Clearly there is evidence to establish that visibility increases with the contrast created by the use of daytime running lights. It is an inexpensive and extremely effective measure by which we might decrease automobile accidents.

We do not need to turn to Greyhound Bus Lines or Nordic countries to note examples of the effectiveness of this measure. Since 1966, the daytime use of headlights on motorcycles has been compulsory in Canada. It should be noted that since the introduction of that safety feature, there was a 40 per cent decrease in motorcycle accidents. In 1982, Canada had more than 800,000 motor vehicle accidents wherein 4,169 persons died. Estimates predict that with the use of daytime running lights approximately 120 lives per year would be saved and 11,000 injuries, together with $200 million in related costs, would be eliminated. Total accidents in Canada would decrease by 4 per cent to 5 per cent with use of universal daytime running lights and fatal accidents would be reduced by about 3 per cent.

Merrill Allen of the University of Indiana found that drivers did not seem to know under what conditions they should turn on their headlights. A study done by Transport Canada found that at dusk oncoming unlighted cars were visible to one another only if they were within 500 feet of each other. However, a full 1,500 feet is required for safe passing. At dusk a masking effect occurs if an unlighted car is preceded or followed by a lighted car. The unlighted car in effect becomes invisible.

It was further found that drivers judge a lighted vehicle to be closer than it really is and therefore passing is discouraged. In Canada daytime running lights usage is less than 14 per cent. Thus, full participation in the use of daytime running lights would produce an estimated 10 per cent to 20 per cent reduction in daytime multiple vehicle collisions. This would equate to a 3 per cent to 6 per cent reduction in over-all annual accidents.

A retired engineer and lighting specialist for General Motors indicated that such lamps on automobiles would require an energy equivalent of about eight-tenths of a gallon of gas per car per year. As original equipment on cars, daytime running lights would cost about $15 per vehicle. This recommendation is practical, workable, and responds to a demonstrated need. It is a very economical way in which to reduce accidents, save lives, decrease property damage, and provide a very worthwhile service for Canadian drivers at very little cost.

Owners of existing automobiles would have the option of either switching on their headlights while driving or installing an automatic switch system which would allow their headlights to come on at low beam. Vehicles could be modified, if the owners so wished, to install one of the less expensive options and link it to their ignition systems. The study by Transport Canada indicated that the benefit to cost ratio would be about two to one.

In conclusion, let me say that the use of daytime running lights in Canada on motorcycles has resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in motorcycle accidents. In Sweden and Finland there has been the clear demonstration of a significant reduction in accidents because of the use of daytime running lights. The American Telephone and Telegraph Company has noted extremely positive results, as much as a 45 per cent decrease in accident rates with its experiment. There are similar statistics for the Greyhound Bus Corporation in Canada and the United States. The evidence is there. It is clear for all to see. It is inexpensive. It can save lives and prevent as much as 11,000 injuries a year. Canada ought to adopt this simple but effective system for protecting its citizens. I hope the Bill will be allowed to pass in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak today on the motion of the Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) asking that the Government introduce a measure requiring that all motor vehicles manufactured and sold in Canada be equipped with an automatic system which would cause headlights to be turned on whenever the motor vehicle is in operation.

I wish to commend the Hon. Member for this proposal which I find quite constructive. I hope that Government authorities, especially the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie), will give it favourable consideration. I am not certain that the Minister will act quickly, but I hope that the Hon. Member will use his influence with the Government to speed up the process.

Indeed, such a measure could reduce considerably the number of front-end collisions on Canadian roads. In addition, it could reduce the number of accidents causing fatalities or serious injuries. I therefore believe that this is a very important proposal which deserves to be not only considered, but also implemented by the Government.

It is attractive from many aspects, but I believe that the Government should consider some of my comments before putting it in effect.

Indeed, I find this motion quite appropriate since an increasing number of drivers keep their headlights turned on all day. In Ontario, there are now road signs saying:

[*English*]

"Keep your lights on at all times for greater safety". Indeed, many people going to work early in the morning or returning at the end of the afternoon are using their lights even on a sunny day. They use their lights for greater safety.

• (1710)

I think it is a useful and a valuable recommendation of the Hon. Member. However, there is a caveat. Under closer scrutiny, under a more careful analysis going beyond the principle to the application, the motion does not look totally attractive unless some provisions are embodied in the initiative.