

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Bylaw unenforceable?

We can understand the logic behind the Town's new vehicle idling bylaw but along with Councillor Mike O'Leary we question whether it is going to be just another "unenforceable piece of legislation," since there are a multitude of exceptions.

The bylaw states that no one should leave their vehicle idling for more than three minutes unless they are stuck in a traffic jam, need to keep the motor running to operate the air conditioning or heater in extreme temperatures. Excluded, of course, from the bylaw are fire, police or emergency medical vehicles, and mobile work vehicles doing their job, a vehicle being repaired, transit vehicles loading and unloading passengers, or vehicles in a parade.

O'Leary, who had done some research on the subject, quoted figures from neighbouring municipalities with similar bylaws said only one charge had ever been laid by any of them over the years the regulations had been in force. The mayor and other councillors acknowledged they didn't want to add another layer of police work on town staff but felt they needed some teeth to support an education program designed to curtail vehicle idling.

Councillor Jon Hurst reasoned that a bylaw against idling vehicles could work as well as a no smoking bylaw where peer pressure plays a large degree of the enforcement. Over time, he felt, idling vehicles unnecessarily will receive the same sort of public censure over time. Extra staff won't be needed to spread the message, he felt.

We hope Councillor Hurst is right. Unnecessary idling is another impediment to good health. It pollutes the air as well as being harmful to the environment. However, we're inclined to agree with Councillor O'Leary, that enforcement of a bylaw with so many exceptions is pretty unwieldy.

Perhaps all the arguments pro and con will be redundant if the price of gasoline at the pumps continues to increase or even stay the same. Idling will be just too darn expensive for most drivers unless they have pretty deep pockets.

Gasoline gouging

So where are the prices of gas at the pumps going? The experts say it is up, and up – and up. Prices this week indicate they are right.

Explanations advanced by market experts is there's a shortage of gasoline, oil wells in the Gulf of Mexico might be hit by hurricanes, the new king of Saudi Arabia might not be reluctant to sell much oil, refineries are overtaxed, some are shut down, and what ever else is the flavour of the week.

Few, if any of the experts, point out that the marketing of oil is in very few hands and the people can pretty well sell the stuff at any price they want with demand rising around the world.

Fewer people still point out that governments both provincial and federal, benefit when prices rise. About 37% of the price motorists pay at the pump goes into tax coffers. The federal government, somewhat reluctantly we might add, has finally agreed to share some of the spoils at the pumps with the municipalities. To some degree we'll benefit.

However, if the prices continue as they are, and continue to rise, the shocks won't be limited to the pumps. It will affect most consumer prices and likely lead to another round of labour unrest as people try to catch up with the cost of living.

There's no doubt the economy is tied to the price of gasoline, although many of us fail to curb our use.

Last Sunday this scribbler journeyed to Niagara-on-the-Lake, taking the QEW from Burlington. The speed limit is 100km/h. This driver decided to set the vehicle on "cruise" at that speed. It was like standing still. Vehicles of all descriptions flew past at perhaps 20 or 30kms over the limit, obviously using far more gasoline than if they had stuck with the limit. Price was no object, speed was. Obviously gasoline prices were of no concern to them. Or conservation.

On the other hand, while prices at the pumps along the QEW were at 99.9 cents a litre or higher, when they dropped to 93.6 cents on QEW tributaries, the line-ups at the pumps were long. Obviously it was worth the wait to save six cents a litre.

Those with oil stocks are no doubt rubbing their hands with glee as we joyfully head down the road to economic perdition. Those on fixed incomes who try to conserve and watch prices go up wonder whether they'll be able to afford to drive for very much longer.

Those with deep pockets don't really care but for ordinary Canadians the prices at the pumps can be a real burden.



Morning reflections on Fairy Lake

Airlines, lost bags, bah..!

The ride to the condo seemed to be the longest ride of my life. Every mile was like driving a hundred miles.

My mind was only one place – with my luggage. I was starting to get obsessed with it and yet at the same time trying to reassure myself the bags would be at the condo in a few hours.

Three hours later than expected, after a change of flights and delay at the baggage office, we finally arrived at the beach carrying only the carry-on bag, our luggage claim forms, and an 800 number to call. A moment that should have been wonderful was diminished. I felt grungy from travelling all day. All I wanted was to have a shower and put on some clean clothes. Instead, the only thing I would be doing was resisting the urge to call every five minutes to check on the bags.

Around 9 p.m., I almost ran to the phone. The flight from Philly arrived at 8 p.m. and I figured by now they should know if the bags were on that flight. The original phone number I was given was merely an automated system. I didn't want to push 2 for baggage information. I wanted to speak to a person; someone who could hear my travel tale and show some sympathy. I



By
Angela Tyler

wanted reassurance that everything was okay.

I hung up the phone and started searching the yellow pages. I knew there was a number I could call to talk to a person. I don't know how I did it, but I called someone at US Airways and convinced them to give me the local telephone number for the baggage office. I was quickly introduced to Tom, the baggage guy. Tom would soon become my best friend.

After telling him my tale of woe, Tom must have had some empathy for me. He was just going through the leftover bags from the Philly flight and promised to call me back. I wasn't convinced he would, but he surprised me and did. "Sorry, the bags weren't on the flight, but there's another one arriving in an hour. I'll call you back," Tom promised.

At this point it didn't matter how late it was. I was buzzing trying to find the bags. As I waited impatiently for Tom to call, I decided

to try another avenue and called Air Canada, our originating carrier from Toronto. Of course, I reached another automated phone system and the phone was quickly slammed down. I was not going to be defeated this quickly.

Another phone call, the same sob story and a new person empathized with me. "Can you tell me if the bags even left Toronto?" I pleaded. "We'll check it out and call you back tomorrow morning," they informed me. *Tomorrow morning?* Were they trying to torment me? I wasn't waiting until tomorrow morning. I was going to find those bags tonight if it took all night.

Around 11 p.m., my best friend Tom called, as promised, and he had success. "We have one of the bags" he told me. The Dude was eavesdropping in the other room as he watched the news. "Can you tell me if it is plain or does it have an Air Canada logo on the front?" I begged Tom to look. My bag had the logo on it, the Dude's didn't.

"You know it won't be your bag" the Dude said sarcastically. I knew it wouldn't be. I knew he would be right, but at this point I was starting to become fanatically religious and was praying and promising

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