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# WHEELS

## More injury and death if speeds are increased

*The Ontario Safety League predicts more human suffering if drivers aren't better educated*

The Ontario Safety League said until drivers are more educated and law-abiding, the Minister of Transportation should not increase the speed limit on Ontario's highways.

"Every year, 1,000 people are killed and 90,000 injured in collisions on our roads, with 85 per cent of these crashes caused by driver error," said Bert Killian, president of the OSL. "The human cost is already far too high.

"Before we can seriously consider allowing greater speeds on our highways we must address the current issues that are causing this carnage."

The statement comes after a suggestion by the OPP that speed limits could be raised to match the speeds Ontario's super highway were designed for in the first place.

Killian said many of Ontario's roads are overcrowded, with vehicle num-

bers increasing every year and the driving population growing by 300,000 new drivers annually.

"While this is to be expected in a growing economy, it is not good news when surveys show that Ontario's drivers are among the worst in North America in terms of driving skill and knowledge of the rules of the road," he said.

"In addition, we still have impaired

drivers, whether by alcohol, drugs, fatigue or emotion, and we have a widespread attitude toward our rights on the road that leads to road rage, red light running and aggressive driving.

"To add higher speeds to this deadly mix is to invite even greater human suffering. The key to a reduction in collisions and their tragic aftermath are education, awareness and enforcement.

"We must inculcate in ourselves as drivers an attitude of constant safety awareness and courtesy to other road users. If necessary and in most cases it is we must upgrade our knowledge and our skills.

"And then the rules of the road must be rigorously enforced to weed out those drivers who still insist on playing by their own rules. Driving is not a right; it is a privilege that must be earned every day."

Bert Killian, president of the Ontario Safety League.

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Acknowledging that the 400 series highways are designed for speeds greater than the present limits, and that cars are now better designed and safer, Killian said he still questions the proposal to permit higher speeds, pointing out that the dangerous disparity between faster and slower traffic would likely become even more marked.

As for variable speed limits, he sees no reason why drivers, who already ignore current limits, would obey these different limits.

"In my opinion, much of it is due to lack of knowledge. Drivers simply do not understand the immutable laws of physics involved in operating a vehicle at speed, nor are they fully aware of the consequences of breaking these natural laws. Those consequences are all too often death or injury.

Until such time as we have a driving population that is educated, aware and law-abiding, the Ontario Safety League believes that higher speed limits on our highways will bring a higher death and injury toll."

The Ontario Safety League is a non-partisan, public interest organization that focuses on road and community safety.



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