The Effects of Mandatory Rider Training and Licensing Incentives on Motorcycle Rider Training Enrolment — A Canadian Perspective

By

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Canadian provincial licensing regulations and incentives have had significant effects on rider training enrolment in different jurisdictions. The provincial jurisdictions of Ontario and Quebec-geographically located side by side and sharing similar motorcycle riding environments-have had very different approaches to motorcycle rider licensing since the mid-eighties. This paper will show the effects of mandatory rider training on motorcycle rider training enrolment in the province of Quebec from 1985 to 1997 and compare them with the effects of the province of Ontario's voluntary rider licensing incentives during the same period. The paper will correlate these two very different provincial licensing practices with motorcycle rider collision involvement statistics in these jurisdictions over the same time period. Lastly, the paper will offer a number of recommendations for jurisdictions wishing to increase motorcycle rider training enrolment through the introduction of motorcycle rider licensing regulations and incentives.

Figure 1: Motorcycle Fatalities in Canada 1980 - 1999
(Source: Transport Canada TP 3322)

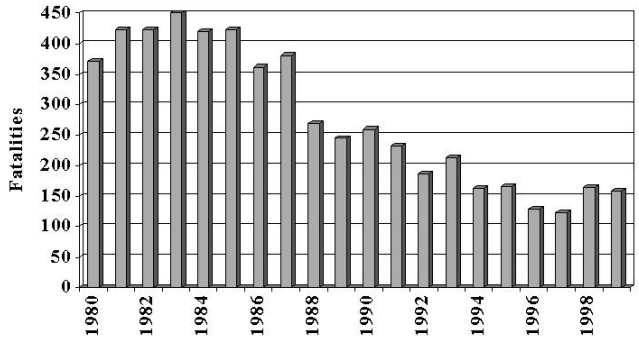

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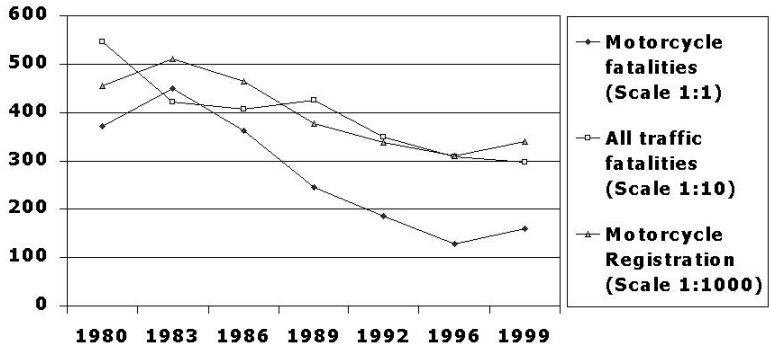
Figure 2: Trends in Canadian Motorcycle Fatalities 1980 - 1999



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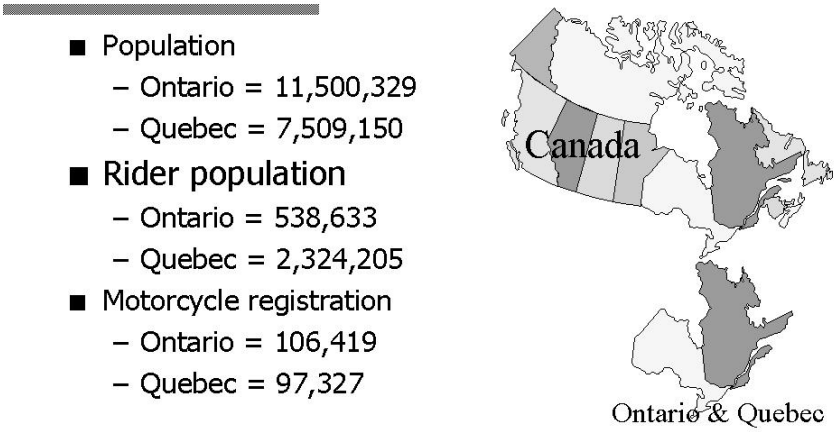
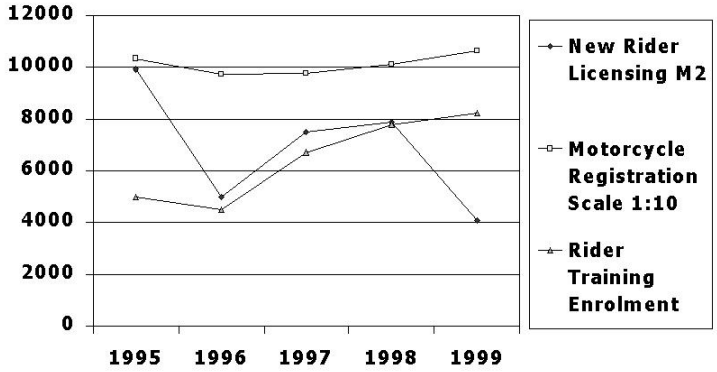
Motorcycle fatalities in Canada have decreased substantially over the past twenty years. When the Canada Safety Council and Transport Canada originally implemented the national motorcycle program in 1974, motorcycle fatalities the previous year were at an all time high of 903 motorcyclists killed. From 1980 to 1999 motorcycle fatalities decreased to a low of 122 motorcyclists killed in 1997 and a slight increase to 159 fatalities in 1999 (Figure 1). Motorcycle fatalities now represent 5.4 per cent of the total road fatalities in Canada; down substantially from the 10.7 per cent they represented in 1983. In addition, Figure 2 shows that while the total number of all traffic fatalities dropped 30 per cent between 1983 and 1999, and that motorcycle registration dropped 33 per cent between 1983 and 1999, and that motorcycle fatalities dropped by 65 per cent during the same period. Rider training programs in Canada are believed to be one of the contributing factors to this decrease in motorcycle fatalities.

Figure 3: 1999 Demographic



In comparing the effects of mandatory rider training with those of training incentives on rider training program enrolment one can examine two Canadian provinces - Ontario and Quebec. Ontario has a population of 11,500,329, a licensed rider population of 538,633 and 106,419 motorcycles registered for use on its roads. Quebec has a population of 7,509,150, a licensed rider population of 2,324,205 and 97,327 motorcycles registered for use on its roads (Figure 3). While Ontario and Quebec have a similar number of registered motorcycles, Quebec has far more licensed riders due to a grand fathered licensing clause that took effect in 1977. All drivers licensed prior to the introduction of the motorcycle class of license in 1977 are considered to hold a valid motorcycle license. For this comparison, one can see that these are two provinces with a similar population base, similar climate and riding season and similar number of motorcycles registered; however, their approach to motorcycle training and the effects of their approach are markedly different.

Figure 4: Ontario New Rider Licensing / Motorcycle Registration / Rider Training Enrolment



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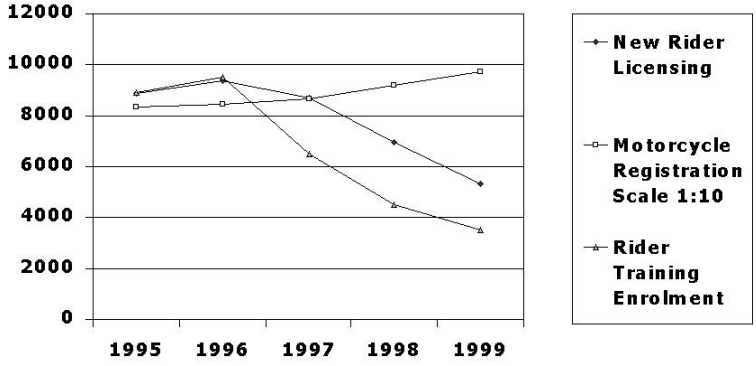
Ontario has an incentive based training program. To encourage new riders to take training, licensing incentives and insurance discounts are offered to rider training graduates. Training is viewed as a opportunity to learn how to operate a motorcycle in a safe and skilled manner. Figure 4 shows that the number of new riders licensed and the number of people enrolled in rider training programs has continually risen over the past five years, although motorcycle registration has remained relatively constant.

Figure 5: Quebec New Rider Licensing / Motorcycle Registration / Rider Training Enrolment



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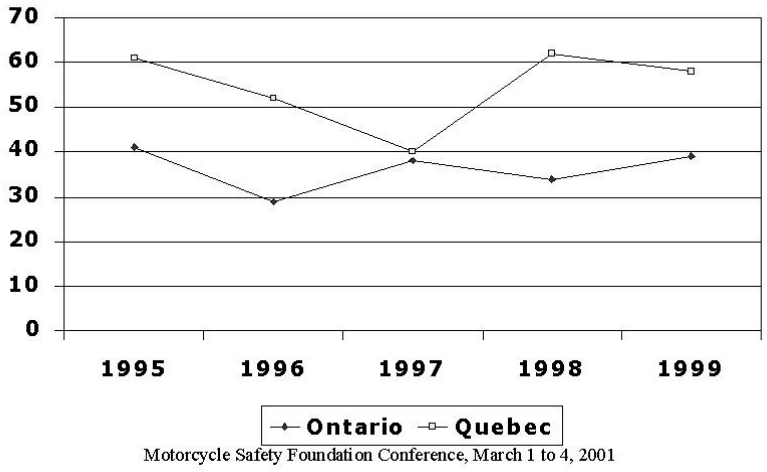
Quebec implemented mandatory training in 1985, moved to non-mandatory training without incentives in 1997, and then re-introduced mandatory training in June 2000. With the mandatory training approach, training has been viewed by new riders as the only method of getting a valid

motorcycle license. Similar to Ontario, Quebec shows a strong correlation between new rider licensing and rider training enrolment between 1995 and 1999 (Figure 5.) In Quebec, however, the number of people enrolled in rider training programs has decreased since the mandatory training was removed in 1997. Once training was no longer mandatory, the only incentive-obtaining a license-was negated and enrolment in training programs dropped significantly. The new rider did not approach training as an avenue to learning new skills and to increase safety. In fact, it has been hypothesized that the decrease in new rider licenses at a time when motorcycle registrations were increasing may be due to an increase in the number of riders that are not properly licensed.

Figure 6: Rider Fatalities Statistics Ontario & Quebec 1995 - 1999



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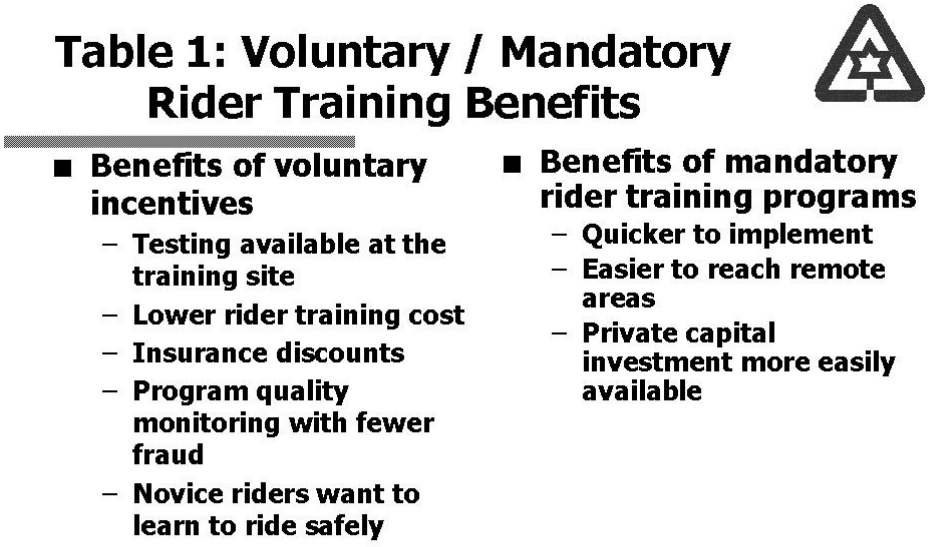
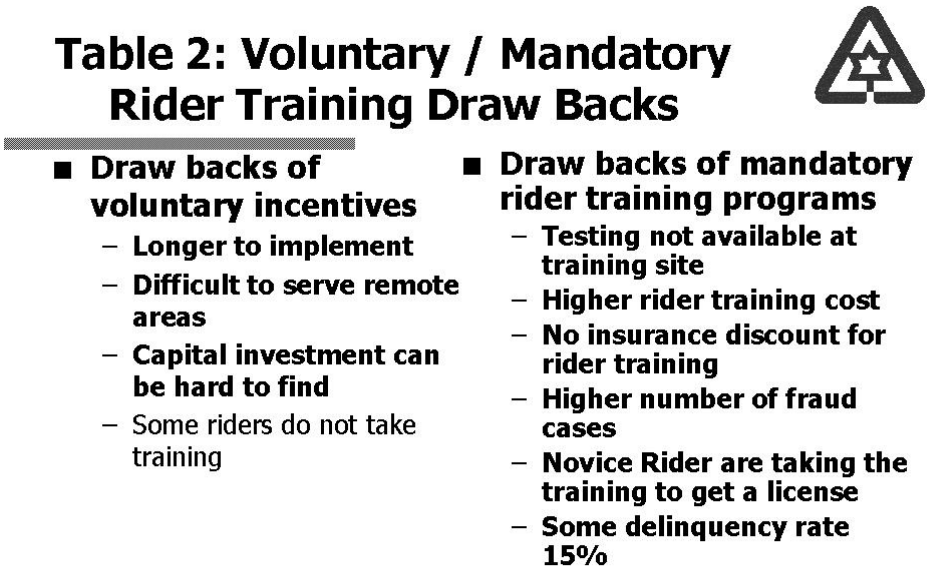
Rider fatalities between Ontario and Quebec are most revealing (Figure 6). While fatalities in Ontario remained relatively stable from 1995 to 1999, motorcycle fatalities in Quebec experienced a 46 per cent increase in 1998. This jumped occurred immediately following the removal of mandatory rider training in that province in 1997. Quebec reintroduced mandatory rider training effective July 1, 2000. The reintroduction of mandatory rider training is expected to have a strong influence on the 2000 and 2001 rider training enrolment; however, it is not going to change the view of training as simply as a means to obtaining a valid motorcycle license.





In jurisdictions such as Ontario (Table 1), offering licensing incentives such as license testing and a voluntary rider training program increases enrolment to rider training program as do insurance discounts to rider training graduates. Since rider training is not compulsory or required by the provincial government in Ontario, monitoring of school quality is less cumbersome and the program costs are 20 per cent to 40 per cent lower than in Quebec, where training is mandated by the province. Since the graduation certificate is not required to obtain a motorcycle license in a

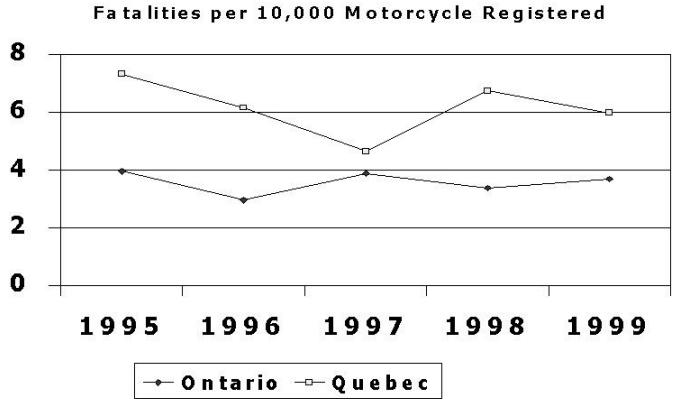
voluntary incentive rider training program, there are fewer riders attempting to purchase graduation certificates without completing training programs.

There are drawbacks to a voluntary incentive system such as the one operating in Ontario (Table 2). These include a longer time frame for rider training growth and difficulties in serving remote areas with low rider population. Capital investment can also be difficult to find since the rider training program is a service oriented business with no captive market. Also, some riders do not take training.

In jurisdictions such as Quebec (Table 1 & 2), mandatory rider training also offers benefits and drawbacks. Mandatory rider training programs are quicker to implement. They reach remote areas more easily. Private capital needed to purchase motorcycles and equipment is easier to find since a captive audience exists for this service. One of the drawbacks of mandatory rider training programs is higher rider training cost since "for profit" driving school businesses are involved. In addition, rider testing is generally not available at the site as a countermeasure to reduce fraud. There is no incentive or reason for state run insurance companies (e.g. Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec or SAAQ) to offer insurance discounts as all novice riders insured must complete rider training. More cases of fraud, such as selling graduation certificates, are reported in Quebec. The delinquency rate (riders riding without licenses) is estimated at 15 per cent. Finally, as mentioned earlier, novice riders are often more interested in getting the graduation certificate simply for license purposes than for rider safety.

Legislative rider training incentives such as recognized licensing test at the rider training program site is most effective to increase rider training enrolment. Motorcycle insurance discounts are also perceived by the novice rider as an incentive for rider training since the insurance discount reduces the rider training cost. Convenience and cost, together with a reputable rider training program, are major incentives to increase rider training program enrolment and decrease rider fatalities.

Figure 7: Incentives to voluntary rider training program produce fewer fatalities.



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Two jurisdictions were examined: one with incentives to rider training programs, the other with a mandatory rider training program. It was clear in both cases that new rider licensing figures and rider training enrolment numbers are strongly related. Implementing the voluntary rider training program requires less government intervention, is less costly, provides a better outlook with respect to motorcycle safety and results in fewer rider fatalities per 10,000 motorcycle registered (Figure 7). Based on the experiences in these two Canadian jurisdictions, I conclude that incentives to rider training programs such as the program in place in the Province of Ontario offer a better model for future rider training enrolment and rider safety.

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