

# Popularity of Snowmobiles Makes Government Eye New Legislation

by Jim Marshall

The Department of Transport is caught up in a rising tide of snowmobile complaints which is resulting in a review of present legislation.

Officials are considering ways to reduce the complaints, many resulting from excessive noise or trespassing. Stronger enforcement of the legislation is also under study.

"While some changes in snowmobile legislation may have to be made," says Transport Minister Irwin Haskett, "no legislation will replace common sense. Legislation will not stop snowmobile operators from running into trees or breaking through thin ice."

## LOOPHOLE

As a result of a loophole in the year's Snowmobile Act, operators can drive their machines on any open spaces within a municipality.

Present legislation gives a municipality power only to prohibit snowmobiles on streets and roads. Officials are now investigating the need for extending the municipality's power to ban snowmobiles from boulevards, parks, golf courses and other open areas.

"The regulations for the new season," says Mr. Haskett, "are basically the same as they were in 1968. The big difference is that an endeavour is being made to make people more aware of them."

Informal meetings to discuss problem areas related to snowmobile operations and complaints are being planned by the Department in the near future, said the Minister.

Representatives at the discussions include Provincial safety associations, snowmobile manufacturing associations, and snowmobile clubs.

## NOISE PROBLEMS

The Department has sent out invitations to the representatives following complaints received last year. Areas under study include noise problems, trespass and damage complaints, visibility and lighting.

Snowmobiles are rapidly increasing in popularity in Ontario. It is expected that 100,000 snowmobiles will be operating in the province this winter.

Last year, the department implemented its first Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, establishing compulsory regulations and requirements for snowmobiles operating on provincial highways.

The Act initially resulted in confusion for snowmobile operators. An enforcement problem was created by what was termed the "two-faced" application of the vehicles. For all practical purposes the snowmobile was originally developed for the recreational and leisure markets; however, it quickly created a second phase by providing ideal transportation methods during the winter months.

## ACTS SIMILAR

The 1968 Act closely follows the rules and regulations set out in the Highway Traffic Act except the snowmobiles cannot be operated on the actual roadway or travelled portion of most provincial highways.

When an operator is on a major highway he is required to drive his vehicle as far away

from the roadway as possible, according to the circumstances of the area.

An example would be a snowmobile on Highway 2 where the driver would need to keep to the shoulder of the road or drive along the right-of-way area between the road and fence. If the snowmobile driver comes to an intersection with a stop sign or other regulator sign he must obey the sign before crossing the road.

All operation of snowmobile is prohibited on highways including the 400 series, the Queen Elizabeth Way between Toronto and Fort Erie, part of highway 27 between the Queen Elizabeth Way and Highway 7 and the Ottawa Queensway.

## NO SPECIAL LICENSE

Unless prohibited by municipal laws, snowmobiles can be operated on municipal roads including streets and county roads. Under a section of the Act the council of a municipality may pass bylaws prohibiting the driving of motorized snow vehicles along or across any road under its jurisdiction.

Although no special license is required to operate a snowmobile, drivers on highways and municipal roads must be 16 years of age. The act demands that at least \$50,000 liability insurance is held by each driver of a snowmobile on a highway. The owner of a vehicle is not permitted to allow any person to drive the unit on a highway unless the driver is insured to meet the requirements of the Insurance Act.

Complaints from a wide area of Ontario have been received by the department's offices in Toronto. The letters seek additional legislation to prevent excessive noise from the operation of the vehicles. Noise complaints arise primarily from the rural areas and the outskirts of towns and small cities. Generally the incidents occur at night. An official of the department stated that tests are being planned to establish what is an excessive noise level and what constitutes general operational noise.

## IRATE PROPERTY OWNERS

As snowmobiles are able to travel long distances at speeds exceeding 30 miles an hour, a number of trespass complaints have been received. Letters have come from irate property owners who state that hedges, small trees, and fences have been damaged by snowmobiles. There have also been isolated cases reported where snowmobiles have been used to chase deer and other wildlife until they fall from exhaustion. Poor visibility of the small vehicles and improper lighting are two additional areas that are being studied.

A suggestion has been made to install serials with flags or fluorescent balls to the back of the unit. This would enable them to be seen more readily especially at intersections often hidden by high snow drifts.

The question of lighting involves additional lights for highway travel instead of the present requirement of one white light at the front and a red lamp at the back.

The areas also still under discussion by the Department include the definition of the snowmobile respecting the "on highway" and "off highway" uses.

Officials state they are vitally concerned about the public's awareness of the safe operation of a snowmobile. Last winter 27 fatalities involving snowmobiles were recorded in Ontario. Fifteen of the deaths occurred on highways and the remainder in off highway mishaps.



D.O.T. attention focussing on the winter fun machine.

# Juveniles Stretch Record With Another Win

Georgetown Juveniles steam-rolled to another big victory in Tri-County play in the Memorial Arena Tuesday night, flattening Milton Juveniles 10-3.

Georgetown Midgets didn't fare as well surrendering 5-3 to Milton Midgets.

Thursday, Georgetown minor hockey teams gave up just a single goal in three games with their Preston counterparts. The local Novices won their game.

## Draw Proceeds Boost Future Treasury

The defunct Georgetown Junior Hockey Club made the draw for their 200 Club prizes Friday.

B. Schmidt was first prize winner, and R. Presswood took second prize. Both are Georgetown residents.

Proceeds from the draw will be applied to the treasury of the junior club which will return to the hockey scene next season.

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and Georgetown Midgets triumphed 4-3 over Preston Midgets last Tuesday here.

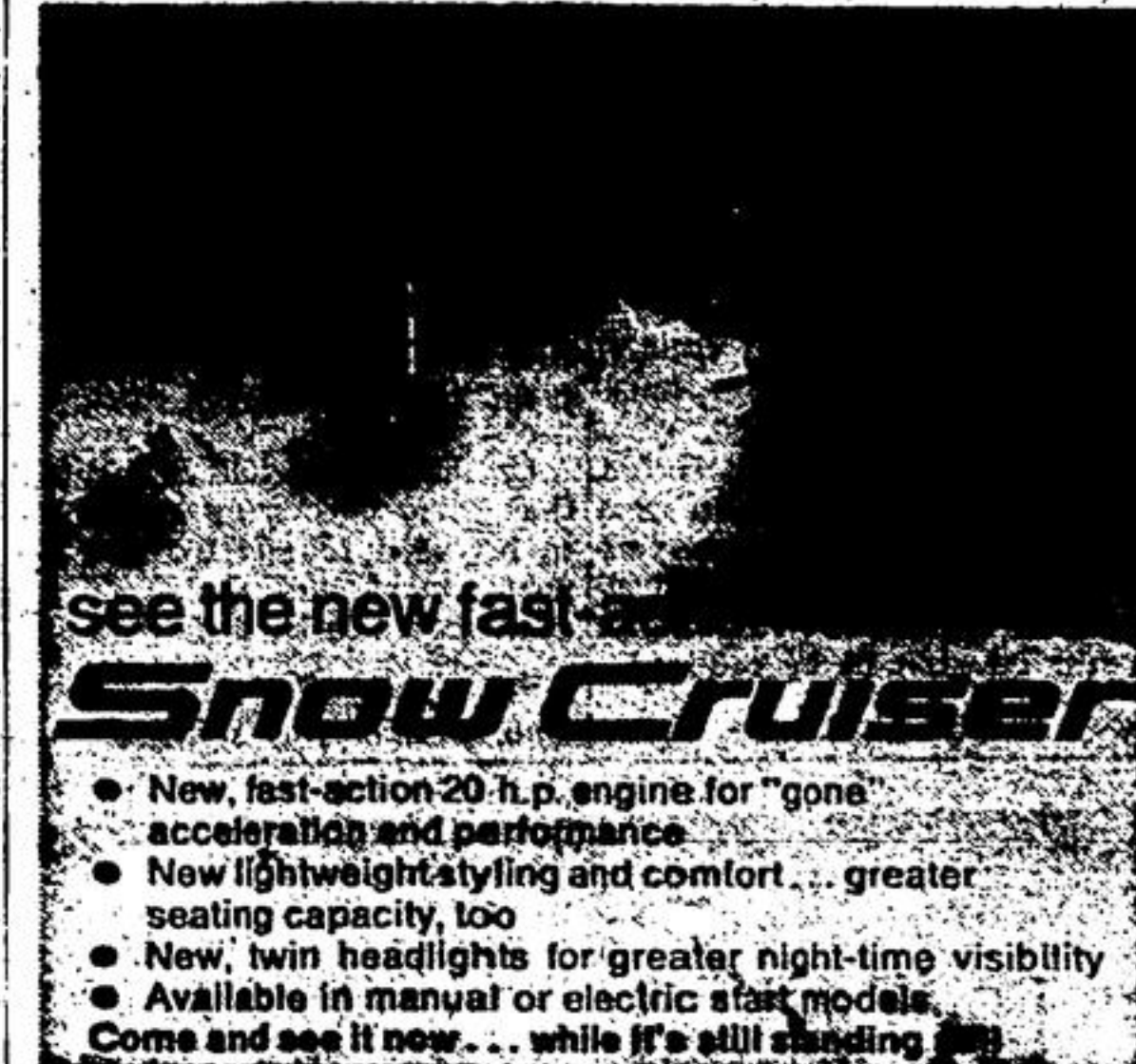
Georgetown Novices, Pee Wee and Bantam take on Milton teams in the Memorial Arena tonight, and are at home to Acton teams Tuesday.

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