

Motor Vehicle Safety Act

when the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) met with the ten provincial ministers responsible for motor vehicle administration in Quebec city in early 1969. At that conference, the provincial ministers welcomed the suggestion of an expanded role for the federal government in certain fields related to traffic safety, and specifically in the field of traffic safety research, in facilitating international co-operation in the field of safety research, and in developing safety standards for motor vehicles and parts at the point of manufacture.

Consultations between the federal and provincial governments continued, and in September 1969 the Minister of Transport again met with the provincial ministers responsible for motor vehicle administration in Fredericton. At that time, it was confirmed that the federal government should assume responsibility for ensuring the safe design, construction and functioning of new motor vehicles manufactured in Canada and for motor vehicles imported into Canada. Furthermore, it was agreed that the provinces would continue to ensure the safety of vehicles in use, as well as the safety of replacement and additional parts for motor vehicles.

[Translation]

In November 1969, the Minister of Transport tabled Bill C-137, entitled "Motor Vehicle Safety Act", which was passed by the House on March 11, 1970.

Commenting on this legislation, the Canadian Automobile Owners Association in its publication "Program and Resolutions for 1970-71", stated as follows:

The Canadian Automobile Owners Association commends all levels of government for agreeing to enact the Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

The fact that the federal government assumes this responsibility sets up a structure which should help in overcoming safety defects in motor vehicles that may be the direct cause of accidents or of serious injuries resulting therefrom.

[English]

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the two main features of this act provided authority for the federal government to enforce safety standards for vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1971 and to require manufacturers to issue notices of safety defects in vehicles in the prescribed manner. Following the enactment of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, the task of developing motor vehicle safety regulations to implement the provisions of the act was commenced. The standards planned by the Department of Transport during the next five years with the objective of providing substantial safety performance improvement in those systems which contribute to the avoidance of crashes will include improved tire safety standards, standards of handling, stability, braking, vehicle controls and display systems, lighting and visibility.

The Motor Vehicle Safety Act provides authority to issue regulations respecting the design, construction and functioning of motor vehicles manufactured in Canada or imported into Canada. Thus, safety standards for seat belts and other safety features of new motor vehicles are prescribed by regulation rather than being specified in the enabling legislation. The Motor Vehicle Safety Act is not concerned with the use of motor vehicles on the road, as this is frequently regulated by the provinces under their highway traffic and motor vehicle acts.

[Mr. Clermont.]

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, since the House passed the Motor Vehicle Safety Act on March 11, 1970, changes have been made to that act through amendments to its regulations.

[English]

For instance, the installation of seat belts in passenger cars was made mandatory on January 1, 1971 and it was required that by July 1, 1972 manufacturers instal seat belts in the operator's seating position in buses, trucks, multi-purpose passenger vehicles and chassis-cabs. It can be seen that the federal government has moved quite rapidly in this field to provide greater safety on Canadian highways.

You will also note, Mr. Speaker, that the use of such seat belts is presently regulated by the provinces under their highway and motor vehicle acts. While this falls primarily within provincial responsibility, I understand there is continuous consultation by the Department of Transport officials with their provincial counterparts to attempt to find ways of persuading more people to use seat belts when travelling in their automobiles.

[Translation]

On October 25, 1971, the Minister of Transport announced amendments to the regulations on motor vehicle safety—which amendments are now in force—lowering the acceptable limit of carbonic fumes flowing from automobiles and commercial vehicles exhaust pipes.

Another amendment provided more detailed provisions on the installation of safety belts to ensure greater protection.

Those amendments were published in Part II of the *Canada Gazette* on October 13, 1971.

On December 15, 1971, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) and the Minister of Environment (Mr. Davis) jointly announced a proposed amendment to the same regulations on motor vehicle safety with a view to protecting public health and checking the deterioration of urban environment.

The recommendations contain more drastic provisions concerning the fumes produced by the new gas burning motor vehicles to be manufactured in 1973, 1975 and 1976.

Mr. Speaker, other changes in the regulations were announced by the Minister of Transport on February 22, 1972, March 17, 1972, and April 21, 1972.

Mr. André Ouellet (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak to this bill. It is not my intention to speak very long because I support its intent. I commend the hon. member for introducing it and I hope that it will be referred to the committee for consideration and implementation.

Bill C-17, the purpose of which is to require the equipping of commercial vehicles, trucks and buses, with safety belts in the driver position and to require the use of these restraint belts by the driver to increase his safety and that of the occupants of his vehicle and of other highway users, strikes me as an extremely important provision.

I think that we in Canada unfortunately have far too many highway accidents which entail casualties or very