

Editorial Page

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Increase in speed limit a possibility

A private member's bill to increase the highway speed by 10 kilometres an hour has been introduced in Queen's Park.

There are many arguments on both sides of this issue - those against arguing in favor of safety and those for mentioning convenience.

Those opposed to the increase bring forward figures which indicate increases in speed limits are directly related to an increase in traffic deaths. The Ontario Safety League backs this argument up with figures from states in the U.S. which have increased their speed limit from 55 m.p.h. to 65 m.p.h.

"On rural Interstates where the speed limit was raised from 55 m.p.h. to 65 m.p.h., crash deaths climbed 15 per cent higher than otherwise expected" had the limit remained at 55 m.p.h. says a study released by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The Ontario Safety League also reports traffic fatalities in Ontario fell from 1,800 in 1975 to 1,102 in 1986 and attributes the decrease to mandatory seat belt use, a crackdown on drunk driving, better vehicles, improved highways and lower speeds. How much of this decrease is directly related to the lower speeds is anyone's guess but the major reason for the decrease must be the reduction of drinking and driving.

On the other side of the coin, there are those that argue higher speed limits, especially in Northern Ontario where there are large distances to travel, will reduce travelling time and expenses for shipping goods and also help to increase tourism.

As for the increase in fatalities, the speed limit is just that - the maximum speed allowed under the law. That doesn't mean a person must travel that speed - especially if they feel unsafe in doing so.



An increase in the speed limit could be beneficial as long as certain other steps are taken at the same time. For instance, how many driver education courses teach people defensive driving or even how to drive properly on a highway for that matter. After driving for many years people fall into bad driving habits such as not checking rear view mirrors regularly, not using seat belts, improper signalling and turning, to name a few.

Offering, or requiring refreshment and defensive driving courses to be taken in conjunction with increasing the speed limit would be beneficial and help to avert fatalities that may otherwise occur.

The News welcomes your letters to the editor. Feel free to express comments, opinions, appreciation, or debate anything of public interest. Write to:

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In order that we may verify authorship, please sign your letters.

A purse by any other name . . .

I don't know Mister Taj Kassam of Edmonton from Mister Adam of Eden but we share a vision, Taj and I.

We both see a future full of purse-carrying men.

Mind you, Mister Kassam has a vested interest in the vision -- he's owner of an Edmonton store called The Leather Place.

One of his main product lines is a small leather carry-all with a shoulder strap designed to do the job of a wallet and pockets and suitable for either sex.

It's a purse, but Mister Kassam doesn't call it that because most of the men would not feel comfortable walking into a store and saying "I'd like to buy a purse, please."

Men would never buy perfume for themselves either -- but they line up to buy "men's fragrances" by the barrel.

Ditto with the "man's purse" concept.

Solution: Don't call it a purse; call it a "unisex bag".

Mister Kassam admits that so far, the male demand for his unisex bags in the macho burg of Edmonton has been distinctly underwhelming, but he wasn't expecting door-crashers anyway.

"In Alberta, you don't see men carrying them around much," he says. "It's a real no-no here."

But Taj Kassam has the patience of a philosopher. He's willing to wait because he thinks the tide is about to turn.

What's going to make men amenable to the idea of carrying a pu-- all right, a unisex bag?

Simple, according to Mister Kassam.

The Loonie.

Taj Kassam thinks the brassy, 11-sided dollar coins now popping up in cash registers across the country are eventually going to convince men that carrying a bag is a reasonable idea.

He has a point.

Good old greenbacks, even as I type these words, are

being sucked out of all over Canada. Every dollar bill that returns to Ottawa is snagged, shredded and replaced by a Loonie. Pretty soon the change that comes back from just about anything you purchase is going to include



Arthur Black

one or two dollar coins.

Pretty soon you're going to have very lumpy pockets.

Well, you can see Taj Kassam's theory, can't you?

He figures men aren't going to want to walk around with their pants pockets

looking like squirrel cheeks. They're going to cast around looking for some new fashionable method of toting about their disposable income.

Taj Kassam hopes they're walking by his store at the moment so that he can sell them a unisex bag.

"It won't be dramatic, it'll be gradual" he says. And he thinks it'll start with young executives between 25 and 30. "They're more adapted to change than other age groups."

Well, true confession time, folks.

I'm no young executive and I'm on the far side of 30, but I've been carrying a bag for years. I carry it because I don't like sitting on my wallet, patting pockets for my car keys or jingling when I walk. I also like to carry things like notebooks, sketch pads and novels that I haven't quite finished reading.

Do I ever get razzed about carrying a bag?

Nah. I've got a beard, broad shoulders and I weigh about 200 pounds. I don't

look exactly limp of wrist. Besides, let me give you an inventory of what I'm carrying in my bag right now:

- a ring full of keys
- a calendar/date book
- a pen knife
- a "lucky" rock (approx. weight 8 oz.)
- three ball point pens
- a couple of months worth of gas receipts
- one Elmore Leonard murder mystery
- sunglasses
- a wallet

You don't want to razz me. If I hit you with my purse you might never get off the floor.

Taj Kassam thinks Loonies will make other men take up shoulder bags, but that creates another problem for me. I don't have room for Loonies. My bag's full.

I think the Loonie deluge is going to bunt me towards my next fashion accessory: a monogrammed shopping cart.

Some of us are simply destined to be slightly ahead of our time.