

Drunk drivers will face stiff new regulations

Transportation Minister Al Palladini introduced legislation today that targets this province's worst offenders—drunk drivers.

"We're going after the bad guys—the people who put others at risk," said Palladini.

"These are people who

took a chance and got caught. With this legislation, they're going to pay the price."

In 1995, one-third of all fatalities on our roads involved drinking drivers. And more than two-thirds of drinking drivers were repeat offenders. That's a 15 per

cent increase since 1988.

With this bill, drunk driving convictions would stay on a driver's record for a minimum of 10 years, up from five.

First-time drunk driving offenders would attend a mandatory education program.

Repeat offenders would undergo an assessment and then education or treatment.

"No time to take an education or treatment program? Too bad—no license," said Palladini.

"It would be up to these people to prove to us that they've got their problem

under control. The tab for these programs would be picked-up by the offenders, not the taxpayer."

The suspension period would increase for all repeat offenders, with first-time offenders losing their license for one year, while those caught a second time will face a three-year suspension.

Drivers caught drinking and driving for a third time would lose their license for life, with the possibility of reducing the loss to 10 years.

"Three strikes and you're out," said Palladini. The only way to get a driver's license back after 10 years would be to complete a remedial measures program and have ignition interlock installed. Fourth time offenders would receive a lifetime suspension.

One of the worst offenders on Ontario roads is the suspended driver.

With this legislation, any one caught driving while suspended for a criminal code offense would lose the vehicle they are driving.

The vehicle would be impounded for 45 days for first-time offenders, with fines ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

The second time an owner's

'Truck impoundment and the wheel separation offense are strong medicine...the most stringent in North America'

—Palladini

vehicle is impounded, it will be for 90 days. All repeat offenders would also be hit with fines ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

Also, trucks or buses caught with a critical defect, such as faulty brakes or cracked wheel rims, would face immediate vehicle impoundment for 15 days.

As promised, this bill would include wheel separations as an absolute liability offense, with fines ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000.

"Truck impoundment and the wheel separation offense are strong medicine—our toughest to date, and the most stringent in North America. If you don't make safety your business in Ontario, then you won't be in business," added Palladini.

Drivers passing a school bus with its stop arm and overhead lights flashing, would face fines that have now doubled to \$400, up to a maximum of \$2,000 for a first offense.

Fines for a repeat offender would also double to \$1,000, up to a maximum of \$4,000.

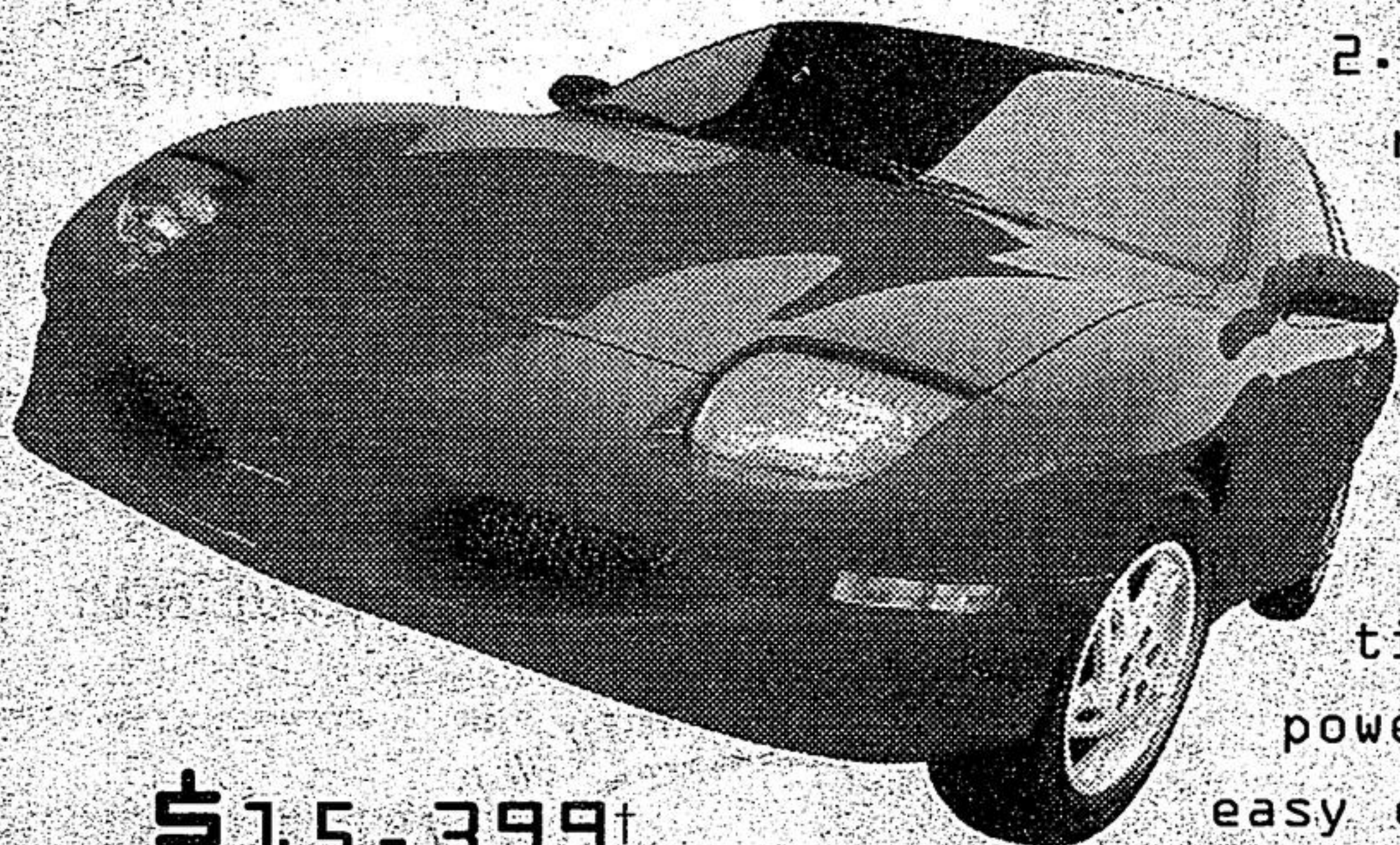
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