



Coalition calls for Coroner's investigation into road deaths caused by pickups and large SUVs

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TORONTO: A coalition of road safety and community groups is calling on Ontario's Chief Coroner Dr. Dirk Huyer to investigate road deaths involving pickup trucks and large SUVs. The coalition has sent a 25-page letter to the Coroner summarizing the growing body of research documenting the out-sized peril of pickups and large SUVs to people on foot and cycling.

"Vehicles that are dangerous-by-design have no place on our roads. This is why we are asking the Coroner to review deaths and propose action to save lives and to spare families and friends from the senseless loss, anguish and devastation that over-sized vehicles often cause," said Jess Spieker, spokesperson for Friends and Families for Safe Streets.

The research lists three principal reasons why pickups and large SUVs pose a greater danger than regular cars to pedestrians, cyclists, and persons with disabilities: the height of these vehicles and consequent driver blind spots; the weight and greater lethal kinetic force inflicted in collisions by these vehicles; and the high, blunt vehicle front ends which are more likely to cause serious injury or death to people struck by them.

Deaths of motor vehicle occupants have dramatically dropped in Ontario while pedestrian deaths remain about the same, while rising to 22% of total road deaths. When pickups and large SUVs strike pedestrians and cyclists, the research shows that the crashes are more likely to be deadly. The proliferation of these vehicles is therefore troubling.

"Since we are all pedestrians at some point --- perhaps simply to walk to the bus stop or parking lot --- we all lose when road vehicles are bigger and have features that are more dangerous to those outside such vehicles," said Daniella Levy-Pinto of Walk Toronto. "In fact, the victim in a road crash with a pickup may just as easily be a stranger as a loved one who goes unnoticed by the driver in their own driveway."

The Coalition is asking the Coroner to review the research as the foundation for safety recommendations that could include a higher class of driver's licence for operators of pickups and large SUVs; higher vehicle taxes; requirements on manufacturers to fix safety deficiencies; and the imposition of limits for vehicle size, weight and body type to protect other road users.

"It's troubling that during a climate crisis, government and industry are facilitating or promoting the proliferation of gas-guzzling pickups and large SUVs that the evidence tells us makes walking and cycling — activities that are key to reducing GHG emissions --- more dangerous," said Albert Koehl, environmental lawyer and coordinator of the Community Bikeways Coalition.



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