



EDITOR'S POINT OF VIEW

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Slip Slidin' Away Our Highways and Byways

I had an interesting trip to Sudbury last Sunday. I opted to take the Sultan industrial road, as always, to save time and valuable gasoline. There was a bit of a snowfall on Saturday night. The weather warmed up enough Sunday that the light snow turned into rain, while I was in transit.

The road was fine up to a certain point. I then observed from a distance that the road ahead seemed to have been paved. Had I sprung thru to another dimension in time where our governing bodies had somehow given up to our relentless demands to have the road paved? Or was this a mirage?

Unfortunately it wasn't to be. It was ice, black ice that is. At this moment in time the vehicle was actively pursuing another path and the GPS lady was having a nervous breakdown, demanding for an immediate 180, even raising her tone on a few occasions.

Feet off any available pedals, gentle turn of the steering wheel to correct said path. Now the vehicle is facing the other side of the road defying all known laws, handling the ice about as well as Bambi, in a position that only a calculus, algebra or physics professor could calculate.

The brain reacts in strange ways in moments of high anxiety! The first symptom is the slow motion effect. Everything slows down. This gave me an opportunity to conclude that the size of the pine cones was directly proportional to the size of the trees. I deduced that trying to aim for the smaller cones was probably the right decision to make.

My next thought was that the darn lumber companies had not cut down enough trees. As the slow motion effects wore off, my vehicle returned to its' proper path. Now I was desperately waiting for the forward

momentum to quickly diminish as I was in dire need to touch solid ground. In the middle of nowhere, I got out of the vehicle and after resisting the urge for a Papal-like ground kiss I took the proverbial "look around" to see if anyone had seen my antics. I attempted to take a short walk, to ease the stress level, but soon realized that my shoes were not any better than my tires. That was enough to get a smile back on my face. The rest of the trip was a slow ride with my hazard lights on and the occasional humming of "All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth".

Travelling the Sultan road was done at my own risk and it turned out to be the better part of the trip. The highway travel between Chapleau and Sultan was done in 3 to 4 inches of slush following a single vehicle track, smack in the middle of the road. Something is amiss when transport trucks are travelling at 30 km/h on a main highway. Our highways are not properly maintained.

In November during a trek to Timmins I encountered a stretch of highway exceeding a

distance of 20 kilometers that only a Zamboni driver could have appreciated. No sand, no salt! Another interesting moment in my life! I have never experienced this type of road condition in forty years of driving unless a major storm was involved.

As you know, our Provincial government has been shopping out of province and out of country lately, with the GoCar Transit Train repairs going to a Quebec based company instead of going to Northern Ontario's Ontario Northland. The company that was awarded the contract for highway maintenance in Ontario is called Transfield Services and is based out of Australia. While we're out on this shopping spree, maybe we should look into cheaper hydro from either Quebec or Manitoba and use the savings not to pay for OUR hydro debt but to properly maintain our highways.

According to the Ministry of Transportation's web site the Ministry is committed to creating a balanced and effective transportation system that

supports strong communities that offer a high quality of life. To accomplish this, the ministry seeks to: Improve road safety and enhance customer service - by maintaining Ontario's road safety record among the top jurisdictions in North America as well as increasing access to, and developing new ministry products and services. One of its major responsibilities is using the latest technology to maintain safe roads in all weather conditions and provide driving condition information to the public. Aside from providing driving conditions by closing the highways nothing else is being done! Maybe we should declare a state of emergency. Now I understand why the studded tires are now legal. It was a plot!

If you experience poor road conditions you may want to contact Transfield services at 1-877-250-7575 or you can write to the Minister of Transportation to either complain or at least correct the information on their website. The address for the Minister is as follows: Honourable Bob Chiarelli, Minister of

Transportation, Ministry of Transportation Corporate Correspondence Unit, 3rd Floor, Ferguson Block, 77 Wellesley Street West, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z8

If awarding highway maintenance contracts to foreign companies is a necessity, I am placing Norway, Finland and Sweden on my Christmas wish list.

Chapleau could gain financially from this situation with a TV reality show. We would easily compete with "Ice Road Truckers"!

As compensation maybe Ontario Northland should be given a contract to link all of Northern Ontario communities with a rail system. We could then transfer our highway systems to the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs to use as their snowmobile trails. No cars, no gasoline cost, no need to plug in our vehicles, no insurance cost, no brushing cost for the snowmobile club. It's a win-win solution.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Drive sober, and if the highways are open, drive safely!