

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Bad drivers already paying penalties

The proposal by Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Julian Fantino to crack down on people who drive in an unsafe manner in bad weather appears to assume that everyone who gets involved in an accident could have avoided it.

But most of us know that this is Canada and the weather and road conditions are typically beyond our control.

Will anyone who hits a patch of black ice or encounters a drift of snow now be at the mercy of a police officer who will decide if the resulting mishap was their fault or not?

Driving is onerous enough on our roads without the thought that should we get into a single-car accident — in other words, it's just little old me, going off the road — that we could face a fine on top of the trouble we're already facing, which is getting the damage repaired and likely paying much higher insurance premiums.

It's interesting one of the apparent justifications for such a change is that this is the policy in many U.S. states at the moment.

In New York, for instance, drivers are banned from exceeding whatever speed is prudent under the conditions.

It's difficult to see how this does not open up a Pandora's box of interpretation of the law and different judgment calls by different officers.

Besides, why should what is done in U.S.

states have any bearing on what we do here?

There are a lot of policies in effect in the United States that we should not necessarily emulate. (Granting mortgages to millions of people who can't afford to make the payments, precipitating the near collapse of the world's financial system, is one that comes to mind.)

Mr. Fantino denies that, contrary to early reports, he was calling for insurance companies to be given the right to not pay if a driver was operating his or her vehicle dangerously.

As it turns out, the insurance companies already have this option.

Another thing they do in the United States is elect their sheriffs. But we don't do that here.

The top cops are appointed and are there to enforce the laws, not write them. That job is reserved for our lawmakers in Parliament.

The important part of this separation is that it keeps the intergrity of both the lawmakers and the law enforcement arm intact. We're never left wondering which laws our police are going to enforce or not, which ones they like better than others, which laws they'd like to see on the books and which ones they'd like stricken from the books.

That is up to Parliament to decide, not the police. It's the police's job simply to enforce.

If Mr. Fantino really wants to have a hand in drafting legislation, perhaps he should be running for provincial Parliament instead.



Surprised my 2009 horoscope sounds positive, considering

Am I too old to be suddenly fascinated by my horoscope, which keeps telling me 2009 will be a momentous year in my life, a turning point, there's no stopping me, you go girl, yadayadayada, even though people are worried about 2009?

And for this I can thank my lucky stars, which now seem to be in charge, after my unlucky stars abused their expense accounts and were asked to resign.

The year will be big on the domestic front (I assume they are not talking domestic automobiles) and maybe even financially, so long as I'm careful (is the horoscope writer sure he has the right year?).

What I have done to deserve this favourable juxtaposition of objects in the Heavens, is not exactly clear.

Who takes this stuff seriously, I don't know, but according to the newspapers, it's millions of us. It would be nice if everyone had a positive 2009 horoscope, even if it's just the little things. We just have to lower our expectations a bit and we'll be all right:

Aries (March 21-April 19) — Suddenly the things you always wished you were good at, you're good at. You can scrape and pile dishes faster yet more quietly. When you go to the grocery store five minutes before closing on Christmas Eve, you don't have to ask the deli clerk what a turnip looks like. You can actually pick out an edible tomato. You play hockey with the guys and suddenly have an excellent wrist shot — and you're the goalie! Life is good.

Taurus (April 20 to May 20) — You are less shy. And, the interior of your car is always clean. For you, this is enough.

Gemini (May 21 to June 20) — All at once you can cook! Not just french fries but Chez Bernie's Roast Duckling a la Mashed Potatoes. People who care about you, buy you an apron. People of other astrological signs start frequenting your house around meal time and their camaraderie, jokes and penchant for helping clean up, really make a difference. Pisces eats a major roll.

Cancer (June 21 to July 22) — Your sign may be hazardous to your



Bernie O'Neill

health. But have no fear! You are feeling swell and for once all the vertebrae in your back line up, even after lying on the couch all afternoon watching football.

Leo (July 23 to Aug. 22) — Your animal magnetism finally pays off: there's a reward offered for that dog who followed you home! Which is too bad because suddenly dogs really like you. They don't smell your fear or notice the terrified look in your eyes.

Virgo (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) — You are less self-conscious about the way you walk. ("Head down, looking for money," as your mother used to say.) Also, you finally real-

ize parting your hair on the other side will make no real difference in your life.

Libra (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) — When patience with the kids is called for, you have patience. When "enough with the food fight already, get to bed before you waste all the mayonnaise" is called for, you run out of patience. You always have the right amount of patience for the right occasion, no more, no less. As for cleaning up the mayonnaise, you put your faith in your sham wow, or whatever it's called.

Scorpio (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) — You are able to find fashionable footwear in your shoe size, at a discount price. When you tie your tie, it's never hanging down too far, nor is it ever too short. It's always just right. Things are really humming for you right now.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) — You now feel comfortable holding your fork with your left hand at a nice restaurant. Which piece of cutlery to use and when, and what to do with it after (leave the small spoon on the plate for the server to take away? put it back beside the

plate? polish it up with my sleeve?) is all just as plain as day.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) — To the people that you wished would realize that you have an inner soul that's worth knowing, suddenly they just see it, in a flash, just by looking at you, you don't have to do any cartwheels or funny tricks anymore. For the rest, there's no hope for them so it's time to move on.

Aquarius (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) — Every time you get your hair cut, it's exactly the way you wanted it. You always gas up when gas prices are at their lowest. That purchase you put off until Boxing Day? The thing's on sale at 70 per cent off.

Pisces (Feb. 19 to March 20) — There's something fishy about your sign, but not about the year you're about to have. Romance, wealth, fame are all there for you to experience vicariously via your favourite TV show, which is debuting new episodes next month.

Even if your horoscope doesn't sound promising, I hope you all try to have a happy 2009 anyway, just to prove them wrong.

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