

Suspended State – Facts & highlights

By the numbers – Ministry of Transportation

- Licensed drivers in Ontario: **9.8 million** (paragraph 27)
- Drivers suspended for all offences (2016): **170,000**; number of those suspended for unpaid fines: **90,000+**, or 53% (para 31)
- Estimated number of suspension notices (for all offences) returned to sender per year, based on 2016 project: **20,000+** (para 67)
- Estimated number of suspension notices for unpaid fines returned to sender, based on 2017 review: **5,000** per year; about **4%** (para 68)
- Percentage of drivers suspended for unpaid fines who paid them within 15 days after suspension (2016): **8%**; percentage who paid when given grace period before suspension (1997 and earlier): **30-50%** (para 77)
- Number of suspended drivers who paid their fines (2016): **90,000** (para 130)
- Number of those who failed to pay reinstatement fee and had licences cancelled as result: **40,000 (44%)** in 2016; **14,000** between June 2017-June 2018
- Provinces that do not suspend drivers for unpaid fines: B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia (para 33)
- Provinces that track undelivered mail to drivers: Alberta, B.C., Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador (para 66); New Brunswick sends suspension notices by registered mail (para 89)
- Provinces that give drivers a grace period to pay fines after notifying them of impending suspensions: Saskatchewan, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador (para 89)
- Percentage of calls to Driver Control Section that are recorded: **2%**

Steps to suspension: How drivers are notified:

1. **Offence Notice** (also known as a traffic ticket) issued by police
2. **Notice of Fine and Due Date** mailed by municipality's provincial offences court (if Offence Notice fine is not paid or contested within 15 days)
3. **Notice of Suspension** mailed by Ministry of Transportation (if fine is not paid by due date and offences court orders suspension)
4. **Notice of Outstanding Licensing Requirements** sent by mail (if fine has been paid but reinstatement fee is outstanding, if additional testing is required, OR, if there are actually no outstanding requirements, a temporary licence is included)

Ombudsman investigation:

- Complaints received about licence suspensions for unpaid fines, prior to investigation (2013-2017): **128**; after investigation launched (2017): **107**
- **70** interviews, thousands of documents reviewed

- **42** recommendations – Among other things, Ministry has agreed to:
 - Improve its system for sending notices to drivers and tracking returned mail
 - Revise all notices sent to drivers to make them clearer
 - Provide an online licence status checker service free of charge and explore other digital solutions such as an online portal for personal driving information
 - Improve customer service for drivers who have questions and complaints, through Ministry and ServiceOntario outlets
 - Report back to Ombudsman every six months on progress

Drivers' stories highlighted in *Suspended State*:

Mike (para 36): Received a ticket for an illegal turn while taking his mother to hospital; neglected to pay it. Months later, was in a car accident and learned his licence had been suspended that day – even though he would not get notice in the mail for a week. Initially his insurer denied him coverage for the accident and a \$1-million lawsuit.

Raymond (para 80): Learned in 2009 that he had been driving illegally since 2005, when his licence was suspended for non-payment of a seatbelt fine. Ministry records show a suspension notice was mailed, but he says he received nothing.

Kevin (para 81): Complained that Ministry's notices only informed him of "the possibility of licence suspension," so he had no idea he was driving illegally between the day his suspension took effect and when he received it in the mail, five days later.

Robert (para 82): A bus driver, he opted to contest a ticket in court and heard nothing back. Was shocked when his employer was notified of his suspension before he received it by mail.

Darcy (para 117): Paid a speeding fine in September 2012, did not realize there was also a reinstatement fee. Discovered in 2016 her licence was invalid; had to take three days off work and pay \$236 for graduated licensing tests (for novice drivers).

Pierre (para 150): Learned his licence was suspended when he bought a new car in 2017, over a speeding fine in 2011, which he had attempted to pay online. Ministry record showed his suspension was in 2017; the time gap was never explained.

Pablo (para 155): Tried to pay speeding ticket online; learned three months later he had sent payment to wrong municipal court. Within days, before could address it, his licence was suspended, forcing him to pay \$198 reinstatement fee.

Sophie (para 159): Couldn't pay a \$35 speeding ticket in 2008, was given several extensions. Paid fine and reinstatement fee in 2013, only to be told her licence wouldn't be reinstated until she paid for graduated licensing tests.

Javier (para 182): Paid a speeding fine in 2013, not knowing his licence was already suspended. Learned in 2017 it was cancelled because he didn't pay the reinstatement fee. Was unable to get information about his suspension from Ministry's Driver Control Section.