning 26 patrol yards in three Ontario regions – Northwestern, Northeastern and Eastern.

The pilot project also examined an alternative for introducing a new bare pavement performance target, comparing bare pavement performances for the current 16-hour target against a possible 12-hour bare pavement target on those highways. The bare pavement target is the time required for highway maintenance contractors to fully clear snow and ice from the travelling lanes of a roadway after a winter storm.

In November 2022, after two years of diligent effort on the pilot, the ministry introduced a new [ON Trans-Canada Standard](#), requiring contractors to clear Highways 11 and 17 to bare pavement within 12 hours from the end of a winter storm - four hours faster than the previous standard. The 12-hour bare pavement standard balances the need to clear Highways 11 and 17 faster while optimizing resources and protecting our environment.

In addition to the new bare pavement standard on Highways 11 and 17, the ministry continues to improve winter maintenance services specifically in Northern Ontario, including:



Highway 17 Trans-Canada Northern Ontario Route sign post

- Transitioning to newer contract models that consider more prescriptive equipment, routes, and maintenance requirements.
- Increased proactive use of anti-icing liquid in advance of a winter storm when conditions are appropriate.
- Increased use of underbody plows that are more effective for removing snowpack conditions.

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"Our government is the first to create a new level of highway service that will ensure Highways 11 and 17 are cleared faster, while improving road safety for drivers in the North. Ontario already has nation-leading standards in place when it comes to winter maintenance, and this builds on our government's broader efforts to ensure we keep it that way". - Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation

Highways 11 & 17 Pilot Introduces Enhanced Winter Maintenance Services



- Building an additional 24 Road Weather Information Stations (14 in Northern Ontario) to respond to changing winter weather conditions faster.
- Installing 23 Portable Variable Message signs along highways in Northern Ontario to inform motorists about winter weather and highway closures.

Quick Facts

- Ontario is the only province in Canada to have a publicly reported bare pavement requirement after a storm.
- In 2020, Ontario released a technical review of Highways 11 and 17 and found levels of service met or exceeded provincial standards.
- The Highway 11 and 17 winter maintenance pilot ran for two years during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 winter seasons and helped inform the new 12-hour bare pavement standard on these highways.

- Ontario has more than 1,100 pieces of equipment ready to fight the harshest winter conditions and our winter maintenance contractors are active 24/7 to clear highways. At the start of a winter storm, maintenance crews deploy their equipment within 30 minutes to plow, salt and sand highways.

Before travelling in winter, plan your travel by visiting [Ontario.ca/511](https://www.ontario.ca/page/511) or using the 511-app available for free on the App Store and Google Play. Ontario 511 allows you to plan your route by reviewing road conditions, cameras, weather, and Track My Plow to find out where plows are on provincial highways. ●

< Ontario map showing Highways 11 and 17 pilot project sections

For more information, please follow the below links:

[Technical Review of Highway Winter Service Levels on Highways 11 and 17 in Northern Ontario | ontario.ca](#)

[Keeping Highways 11 and 17 safe in winter | ontario.ca](#)

[ON Trans-Canada Standard News Release](#)

OR contact:

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Road Talk online:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/resources-transportation-planners#section-3>

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Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Tow Zone Pilot

Reporting on four restricted towing zones on provincial highways in the Greater Toronto Area

On December 13th, 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) launched a Tow Zone Pilot (TZP) program introducing four restricted towing zones on sections of the provincial highways within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), for faster and safer incident clearance on some of North America's busiest highways.

The Tow Zone Pilot is intended to enhance safety, improve customer protection, curb unethical practices, remove bad actors, and better integrate towing and recovery services with other incident responders. The pilot is actively achieving these goals by ensuring that towing and recovery services within the restricted towing zones are provided by authorized towing companies possessing the required experience, equipment, and training to clear the highway safely and quickly, and that these services are provided at reasonable cost to Ontario road users.

Restricted towing zones are sections of provincial highways defined under Ontario Regulation 325/21, where only authorized towing companies may remove vehicles that require a tow. This means no other towing company can solicit towing of vehicles within a restricted towing zone.

The pilot also supports the development of new processes, standards and the regulatory framework for the towing and storage sector under the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act.

The ministry continues to review the pilot, regularly making adjustments to further enhance public safety, improve customer protection, and better integrate incident responses on provincial highways.

During its first year, the pilot serviced almost 33,000 incidents and highways were cleared within specified timelines in over 90 per cent of incidents.

Customer complaints were less than 1 per cent of the total incidents serviced. The ministry's work in the pilot received strong endorsement and support from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and other stakeholders.

The first year of the pilot was very successful, and the ministry is looking forward to building on the program accomplishments in year two.

What Drivers Need to Know

If a driver is in need of assistance in a restricted towing zone, and is in an emergency or stranded in a travelled lane - call 911.

If a driver is in a relatively safer location on the highway shoulder and in need of a tow - call 511 and select the option for the Tow Zone Pilot.

In a restricted towing zone, drivers may call their roadside assistance provider directly for a tow if they are in a safe location on the shoulder, have not been involved in a collision, and are driving a light vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 4,500 kg or less, such as a car, pick-up truck, SUV or minivan.



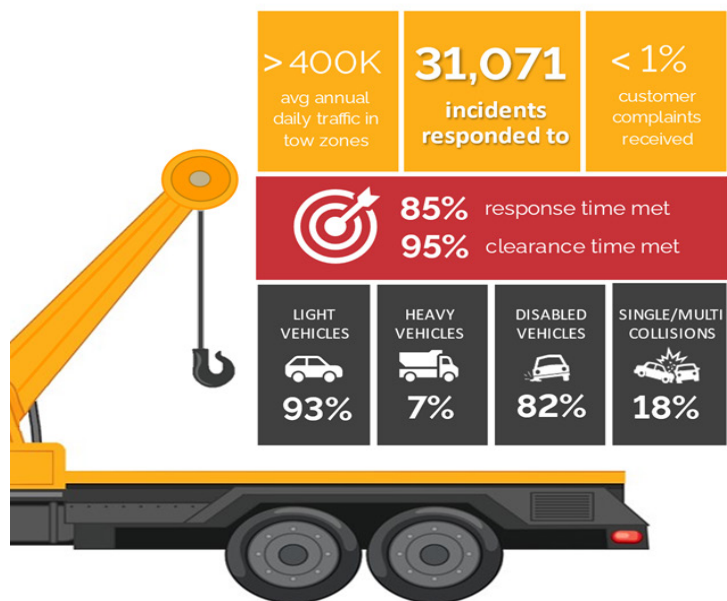
Pilot Locations

The pilot includes four restricted towing zones on sections of provincial highways in the Greater Toronto Area. Each pilot location was carefully chosen based on various factors including traffic volumes and collision data. The locations of the pilot are:

- **Zone 1:** Highway 401 from Highway 400 east to Morningside Avenue
- **Zone 2:**
 - o Highway 401 from Highway 400 west to Regional Road 25
 - o Highway 427 from QEW to Highway 409
 - o Highway 409 from Highway 427 to Highway 401
- **Zone 3:** Highway 400 from Highway 401 to Highway 9
- **Zone 4:** QEW from Highway 427 to Brant Street

Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Tow Zone Pilot

Tow Zone Pilot: By the Numbers



Goals of the Tow Zone Pilot

- Ensure tow operators have the training, experience and proper equipment to clear highways safely and efficiently.
- Reduce congestion and delays on provincial highways by clearing the highway more quickly.
- Help ensure reasonable tow rates for drivers by providing standard pricing and invoicing for towing services in the restricted towing zone.

In a restricted towing zone, you must use an authorized towing company. If you need assistance in a restricted towing zone:

- **Call 911** if it is an emergency or if you are in a travelled lane and cannot safely move your vehicle to a safe location.
- **Call 511** or your roadside assistance provider if you are in a safe location on the shoulder.

* Statistics are averages based on MTO data; April 1, 2022- March 31, 2023

The OPP Highway Safety Division recently tweeted about the pilot, you may view the tweet here, https://twitter.com/opp_hsd/status/1592714499358068736?s=51&t=RzAI9JI3FFNPuXCSYfpwhA.

A list of authorized tow companies and a fee schedule, may be found at the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/tow-zone-pilot-program> •

For more information on the Tow Zone Pilot, please visit:

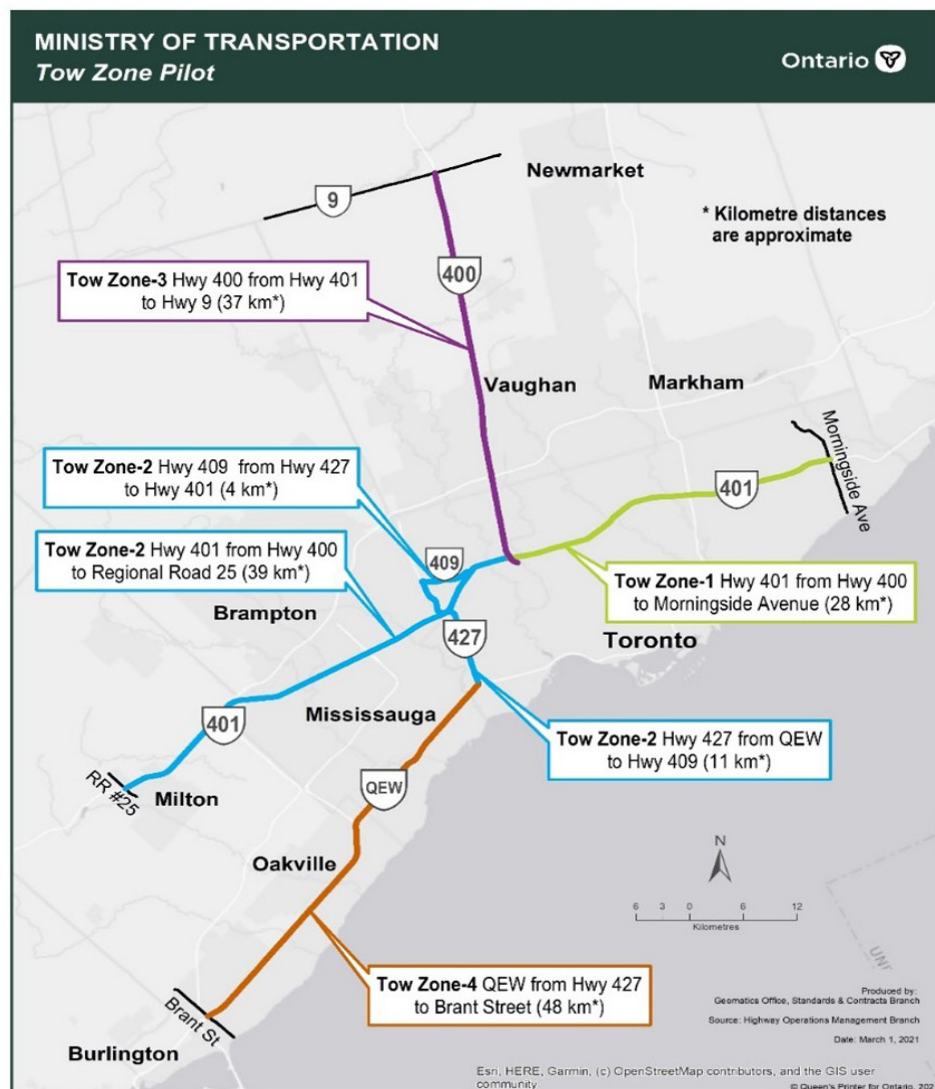
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/tow-zone-pilot-program>

For questions or concerns regarding the pilot please contact: TowZonePilot@ontario.ca



Tow Zone overhead highway message

Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Tow Zone Pilot



Map showing four Tow Zones

Road Talk online:

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Road Talk, Ontario's Transportation Technology Transfer Digest, again available to the public online

29 years of promoted research is available online to other road authorities, interested stakeholders, industry, and academia around the globe!

With the ministry's migration to a more user-friendly, service-oriented web platform, access to *Road Talk* was disrupted for the public. However, the MTO Library provides a new access solution. Library records for hundreds of previously published *Road Talk* articles are now catalogued and searchable by topic key words.

Road Talk is the ministry's technology transfer newsletter, distributed to public subscribers electronically and posted on www.ontario.ca. The publication promotes the ministry's highway research and innovation activities, as well as innovative operational policy and standards. Much of *Road Talk*'s content is derived from ministry test pilots, research, innovative technology, or advancements by MTO researchers and technical staff. Articles are developed in collaboration with, or sometimes by, ministry subject matter experts.

Road Talk is directed to MTO colleagues, the ministry's stakeholders, global road authorities, industry, academia, and other transportation technology transfer agencies.

First printed in 1994, *Road Talk* was initially distributed as a hard copy quarterly. Currently, many aspects of



An array of *Road Talk* newsletters demonstrating the evolution of its design and branding over 29 years.

Road Talk's administration are being modernized and its present distribution is ad hoc whenever approved content is available.

Road Talk is produced in MTO's Operations Division (OD) Division Services Office on behalf of the Transportation Infrastructure Management Division, by Communications Planner, Kristin

Stahlman. *Road Talk* is promoted externally with the assistance of MTO Communications social media staff.

To access *Road Talk*'s publications featuring the ministry's historic research and innovative projects, follow this link to the MTO Library: [Ontario Ministry of Transportation Library](https://www.ontario.ca/library). •

Road Talk, Ontario's Transportation Technology Transfer Digest, again available to the public online

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For more information about *Road Talk*, please contact:

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"Making these articles available to the public again was a major step in modernizing Road Talk. I'm glad I was able to assist in moving this modernization ahead. Through these articles, the public can see the behind-the-scenes and on-the-scenes efforts of the ministry and what MTO staff are doing to ensure and support road safety, through planning, engineering, construction, operations, and maintenance activities."

- Jasmin Minhas, TIMD Co-op Associate (Mohawk College)

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