

*Fuel Consumption Standards*

[Translation]

More oil is required in this transportation sector than in any other, and although other fuels such as propane can be substituted for gasoline, this is not sufficient, at least not in the short term. Once again, we must save energy. Since substitutes are known, in abundant supply and ready for immediate use, it is the National Energy Program's aim to provide for efficient management of the demand for oil products in this sector. We shall be able to stabilize, and even reduce, the demand for oil products to a considerable extent through the proposed legislation on motor vehicle fuel consumption standards which is aimed at saving our energy resources. This additional authority would make existing voluntary guidelines for fuel consumption standards official and would give force of law to compulsory standards, should they prove to be desirable or necessary in the future. There are already signs of change in this sector, one example being the installation of relatively inexpensive aerodynamic deflectors on tractor-trailers, which help cut down on fuel consumption.

Carpool programs appear to be spreading, and are another way of reducing our transportation fuel requirements. However, not only the drivers' attitude must be changed. Driving itself must be rethought and revolutionized. This bill is therefore proposing a program that takes into account Canadian conditions and requirements on the basis of which the automobile industry will design and manufacture the cars of this decade. In 1975, the American government adopted legislation that set fuel consumption standards for cars. It is up to the manufacturers and importers to ensure that average consumption, weighted by the number of cars sold each year, meets annual standards. Since these standards are becoming increasingly stricter, the industry has been obliged to change the design of North American cars. Increasingly, however, cars manufactured to U.S. standards do not allow for the differences in climate and fuel encountered in Canada. Because of our energy policy, we need a made-in-Canada program. The bill on motor vehicle fuel consumption standards will authorize the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) to continue the voluntary fuel consumption program.

The first part of the Act provides that a fuel consumption number will be given to each vehicle sold in Canada. The numbers will be used on information stickers for each vehicle and also to provide data for the Transport Canada transportation fuel consumption guide. The same figures will also be used by the Minister of Transport to calculate the fuel consumption of vehicles sold by manufacturers in Canada.

The vehicle categories covered by the legislation are to be general. For instance, private cars will form one category. The present voluntary program sets average motor vehicle fuel consumption standards for a company for every year up to 1985. Companies can reduce fuel consumption by selling more energy-saving cars or by refining each model in this respect at the design stage.

The government has decided that the program will remain voluntary unless companies fail to co-operate.

[English]

So as to hammer the point home, the authority to set standards and impose penalties is contained in the act. But the government does not intend that these provisions should be proclaimed. Just having written these sections into the law we hope will be enough to accomplish our goals.

We want detailed information for the consumer and for the government. We want to demonstrate to everyone, manufacturers, consumers, and the world that we are truly committed to saving scarce oil supplies and we want to be in a strong position to negotiate with the industry on voluntary standards. Obviously if we cannot achieve all of that without using the legal clout this offers us, we will resort to that approach. But for now the practice of setting voluntary fuel consumption standards will continue along with an improved flow of information.

The primary beneficiary here is not in fact the government but the consumer. We expect automobile manufacturers and dealers to display prominently energy consumption ratings and give the consumer the chance to make intelligent, informed decisions when in the vehicle marketplace. The government will compile the data to monitor the accuracy of the ratings and the progress we are making in getting more kilometres out of every drop of fuel.

We can also get a better idea of what is happening by way of research and how the new technology is performing. Such information is crucial to developing government policy. As the situation stands now we cannot be sure such complete information will be supplied. The consumer will also benefit by having the attention of automobile manufacturers focused on Canadian needs and conditions and on our supplies of gasoline or alternative fuels. Nothing in this bill should cause undue hardship to the industry, which we all know is hard pressed these days. We are really asking for very little additional information beyond what the industry now supplies. This act merely ensures that the information will in fact be forthcoming. The expense will be minor and the benefits potentially great. What it will do is to give us some data and some measurement directly related to the real world that Canadian motorists face. We have to find ways of looking for data which is relevant to the Canadian climate, which we all know has a mean temperature all its own.

If fuel consumption testing does not yield results which are translated into actual fuel consumption when cars and trucks are put into use on streets and highways, it is not of much use. The government needs to be sure it is getting complete and precise information if it is to verify for the consumer the numbers which manufacturers are turning out. We need this legislation to get that data. We also need a not so subtle means of encouraging automobile manufacturers to look at alternative fuels.