

Dangerous drivers target of provincial road safety plan

Some of the worst offenders on Ontario's roads — drinking drivers, unsafe trucks, people who drive while under a Criminal Code suspension, and those who continue to pass school buses when they shouldn't — have been the target of the government's actions to make Ontario's roads safer this past year.

"Two years into our five-year Road Safety Plan and we're on course with measures that target unsafe drivers and make their vehicles," said Minister of Transportation Tony Clement, marking of the second anniversary of Ontario's Road Safety Plan. "I believe drivers are the ones who must be held accountable and responsible for their actions, as well as the upkeep of their vehicles."

The province is reaching those drivers with bad attitudes and unsafe vehicles through higher fines, incentives and deterrents. Since October 1996, the province has targeted some of the worst offenders in the following ways:

Focusing on drinking drivers:

- Introducing the Administrative Driver's License Suspension program - to date, about 19,000 people have lost their privilege to drive for 90 days; and

- \$1.2 million continues to be available to municipal police services for Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) spotchecks.

Improving truck and bus safety:

- Making wheel separations an absolute liability offense with fines up to \$50,000;

- Introducing mandatory training programs for people who install truck wheels and for truck drivers who want to adjust air brakes;

- Increasing truck fines to a maximum of \$20,000 — the highest in North America;

- Working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada to aid enforcement officers and the OPP in verifying insurance slips on the spot;

- Giving the Registrar of Motor Vehicles more authority to take faster action against a company under, or pending sanction, including denying operating privileges to a truck or bus operator;

- Receiving legislative approval to

impound truck and buses with critical defects;

- Introducing a zero tolerance enforcement policy;
- Revising the safety fitness test for new entrants to the truck and bus industry.

Identifying high risk drivers sooner:

- Releasing a new Driver Performance Record that allows insurers to review every drivers record before they renew their insurance policy so high risk drivers can be identified quickly and easily.

Encouraging people to buckle up:

- Participating at the community level in the two week province wide Seat Belt Campaign.

Keeping children safe on school buses:

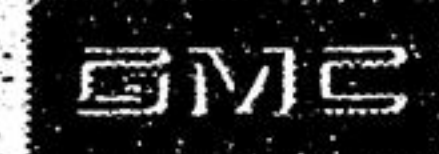
- Making it mandatory for school buses to stop at all railway crossings; and

- Doubling the fines to a \$400 minimum and a \$2,000 maximum for anyone who passes a school bus with its red lights flashing and its stop arm out.

"Next year, we're going to get even tougher when education and treatment programs and vehicle impoundment are up and running," said Clement.

For further information contact Dan Shultz, Minister's Office, Ministry of Transportation, (416) 327-9200; Kathy Dermott, Corporate Policy & Communications Branch, Ministry of Transportation, (416) 235-4102; Ministry of Transportation web site: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/>

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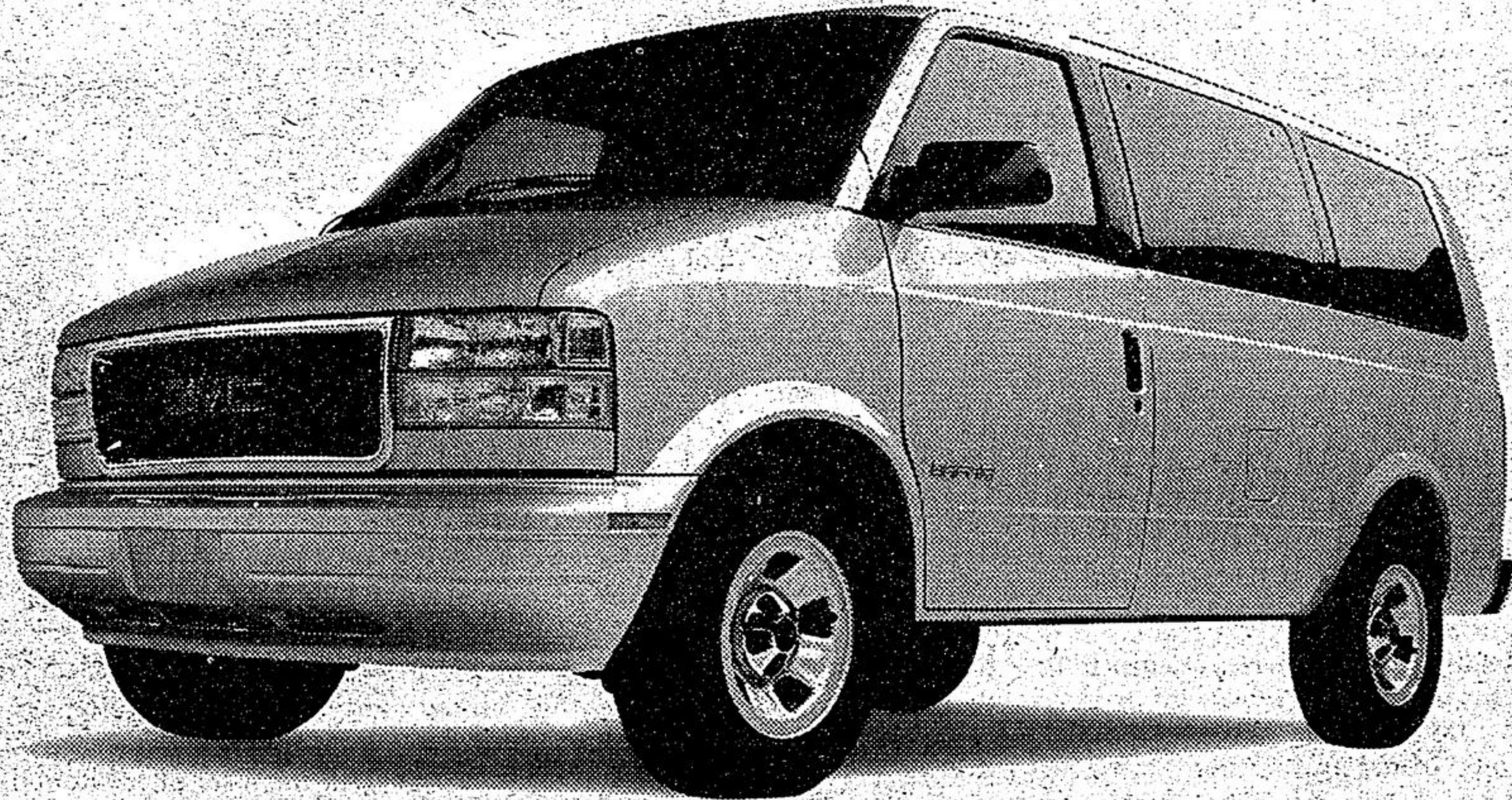
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