

Raising limits a good idea

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Anyone who routinely enters Orangeville from Highway 9 knows that when you hit that stretch of road where auto dealerships line the thoroughfare for a good half-mile for more, the speed limit drops from 80 km/ to 60 km/h and you've got a good distance to go at a relatively slow pace until you hit the next set of lights.

There is fair warning with a '60 km/h ahead' sign posted a good distance before the drop in speed limit takes effect.

The new speed limit was put into place a little over three years ago to slow traffic approaching a new set of lights at the intersection of Highway 9 and the First Line of Mono. The limit also probably serves to increase safety in a stretch of road that sees a lot of turning traffic as well as trucks stopping to unload new cars to the dealerships.

Most people who know the road slow down and at least drive close to the posted limit. Others have a tendency to ride your tail and seem to wonder why you are driving so slowly on a highway.

Occasionally you'll see an OPP SUV parked on a dealership drive-in area waiting to pounce on some guy who's been juicing his ride all the way down the Highway and thinks the new limit doesn't apply to him.

In this case the speed limit is there for a good reason ? even if it does seem a bit slow for that stretch of road.

The Province is now taking a look at increasing the speed limit on some highways and has already designated three stretches of the 400 series as pilot projects to see how things go.

The plan is to raise the current limit to 110 km/h.

If you drive any of the 400 series highways you'll notice almost no one drives the speed limit. Most likely the flow of traffic will be between 110 and 120 km/h ? and with good reason. You can safely navigate a wide-open straight stretch of highway at that speed.

Modern vehicles easily cruise at between 110 and 120 km/h and with the entire flow of traffic at the same speed the highway will keep moving.

Most drivers feel confident driving at that rate of speed in traffic. People will instinctively feel unsafe in any vehicle that is travelling too fast for a stretch of road.

If you're gripping the wheel and see your knuckles turning white at 110 km/h, you should probably stick to the back roads or buy a bicycle.

The whole idea of a highway is to provide a road that connects destinations and will allow faster speed traffic without stop signs, intersections, and stop lights. It's a way of moving traffic efficiently and getting to a destination in a timely manner.

Even the police have adapted to the generally higher speeds on the the 400 series highways.

I travel the QEW fairly frequently and quite off see an OPP cruiser parked to the side while cars fly by at close to 120 km/h. If the flow of traffic is at that speed, there isn't a problem. The police are looking for that one hot shot who thinks he can drive faster than anyone else and weaves around traffic, changing lanes frequently.

Those are the drivers that do cause problems for everyone else.

However, sometimes the police will decide to shake things up and start handing out tickets just to keep people in check.

I once got a ticket for doing 110 ? ten km over the limit ? after being picked off by a radar gun stationed on an overpass and a cop who radioed ahead to another patrol car down the highway.

The pilot project for increased speed limits will be in effect on three stretches of road that are straight and uncomplicated.

If drivers can manage to drive a straight line at the higher speed without suddenly swerving off the roadway or inexplicably crashing into something, the Province will then assess the results of the project and possibly apply higher limits to other stretches of highway.

Of course there is always going to be someone who will take advantage of the higher limit and step on the gas with the reasoning that if the limit is 110, you should be able to do 140.

In that case, I think the OPP should pull out the ticket book.

At that speed you have become a danger to those around you.

The new higher speed limit reflects a practical way of managing traffic in a highway situation without the worry of being ticketed for travelling at a safe speed.