



Mothers Against Drunk Driving estimates that 1,239 Canadians were killed and 73,120 injured in alcohol-related crashes in 2007. PORNCHAI KITTIWONGSAKUL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# Most Canadians endorse random breath testing: Survey

By HELENA ZHU  
Epoch Times Staff

VANCOUVER—More than three quarters of Canadians support

random breath tests as a way to combat impaired driving, according to a recent national survey.

Commissioned by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada, the survey shows that 98 percent of Canadians think impaired driving is an important issue, 77 percent support random breath testing (RBT), 79 percent agree that RBT is a reasonable intrusion on drivers, and 75 percent agree that police have the right to randomly test drivers' breath.

"These results indicate the strong level of concern that Canadians have about impaired driving and the need to address the problem," MADD national president Margaret Miller said in a press release.

RBT is in effect in many Western countries where it has dramatically decreased alcohol-related crashes, deaths, and injuries. In Ireland, RBT reduced annual road fatalities by 19 percent in its first year, according to MADD.

In 2007, MADD estimates that 1,239 Canadians were killed and 73,120 injured in alcohol-related crashes.

"If we take an average of the crash reductions seen in other countries with RBT and estimate

a 22 percent crash reduction in Canada, that is 273 lives saved and more than 16,000 injuries prevented," said Miller.

In June 2009, a report by Canada's House of Commons Standing Committee of Justice and Human Rights recommended enacting RBT legislation. The federal Justice Ministry is currently considering RBT and other measures for updating the nation's impaired driving provisions.

"The federal government has studied it, it's recommended it... so we're hoping that sometime this fall the federal government will introduce it," said MADD CEO Andrew Murie in an interview.

"Literally it'll save hundreds of lives and avoid thousands of injuries the first year it's implemented here in Canada."

Contrary to what some civil liberties groups believe, said Murie, random breath testing does not violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"The courts have been really clear to say that because of the high death rate and injury rate, the government has the right to regulate driving and put certain precautions in place to protect the public," he said.

"We feel very clearly [that RBT]

falls within that framework, because the intrusion we are asking for, you know, is a simple breath test on the roadside. If you haven't been drinking, you have no fears whatsoever."

While several provinces are looking at cracking down more on impaired drivers, Murie said new legislation proposed in B.C. is the strongest. It includes escalating licence suspensions, vehicle impoundments, remedial education programs, alcohol ignition interlocks, and fines for drivers who get behind the wheel with a blood alcohol level of 0.05 percent or higher.

In a tragic case currently before the court in Surrey, B.C., a woman is charged with impaired driving causing death and dangerous driving following an accident in which she hit and killed four-year-old Alexa Middelaer in May 2008.

Foreign Berner is also charged with impaired driving causing bodily harm and dangerous driving in relation to Alexa's aunt, Daphne Johnson, who was seriously injured. Johnson and her niece had stopped to pat a horse on the shoulder of the road when Berner lost control of her Oldsmobile and ploughed into them.

# Montreal woman, children trapped in Saudi Arabia

By JOAN DELANEY  
Epoch Times Staff

Just as one Canadian woman who had been stranded in Saudi Arabia was finally able to leave last month, another remains trapped under that country's male guardianship system—along with her three young children.

For the past five years, Nathalie Morin, 25, has wanted to return to Canada with her children but cannot leave Saudi Arabia without the consent of her common-law husband, Saeed Al Sharahni, who she alleges is abusive.

According to Johanne Derocher, Morin's mother who lives in Montreal, Al Sharahni beats Morin and for long periods kept her and the children locked in an apartment, isolated from society. The situation has deteriorated for Morin since the family recently moved to Bisha, a city in southwestern Saudi Arabia near Yemen.

Although the children have more freedom now, Derocher says Al Sharahni's family verbally abuses Morin and often confines her in a small storage room, sometimes for over 30 hours at a time and without food or water, despite temperatures of 40 C in Bisha.

"They're trying to make her get sick and crazy, so she's going to be on her knees and she's going to have to come back to Canada. That's what they're trying to do," says Derocher, adding that the family is illiterate and extremely poor.

"The mother is a widow, so now they're trying to push my girl out of the country and they're going to get money for the mother. She thinks she's going to have a Filipino take care of the children, the house, the food, everything, and the government is going to pay that. So for them it's a very big stroke of luck."

## CUSTODY ISSUE

Derocher, who speaks to her daughter regularly by telephone, says Al Sharahni will allow Morin to leave without the children but she refuses, fearing they will be further neglected if she's not there.

However, in a meeting with Canadian consular staff in October 2009, Al Sharahni said he would allow Morin to leave with the children if Canada paid him \$300,000.

Derocher says this was a perfect opportunity for Canadian officials to pressure the Saudi government for Morin and the children's freedom, as it was proof that Al Sharahni only cares about the money, not the children.

But that didn't happen. Instead, a consular official told Derocher in an email that since Al Sharahni's demand was legal under Saudi law, "we cannot take sides and will continue to consider the situation of Mrs. Morin and her three children as a private, family matter."

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Simone MacAndrew said Tuesday that consular officials have advised Morin that she and Al Sharahni must resolve the issue of child custody through appropriate Saudi legal channels before the government can facilitate the children's return to Canada.

Both Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon and Parliamentary Secretary Obhrai have raised this issue

with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia when they visited the country, MacAndrew said.

"Consular officials continue to support Ms. Morin in resolving the situation, but are limited by the laws of Saudi Arabia. With the assistance of Saudi officials, consular officials hope that Ms. Morin and her husband can reach an agreement for the positive resolution of this case," she said.

The oldest child, Samir, age 8, was born in Canada while Abdullah, 4, and Sarah, 18 months, were born in Saudi. According to the group Nathalie Morin's Support Committee, Abdullah and Sarah were conceived as a result of rape by Al Sharahni.

Marie-Eve Adam is a member of the support committee and also works for Bloc Quebecois MP Francine Lalonde. She says she and Lalonde have been "doing many things" to help Morin and the children return to Canada, including meeting with the Saudi ambassador last month.

In cases of American women trapped under Saudi's male guardianship system, Adam says agreements were negotiated for them to leave the country without the permission of the male guardian.

"The kids usually stay over there unless there is proof that they are badly treated by the Saudi father—which is the case. We have medical reports that Samir is not well treated, and we are asking the Canadian government to negotiate the same thing with the Saudis."

## BISHA 'WORST PLACE'

It was thanks to media attention that Nazi Quazi, a Canadian citizen who was stuck in Saudi Arabia for almost three years because her father disapproved of her boyfriend, was finally allowed to leave in early May.

According to Muslims for Progressive Values, Quazi said she obtained her father's consent to leave the country after her family decided the media coverage made them appear dishonourable.

Adam says media attention in Morin's case has also helped. "I mean, it's not resolved, but it's always put us a bit forward—the media coverage. It's the only thing that worked."

Morin and Al Sharahni met in 2001 in Montreal. Soon after the birth of their first child in 2002, Al Sharahni was deported for being in the country illegally. Morin joined him in Saudi Arabia in 2005, when she was just 20.

"She was very idealistic and she thought she was going to make a family with him and everything, but about three weeks after she arrived there he beat her for the first time—a very bad beating," says Derocher.

Morin returned to Montreal alone in 2006 for a month, but missed the children so much she returned to Saudi.

With Morin already having attempted suicide once, Derocher says she's very worried about her. She's also concerned for the children's welfare in Bisha, which she says is a hub for drug and munitions trafficking as well as terrorist groups.

"That's the worst place in Saudi. It's the very worst place, where the people are very hard. So I am very afraid that my girl and my grandchildren are there."

**PUZZLES 4 PEACE**  
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# Are the Conservatives softening on human rights in China?

CHINA CONTINUED FROM P1

Stockwell Day, who was previously a vocal advocate for rights in China, returned two weeks ago from his most recent China trip as Minister for Asia-Pacific Gateway. He seemed caught off guard when asked what he'd raised regarding human rights and did not answer directly.

"There are always issues related to human rights," he said. "We don't separate out any one part of life from another. We talk about the whole picture. We did that on this trip and we'll continue doing that."

Embassy, one of Canada's most respected political newspapers, described Day's change from a China critic to promoter as a "U-turn."

Last July, Transport Minister John Baird returned from an official visit to China gushing about the pace of development there.

"My past viewpoint and past understanding of China has completely changed," reported an Ottawa-based Chinese newspaper.

Another high-level visit slated for next month has raised the concern further, especially since it could be a propaganda bonanza for China's state-controlled media.

**ANOTHER SENSITIVE DATE**  
That visit is scheduled for July 1, when Governor General Michaëlle Jean will visit China at the request of Prime Minister Stephen Harper and at the invitation of the Chinese regime.

While Jean's trip will mark the celebration of Canada Day and Canada's participation at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, the date has another meaning for mainland Chinese—a date that will likely be much more prominently reported on there.

July 1 is the official "birthday" of the Chinese Communist Party and a national holiday. It also marks the day that Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule, a day marked by annual protests over eroding democratic freedoms.

Fung worries about the implications of the governor general's visit on that day.

"It is the day they commemorate the founding of the Chinese Communist Party. It will be seen internationally as an endorsement of the Chinese Communist Party."

In response to questions from The Epoch Times, a spokesperson from the Prime Minister's Office cited Harper's speech in Shanghai last year as a clear indication of the government's position. Harper said:

"Our government believes, and has always believed, that a mutually beneficial economic relationship is not incompatible with a good and frank dialogue on fundamental values like freedom, human rights, and the rule of law... To Canadians, these attributes are inseparable, and Canadians of Chinese origin participate as fully in them as any of our citizens."

With at least eight senior cabinet members visiting China in the last year, one would hope Canada has something concrete to show that they aren't letting the issue slide under the trade rug.