

Opinion

The onus is on us

In today's mobile society, the car has become almost a second home. The average Canadian travels 23,000 kilometres (14,000 miles) each year. This means that each person spends 368 hours, or the equivalent of 15 solid days, in the car. During Safe Driving Week (Dec. 2-8) those figures are especially significant.

Cars have been designed to make driving a more enjoyable experience—telephones, stereos, air conditioning, comfortable seating. Everything, that is, but today's driver.

Most accidents are still caused by momentary inattention. We've all been guilty. We lean over to adjust the radio, turn to comfort a child, think of the next meeting at work.

Alison MacDonald of the Canada Safety Council says, "With far more cars and drivers on the roads today, the risk of collision increases. But, the fact remains that 85 per cent of all collisions are still caused by driver error. People must take driving more seriously—and realize that every car is a potential weapon."

The magnitude of the collision problem is staggering. In 1989, 4,221 people were killed and 284,234 others were injured on Canada's roads. That same year, private insurance companies paid out more than \$5 billion in total claims costs, up from \$4.5 billion in 1988.

Some people estimate that the indirect cost of collisions—both to the health care system and in lost productivity—ranges between \$7 and \$10 billion annually. Today, traffic accidents are the number one cause of death for Canadians under age 45. This represents a crushing loss in human potential each year.

Yet, the public remains largely unconcerned. Many drivers say, "Well, I'm a good driver so I never have accidents." Yet every driver is paying the price, in increased insurance premiums and in the indirect expenses that drive up taxes and the cost of doing business in this country.

What people often don't realize is the relationship between collisions and insurance premiums. "Insurance premiums go into a pool of funds from which claims costs are paid out. This means that as the cost of settling claims goes up with the increased frequency and severity of accidents, so do insurance premiums."

Experts agree that, ultimately, the only way to solve the problem of car collisions is to change public attitudes. Each driver has to take responsibility for his or her own actions. Remember we share the road with other cars, trucks, bicycles, motorcycles and pedestrians. We must consider how our actions affect others.

As the pace of life becomes ever more hectic and the number of cars on the road increase, we all have a responsibility to drive more safely to reduce the high risk of traffic deaths and serious injuries.

The car crash problem begins with each one of us. And so does the solution.

Jays clean their nest

Forget the Persian Gulf crisis, the recession, the demise of the CBC, the Blue Jays have finally made a big trade.

Tony Fernandez and Fred McGriff, two mainstays of the Toronto Jays for the last few seasons, were trundled off to San Diego for outfielder Joe Carter and second baseman Roberto Alomar, both stars of equal or better stature. The baseball world was electrified.

Secretly, both teams felt they got the best of the deal. Publicly, they each praised the other's acumen. Privately, we'll wait until we see the results on the diamond before we cheer or moan.

We think the most significant move the Jays made so far this year was resigning Rance Mulliniks for two years. —H.C.



"...NOW THAT YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS—PLEASE TELL ME IF YOUR RETURN AND EXCHANGE POLICY IS COMPARABLE TO THOSE OF THE LEADING DEPARTMENT STORES...!"

Our readers write

Putting the cart before the horse

Dear editor,

A report in The Star (Dec. 1st) advises that most metro residents are behind a so-called "get tough" plan to reduce trash.

It is reported that Paul Christie, head of metro's work committee said it's the local municipalities that need persuading to adopt a 13-point garbage reduction plan proposed by the committee.

I would suggest the committee that proposed the reduction plan take up some other line of work.

Why am I suggesting this you may ask?

Well, first of all, if you are going to solve a problem you have to determine correctly what the problem is, and what is creating it.

This report proposes a charge or fee to be paid by those who have garbage to be picked up.

This, in my opinion, is putting the cart before the horse, as the saying goes.

These people who have garbage to put out are not—repeat, not—the source of the problem.

The main source of the problem is over packaging of products and this was not even mentioned in the 13-point program.

Can anyone explain why we need a box that is twice as large as needed to house the contents of some cereals?

Oh, I know some will say we have to make it that big to get all the printing on it.

The packaging of over-the-counter items such as vitamins is overdone. Prescription drugs are largely over-packaged.

I would suggest that newspapers are also "over-packaged."

"Junk Mail"—do we really need it? Have we demanded it? Not that I am aware of. It just comes and comes, without any request from the public.

No—the responsibility to overcome the real problem does not rest at the door of the municipalities. It rests with the provincial and federal governments to enact legislation to properly control the problem.

Garbage is big, big business and there are more jobs involved than the ones for the guys picking it up.

Cutting down on the number of pick-ups per week or per month will not reduce the amount of

garbage—it may reduce some cost but the real problem is still there.

It is a typical politician's reaction to suggest "user fees" be applied to the public. This really is another "tax" they are talking about.

What we really need is a politician somewhere in this mess with enough courage to say "No". N-O-period. No more phony committees to study a problem to death. Someone who understands that John Q. Public is fed up with their hair-brained schemes to lay more tax on the public.

Go after the real perpetrators of the problem. Someone has suggested implementing so-called "garbage police."

Can't you just picture the back-log of court cases as a result of this kooky idea?

Can't you just picture the poor judge trying to determine beyond a reasonable doubt the question—"Whose garbage is in the bag?"

Steve Emmerson, Acton

Suggests Garth resign his seat

Dear editor,

'I'm still irrelevant and irreverent,' 'True political power rests in the hands of so few people,' and 'The job of MPs now is just to act as ombudsmen for the government,' our MP Garth Turner is quoted as saying.

If this is true then I respectfully suggest that he now resign his seat so that a by-election can be called. I am confident that this will result in the replacement of an MP who represents a one-man dictatorship with an MP who represents a party committed to reform and the democratization of our parliamentary system, so that never again can Canada be ruled by a government representing only 14% of the population.

Before he resigns though I hope that Mr. Turner will reply to my last two open letters to him questioning waste by his government.

Yours truly,
R. Kathwaroon (Mr.)
Burlington.

Halton Hills

WEEKEND

The Georgetown Independent and Acton Free Press

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