

2011 Provincial Election

We have been asked for questions to be proposed on behalf of the collector car community to candidates in the upcoming provincial election.

There are currently three major unresolved issues with regard to our community. All of these were initially discussed with MTO and the environment ministry; the initial discussions dating back prior to the institution of Drive Clean programme. The issues are:

- 1.The 20 year rolling exemption from emission testing. This was established by a previous government at the institution of Drive Clean and was viewed by other North American jurisdictions as being forward looking and thinking. Ontario's law formed the basis for subsequent legislation in both Canada and the US. Unfortunately, it was removed by the current government for no other apparent reason than a sound bite. The excuse given was the ageing of Ontario's fleet and the daily use of more gross polluters. While Ontario's vehicle fleet is ageing, we have been informed, unfortunately verbally and by an MTO person who insists on anonymity, that the number of licensed daily drivers over twenty years old, the target group in this case, has not increased. Most cars in excess of twenty years of age, unless restored and/or maintained by a collector, are terminal rust buckets.
- 2.The institution of Year of Manufacture plates as a sub-set of Historical plates. This was done by the ministry of transportation but, while historically plated vehicles are exempt from testing, we have been unable to convince the environment ministry that they should be so exempt.
- 3.The need for a collector plate. Most jurisdictions in both Canada and the US have a collector plate. MTO people agreed that they were desirable but were not possible due to constraints imposed by the ministry's computer system. We understand that this system has since been rewritten and a collector plate should now be a practical request.

What do we want/need?

- 1.The reinstatement of the 20 year rolling exemption.
- 2.Minor changes to the regulations governing Historical plates and recognition that Year of Manufacture plates are a sub-set of Historical plates.
- 3.A collector plate which would make Ontario licensing consistent with other North American jurisdictions.

Historical plates

Minor amendments are advocated to the regulation governing historical plate.

No charge should be made for license sticker for these or for year of manufacture plates. These vehicles are, in reality, part of the province's heritage and if, as we are advocating, the regulations are strictly upheld these vehicles could not be used for regular transportation. Our community is restoring and preserving these vehicles for posterity and this contribution should be recognized.

The vehicle age requirement should be changed to a minimum of twenty-five years old rather than the present thirty years. This would bring Ontario into line with the international community.

The vehicle must be substantially unchanged or unmodified from the original manufacturers specifications. This is the same as at present but should be amended to allow modifications made specifically to make the vehicle safer and/or environmentally friendlier.

Collector Plates

The Specialty Vehicle Association of British Columbia was instrumental in the institution of a Collector plate in that province and, as of 1996, over 10,000 vehicles were plated this way. We feel that the advantages to both the ministry and the hobby indicate that the time has come for Ontario to follow this lead.

The following regulations are suggested for collector plates.

Annual stickers should cost 10% of that of a regular plate.

There should be no vehicle age restriction on the issuing of these plates.

The annual mileage of collector plated vehicles should be strictly regulated (say 8,000 kilometres or 5,000 miles). If the vehicle exceeds this limit the owner must, at renewal time, pay the remaining portion of the full license fee for the year just ending before a renewal sticker can be issued.

A collector plated vehicle plate cannot be for primary transportation.

A collector plated commercial vehicle cannot carry a load for profit.

An original Ontario license plate of the vehicle's year of manufacture may be registered to the vehicle and used in lieu of a collector Vehicle Plate.

The ministry's primary argument in past discussions against the institution of a collector plate was the need to await the introduction of an impending major computer system upgrade. We assume that this has been accomplished and it will be interesting to see each party's response to a request for lower fees to help private citizens preserve our motoring history.

Background Information

The perception of the non-enthusiast in the general public is that Drive Clean is an additional tax by the province. Recent changes may alleviate to some extent this perception of a cash grab.

The collector car community is made up of relatively sophisticated consumers whose perception of Drive Clean is somewhat different. It appears to us that the environment ministry, like the city of Toronto, is opposed to automobiles and to automotive enthusiasts and that the people at the top in government really do not have much use for our hobby and that recent developments are much more concerned with political posturing than with the environment.

I was one of those present, prior to the institution of the Drive Clean program, when the original exemption was discussed. It was shown at that time that the number of licensed vehicles over twenty years old that were in daily rather than "collector" use was insignificant.

Ontario was hailed by the collector car community and by other transport regulators, particularly south of the border, as being in the vanguard of the enlightened application of environmental legislation.

Subsequently, our provincial government sacrificed the rolling exemption for what appears to be little more than a ten second sound bite.

Ministry officials have undergone many changes since the institution of the Drive Clean Program and much of the original reasoning behind those regulations, particularly the logic of the hard won rolling exemption, have been lost. This reasoning has been blurred by rhetoric on both sides of the argument and much of the logic behind previous decisions has been lost in the heat of the moment.

The majority of the meetings preceding the launch of the Drive Clean program took place at a pilot project test facility near Pearson International Airport and were between two senior ministry policy advisers, one an environmentalist, the other an automotive engineer and three representatives from the Specialty Vehicle Association of Ontario. During this period a sizable number of collector vehicles, ranging in age from the 1930's to the present, were tested and served as a basis for decision making. Testing cars from the 1920's or earlier was deemed too dangerous.

Many reasons formed the bases for the agreement on twenty years as the cut-off date for testing. Three of the apparently forgotten reasons were:

1. Inaccurate population data for older vehicles,
2. The hardships imposed upon poorer and rural residents by the removal of their means of transport, and
3. The total destruction of the automotive hobby for future generations.

The reason given for eliminating the exemption was the "ageing of Ontario's vehicle fleet". I had the opportunity a while ago of discussing this development and its impact on our community with "an MTO person". Apparently, Ontario's fleet is ageing but not those vehicles that were exempt (i.e. those over twenty years of age). If this is the case then the reinstatement of the rolling exemption is justified.

The number of older cars operating in the province was greatly exaggerated. Unless MTO computer systems

have undergone a major change many vehicles that have been abandoned or scrapped remain in the MTO system. They exist only as entries in a data file, entered when the vehicles were first registered and never removed.

If one were to obtain the population of vehicles in the system that are plated and carry current validation stickers one would have the functioning vehicles which may at some time show up on our highways. If one then deducted those with Historic plates and those with Year of Manufacture plates one would have the total number of "non-hobby" cars or those that may be used as daily drivers.

Collector cars, however plated, are rarely driven; the average annual distance travelled being less than four hundred miles (640 km.).

The number of collector vehicles cars in this age group has marginally increased but these are well tuned and have very limited usage.

These vehicles are part of Ontario's cultural heritage and their restoration and preservation should not be discouraged in this manner.

Certain segments of our population depend on older vehicles for general transportation. Practically, the provincial government cannot allow the "poor people" to be taken out of their "cheap" transportation. Too many people, especially in rural areas and particularly in Northern Ontario need transport and, short of the government's institution of a functioning province wide public transit system, these folks have no wheels other than older vehicles. The older daily drivers will succumb to rust and will be removed by attrition.

Vehicles older than twenty years that are not in a state of good repair will not last long on the road. Living with today's high fuel prices requires a certain degree of efficiency in one's automobile and efficiency, believe it or not, is what lowers emissions. Also, drivers of older "daily drivers" drive them because they have to, not by choice. The additional cash grab of further testing represents regressive taxation at its worst.

A serious problem facing the collector car community will be the availability of vehicles and the parts to fix them. Vehicles and parts will presumably be available in the United States and in Europe with profits from the resulting transactions following the loonies and toonies in those directions.

The loss of the rolling exemption has effectively removed ordinary citizens from the hobby insofar as post 1987 vehicles are concerned and left it for those with deeper pockets.

Much has been made in the press about the fact that our cars are "gross polluters" and that they should, therefore, be removed from the nation's highways. This is far from the truth. Most data gathered on gross polluters was obtained from vehicles in the last stages of their useful life immediately prior to scrapping.

The majority of the worst emission test results were obtained from vehicles turned in to the scrapping programs in the United States. These vehicles were scrapped so that major corporations, notably ARCO and Mobil Oil in California, could use the pollution credits gained through their scrapping to offset these companies' own requirements for emission reduction as mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency. It was, naturally, in the interest of these corporations to overstate the amount of pollution reduction resulting from crushing programs. This, incidentally, is why the Specialty Vehicle Association of Ontario is opposed to any form of pollution credits and trade in them.

Our vehicles are better tuned and in much better condition than when they were in daily use. In fact, most are in superior condition to that in which they left the factories in which they were built.

We have tested quite a number of them and have surprised the Ontario Drive Clean testers with their low levels of harmful emissions.

Our vehicles are not in daily use and are not used as primary means of transportation. A study done by the SVAO, completed in 1997, indicated that the vehicles in question travelled an average of only 705 kilometres per year. Even if the emissions were much greater than they, in fact, are the total amount of pollutants released would be minimal. Ontario's level of usage for "toy cars" is consistent with that of studies conducted in the UK, the US and Europe.

The benefits of our community to Canada are many. Motor vehicles have played a significant role in Canada's economic and cultural development. While Ontario has enjoyed the industry's major economic benefits, there is no region, with maybe the possible exception of the high arctic, where motor vehicles have not participated in and/or precipitated significant events and changes.

Ontario continues to be the growth engine of Canada and the automotive industry is one of the most important

segments of Ontario's economy. The vehicles restored, cherished and exercised by our community's members are an important element of Ontario's heritage and should be considered provincial cultural assets.

The "old car hobby" has a significant impact on the Ontario economy. Our community supports the trades involved in restoration and maintenance as well as providing a drawing card for travel and tourism.

In a survey conducted some years ago by the SVAO the average cost of a restoration was reported as \$8,700. The average amount spent annually per vehicle on maintenance, storage and insurance was reported as \$2,270. Inflation has increased this amount which, in light of the very limited mileage driven, is a very significant expense to the hobbyist.

Historical and special interest vehicles are very popular with both Ontario residents and tourists. People spend significant amounts to come and see specialty cars at auto shows, automobile races and other events of the type. The questions from the general public at car shows and cruises indicate a fascination with "old cars" and a lively interest in our mechanical past.

While national unity is not a primary concern of the Ontario government, our community and our vehicles are a powerful force for national unity within at least that part of the population that our "hobby" touches, the owners of the vehicles, the people who get enjoyment at parades and car shows and people who love history and historical artifacts.

The "hobby" is vibrant in all parts of the province, effectively bridging gaps and disparities; whether regional, ethnic or political. The SVAO is in regular contact with other groups and individuals across Canada, in the US and Europe.