



CHILD PASSENGER
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CPSAC applauds Nova Scotia's stronger car seat laws

National association welcomes age-based protections and encourages other provinces and territories to follow Nova Scotia's lead

October 7, 2026 — The Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada (CPSAC) applauds Nova Scotia's stronger car seat laws that will require children to remain in a rear-facing car seat until at least age two and remain in a car seat with a five-point harness until at least age four.

These changes will raise the minimum protections for young children travelling in vehicles, addressing two important areas that CPSAC and injury prevention partners across Canada have recommended strengthening.

"Nova Scotia is taking a leadership role in Canada by strengthening protections for the youngest passengers," says Katherine Hutka, President of the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada. "These changes bring the law closer to the evidence and the capabilities of today's car seats. We commend the Province for taking action and encourage other provinces and territories to build on this progress."

Where a child lives in Canada can determine what the law requires to keep them safe in a vehicle. CPSAC is calling on each province and territory to strengthen child passenger legislation to align with current evidence. Nova Scotia's changes are a welcome step toward stronger protection for children across the country.

Modernized laws will help children stay in existing seats longer

For most families, meeting the new requirements would mean using their existing seat rear-facing or with its harness for longer, rather than purchasing a different seat.

Today's car seats are designed to accommodate children rear-facing and in a five-point harness beyond these new legal minimum ages. Adding or increasing a minimum age

alongside the existing weight requirements will make the law easier to communicate, understand, and enforce.

“Car seats save lives. Clear, age-based requirements help families understand when children must have the protection of a rear-facing seat or a car seat with a five-point harness,” says Hutka. “For many families, this will simply mean using the seat they already own for longer to help keep their child safer.”

Building on Nova Scotia’s progress

In 2023, CPSAC partnered with Parachute Canada and Child Safety Link to develop and share recommendations with transportation and health ministers in each province and territory. These recommendations were reaffirmed in 2026, with new evidence and a jurisdictional scan that further strengthens the rationale for change.

CPSAC’s recommendations call for legislation that is clear, practical, and informed by current evidence about how children are best protected when travelling in a passenger vehicle. They also call for equitable access to safe transportation for children with disabilities or special health care needs affecting travel and for children in taxis and ride-share vehicles.

Nova Scotia’s new requirement to use a rear-facing car seat until at least age two aligns with the age threshold in CPSAC’s recommendation. Introducing a requirement for continued use of a car seat with a five-point harness until at least age four will also strengthen protection for young children. CPSAC continues to recommend a minimum age of five be added to the current minimum weight of 18 kg (40 lb) before a child would be legally eligible to move out of a car seat with a five-point harness and into a belt-positioning booster seat.

Beyond the rear-facing and five-point harness age requirements, CPSAC calls for:

- **Continued booster use:** Require children to remain in a booster seat until they reach at least 145 cm (57 in) or 12 years old.
- **Protection in every passenger vehicle:** Require children to be properly restrained in all passenger vehicles, including taxis and ride-share vehicles.
- **Safe transportation options for children with disabilities or special health care needs affecting travel:** Provide clear, legal transportation options including access to appropriate Canadian-certified adaptive seats and, when necessary, adaptive restraints certified to recognized standards in other jurisdictions.

“There is further to go, and these are meaningful changes that deserve to be celebrated,” says Hutka. “Our laws should reflect what the evidence tells us about how children are best protected in a vehicle. Nova Scotia’s changes move us closer to that goal and offer an example for other provinces and territories to follow.”

Why legislation matters

Car seats, booster seats, and seat belts significantly reduce the risk of injury and death when they fit the child and are used correctly.

CPSAC's review cites evidence that caregivers frequently interpret legal requirements as safety standards, making legislation an important public health tool. Clear requirements need to be supported by accessible education, knowledgeable support, and access to safe seats.

The new ages will be minimum requirements, not milestones for moving to the next stage. For families, the message is simple: don't rush the transition. Caregivers should continue to safely buckle their child in each stage until their child reaches the applicable limits of their seat, following the manufacturer's instructions.

CPSAC encourages governments across Canada to build on Nova Scotia's leadership by strengthening their own child passenger safety legislation to align with current evidence as outlined in these recommendations.

Quick facts about the NS legislation changes:

Injury Prevention:

- Motor vehicle collisions remain the leading cause of injury-related death among children under 14 in Canada.
- A correctly used car seat can reduce the risk of a child being injured or killed in a collision by up to 71%.
- Adding or increasing a minimum age alongside the existing weight requirements will make the law easier to communicate, understand, and enforce.
- CPSAC has developed five recommendations for provincial and territorial child passenger safety legislation.

Rear-facing child car seats:

- Nova Scotia will require that a child continue to use a rear-facing car seat until at least age two alongside the existing weight requirement of 10 kg (22 pounds).
- This change perfectly aligns with the age threshold in CPSAC's recommendation.
- Nova Scotia will become Canada's first province or territory to explicitly require rear-facing car seat use until age two.
- Rear-facing car seats better protect a young child's disproportionately large head and vulnerable neck and spine during frontal crashes, the most common and most commonly severe collision type.
- Many car seats already have a minimum of age two to move out of the rear-facing stage.

- Approximately half of U.S. states already require rear-facing for children under two.

Car seats with a 5-point harness:

- Nova Scotia will require that a child continue to use a car seat with a five-point harness until at least age four alongside the existing weight requirement of 18 kg (40 pounds).
- Nova Scotia will become Canada's first province or territory to explicitly set a minimum age for moving from a five-point harness to a booster seat.
- This change strengthens the law. CPSAC continues to recommend a minimum age of five be added to the current minimum weight of 18 kg (40 lb) before a child will be legally eligible to move out of a car seat with a five-point harness and into a belt-positioning booster seat.
- A five-point harness helps keep a young child securely positioned before they are developmentally ready to sit correctly in a booster seat.
- Children can reach 18 kg (40 lb) at substantially different ages - approximately three to seven - so weight alone cannot establish developmental readiness.
- Most car seats with a five-point harness can already accommodate children beyond age four or five.
- Most Canadian belt-positioning booster seats already require a minimum age of four or five for use.
- More than half of U.S. states already require a car seat with a five-point harness until age four or five.

Overall:

- Today's car seats are designed to accommodate children rear-facing and in a five-point harness beyond the new legal minimum ages.
- For most families, meeting the new requirements will mean using their existing car seat rear-facing or with its harness for longer, rather than purchasing a different seat.
- The law will continue to require that car seats and booster seats be used according to the manufacturer's instructions, including age, height, and weight limits.
- The new ages are minimum requirements, not milestones for moving to the next stage.

Associated links

- [CPSAC: Provincial and territorial advocacy and legislative recommendations](#)
- [Find a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician](#)
- [Caregiver resources](#)
 - [Ages and stages summary sheets](#)
 - [Car seat resources in multiple languages](#)

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