

# Gorski Consulting Website

## Archived News - 2013 - December

December 31, 2013

### Fatal, Single Vehicle Collision Reported on Highway 402 West of Glendon Drive

News agencies are reporting that, shortly after 0600 hours this morning, a vehicle was westbound on Highway 402 when it left the roadway “striking the centre median”. The driver of the vehicle died. No further information, including the identity of the deceased, has been made available.

The photos below were taken on November 28th, 2013 and provide a general view of the westbound lanes of Highway 402 on approach to the Glendon Drive exit.



View along the westbound lanes of Highway 402 on approach to the Glendon Drive exit.  
This photo was taken on November 28, 2013.



View, showing the left curve of the westbound lanes of Highway 402 on approach to the Glendon Drive overpass. This photo was taken on November 28, 2013.



View, looking along the westbound lanes of Highway 402 just west of the Glendon Drive overpass. This photo was taken on November 28, 2013.



View, looking west, along the westbound lanes of Highway 402, west of the Glendon Drive exit. This photo was taken on November 28, 2013.

Another single-vehicle, fatal collision occurred in this vicinity in the last couple of years and we are in the process of tracking down the photos that were taken of that incident. We will post those photos if we determine that they are relevant.

UPDATE: January 1, 2014; 1025 Hours

News media are now reporting that the collision-involved vehicle was eastbound, not westbound, as earlier reported. The driver is also being identified as Howard McLean, 66, of Middlesex County.

The London Free Press is also quoting police in stating that the driver “...died of natural causes not related to the crash”.

The photos posted earlier in this article are showing westbound traffic so they do not represent the conditions of the crash if the vehicle was actually eastbound. The only information one can gather from these photos is that there is a substantial curve in the highway which would have been a right curve if the vehicle was eastbound.

We have not posted the material with respect to the previous, single-vehicle, collision because it involved a westbound vehicle that travelled completely through the median and was struck by eastbound traffic. This would have been called a “median cross-over” collision that was sensationalized by the media in the late 1980’s before concrete medians were erected on Highway 401. Highway 402 still remains without such median barriers.

**December 30, 2013**

### **Toronto’s Police Chief Blair Confirms Constable Zivcic Was Not Wearing Seatbelt – But What Are The Solutions?**

It took two months for the news media to obtain a confirmation from Toronto’s Police Chief, Bill Blair, that Constable John Zivcic was not wearing a seatbelt when he was “ejected” from his cruiser and killed on November 30th, 2013. Even so, nothing was mentioned regarding how that determination was made. Also, nothing of any substance was provided about why this occurred and where his force will go from here. It is clear to us that Constable Zivcic’s cruiser was travelling very quickly when it travelled through an urban intersection and was involved in a minor impact with another vehicle, resulting in the subsequent impacts that led to the Constable’s ejection from his vehicle. Regrettably, there is nothing that can be done now to change this fact. However something could be done to prevent a future tragedy.

Some open discussion is needed to determine why police travel at high speeds and do not wear seatbelts. Comments have been made that police are constantly in and out of their vehicles. Constantly putting seatbelts on and taking them off is a problem. Other comments have been made that seatbelts do not fit properly around the utility belts worn by officers. Are there other reasons?



Example of an OPP cruiser commencing a high speed passing motion on a highway in October, 2013 on near Delhi Ontario. Situations can change quickly and unexpectedly therefore a seatbelt is essential when police are involved in such actions.

Our point is that, wearing a seatbelt is absolutely crucial for the safety of anyone occupying a vehicle, even when it is stopped. Police are likely involved in more high-risk situations than the average driver so the wearing of a seatbelt should be even more important. One option could be the creation of a simple but mandatory rule to all officers: If you activate your lights and sirens you must also have your seatbelt buckled.

### **Cyclist Child Carriers Can Be Unsafe In Certain Traffic Situations**

Transporting children with your bicycle by attaching child-carrying trailer may appear to be a good idea, particularly in colder months as it may provide some protection from the cold. However, there is also an added risk that parents must take into account.



Low height of child carriers attached to bicycles can make them unsafe in traffic as drivers may be unable to see them while also not expecting such an attachment to a bicycle.

The low height of such carriers means that sometimes they will not be seen in traffic. Also these carriers are uncommon and drivers do not expect to see something like this attached behind a bicycle. In situations where drivers approach too close to a bicycle they may not see the carrier and an accident could happen. These carriers provide essentially no protection in case of a collision while the lower position of a child's head can be vulnerable to impact by the stiffest part of any vehicle – its bumper.

**December 26, 2013**

**Where Ever Christmas Finds You, Let It Find You In Peace**



**Few Major Collisions A Success Story For 2013 Christmas of Ice**

Fortunately, residents of South-Western Ontario have been spared the difficulty of facing any major collisions in the area through Christmas Day even though there was a debilitating ice storm that left hundreds of thousands without electricity and warmth.



View of the typical icy conditions experienced on Trussler Road, southwest of Waterloo, Ontario. Many trees and power lines collapsed under the weight of the ice but few major collisions occurred in the area.

Thanks must go to the army of power workers and snow plow operators who spent their pre-Christmas cleaning the roads of dangerous fallen power lines and accumulations of ice on road surfaces.



View of snow plow working the roads of the Waterloo region on Christmas Day.

Much prior publicity about the ice storm helped everyone to take precautions before conditions worsened. Let us hope the remainder of the holiday period remains as safe as its beginning.

### **What Caused an OPP Police Cruiser Impact With a Tree on the Exit Ramp From Highway 401 Near Ingersoll, Ontario – Part 2 of 2**

We have uploaded the second part of our analysis of a collision involving an OPP police cruiser that occurred on December 18, 2013, on the westbound exit ramp from Highway 401 at Plank Line, near Ingersoll, Ontario. This article can be viewed on the Articles page of this website.

**December 24, 2013**

## **What Caused an OPP Police Cruiser Impact With a Tree on the Exit Ramp From Highway 401 Near Ingersoll Ontario ? – Part 1 of 2**

Gorski Consulting examined the collision site of an OPP Police Cruiser on the westbound exit ramp from Highway 401 to Plank Line near Ingersoll, Ontario. Two articles are being prepared to review the evidence and discuss possibilities of how this collision occurred. The first of these two articles has now been uploaded to the Articles page of this website.

**December 19, 2013**

## **OPP Police Cruiser Crash at Hwy 401 & Plank Line – Blame On Mystery Vehicle Treated With Suspicion By Public Commenters**

This is the official explanation for a police cruiser crash yesterday at Highway 401 and Plank Line near Ingersoll, Ontario, as provided the Woodstock Sentinel-Review newspaper:

***“An OPP officer suffered minor injuries after crashing into a tree on a ramp on Highway 401 near Ingersoll Wednesday afternoon.***

***The collision occurred at 1:55 p.m. on the westbound off ramp at Plank Line. The officer was exiting the highway when they spotted a vehicle parked on the north shoulder of the off ramp.***

***The vehicle suddenly pulled off the shoulder and onto the roadway directly in the path of the fully marked OPP cruiser, police said, causing the officer to drive their vehicle into a north ditch and strick a tree to avoid a collision.***

***The other vehicle, described as a white Ford Fusion, did not remain or return to the scene.***

***OPP are looking for any witnesses who have not yet spoken to police and may have information about this incident, or may be able to help identify the driver involved to contact them at 1-888-310-1122.”***

Years ago we would have accepted that explanation without question. However, having experienced the trickery of past incidents where we know that police have attempted to hide their mis-deeds (and shamefully, successfully at times) we no longer take that approach. Equally unfortunate is the questioning of that official explanation by a majority of commenters in response to the above-noted article. While such commenters may not represent the majority of the public it does indicate the up-hill battle police have with public trust. It is illustrative that, inappropriate behavior by police has its repercussions. While they may successfully hide from a specific incident, the loss of public trust is difficult to regain, and this paints all police, deserving or not, with the same brush.

UPDATE: DECEMBER 19, 2013; 1230 HOURS

Given the lack of information about this collision we decided to travel to the site this morning, December 19th, and we conducted an examination of the evidence for ourselves. We expect, time permitting, that we will prepare a detailed report of our findings in an upcoming article that will be uploaded to the Articles page of this website. In the meantime, the following few photos should provide a general introduction to the facts.

The photo below shows a general view of the westbound exit ramp from Highway 401 as vehicles proceed to the intersection with Plank Line (Oxford Road 19). The site of the OPP police cruiser impact is in the very distant background but this view provides a general indication of what the officer would have seen as he approached the area.



View, looking westbound along the westbound exit ramp from Highway 401 to Plank Line. The traffic on Highway 401 and the Plank Line overpass can be seen at the left edge of the view. The actual collision site of the OPP Cruiser is in the distant background.

The photo below brings us a little closer toward the accident site and we have shown this particular photo to demonstrate that the large blue signs on the right (north) side of the ramp could provide a visibility obstruction, both to the police officer, and to the alleged driver of the White Ford Fusion if that Fusion was parked on the north shoulder as indicated by the official story.



Depending on the exact position of the alleged White Ford Fusion, the two large blue signs on the north side of this ramp could have caused a visibility obstruction to both drivers.

As we come around the bend of the ramp we can begin to see the area on the right (north) roadside where the final curve begins to take traffic to the intersection with Plank Line. Near the beginning of this final curve is where we can see the tire marks from the police cruiser that exist in the snow as the vehicle slid toward the tree.



View, looking along the westbound ramp toward the area where the police cruiser left the pavement on the right (north) side of the ramp.

The photo below shows a view of the tire marks of the police cruiser in the snow, on the right (north) side of the ramp.



In the foreground is the location where the OPP cruiser left the right side of the ramp and the cruiser's tire marks can be seen in the snow. The cruiser stuck a tree as well as some smaller brush and a wire fence in the background.

The photo below shows the evidence of impact with the tree. This impact was not all the evidence of the speed of the cruiser. There was probably more speed lost from the impact of the brush and fence than from the actual impact with the tree.



View of impact damage to the tree struck by the OPP police cruiser. The additional evidence of impact to the smaller saplings and wire fence, following this tree impact is what substantiates the high speed of this vehicle.

We will not go into further details but it is clear from this evidence that the police cruiser was travelling substantially faster than most traffic that would be using this ramp. Given the extent of visible damage there is no doubt in our minds that the event data recorder (“Black Box”) on this Ford Crown Victoria Interceptor would have been activated and would have recorded the cruiser’s speed at the time of this impact.

We do not appreciate the police investigators using the media to develop a story about the driver of the phantom White Ford Fusion being the cause of this accident. We are confident that the EDR of the police cruiser indicates a high speed of the cruiser and the police have that evidence available to them. Even if that phantom Fusion existed, and indeed, entered into the path of the cruiser, it is highly likely that the driver could not detect the approach of the cruiser due to the curvature of the ramp and the obstructing signs, but also due to the high speed of the cruiser.

We expect to provide a further discussion of this in the noted upcoming website article.

**December 18, 2013**

### **Santa Preparing For Deliveries?**



Santa, clearing a path for the exit of his sleigh and reindeer, at his summer cottage in London, Ontario.

Word has it that Santa Claus is finishing up with closure of his summer cottage in London, Ontario and is loading up his sleigh to return to Christmas Town from which he will depart on his yearly, worldly mission. On the other hand, some believe it is just a guy with a Santa hat cleaning out his driveway.

### **Duplication of Tire Marks Observed On A Gravel Shoulder Though Controlled Testing**

On December 4, 2013, Gorski Consulting documented some tire marks that were found on a freshly re-graded gravel shoulder of Clarke Road, north of Fanshawe Park Road on

the north-eastern outskirts of London, Ontario. A test was performed at 60 km/h where the test vehicle travelled onto the shoulder, adjacent to the observed tire marks, so that a comparison between the two sets of marks would help explain how the original tire marks were formed. We have prepared an article, uploaded to the Articles page of this website, discussing the details of this research.



A tire mark produced through controlled testing (left) is compared to a tire mark produced by an unknown, mystery vehicle to help explain how the original mark was created.

**December 16, 2013**

### **What a Difference Some Salt Makes – In Twenty-Four Little Hours**

Some London drivers were found singing in their cars this morning as the City of London decided to clear out the snow from this weekend's winter conditions.



View of a street in London, Ontario on Monday morning, December 16th, 2013 as salting by the City turned the harsh snow to a wet roads.

However, if you were unlucky enough to reside on one of the less-travelled roads the plows and salt have still not arrived, making driving tricky. Pedestrians too had difficulties as sidewalks are often cleared later than the roads, as shown in the example below.



Motorized vehicles received attention but pedestrians, especially those challenged by disabilities found it tough going on many of the City's sidewalks.

Children however were more than abundant as they received help on busier streets from volunteer crossing guards, such as the example below.



When school starts or ends there is an abundance of children making crossings of streets that can be too busy to handle alone. Crossing guards such as the one in this photo provide some measure of additional security that the crossing will be done in safety.

Overall London and area drivers have coped well with the unexpected winter conditions that have blown through the area in the past month or so. While many believe that winter conditions should create more serious collisions the opposite is true: Springtime is when young drivers have historically gained spring fever and this is when many of the more serious collisions see their increased numbers.

**December 14, 2013**

## **Snow Plows Removed From Service While Snow Accumulates In London, Ontario**

Decisions are made by road maintenance departments that can be confusing. While snow begins to accumulate in London, Ontario due to a storm system passing through, snow plows appear to have been taken off the road.



Plowing trucks were out Friday, December 13th, 2013 as shown in this photo, minus their forward plows. Their salt/sand mixture was seen being thrown on the road likely in preparation for the weekend snowfall. Snow plows appear to be missing on Saturday morning as the snow accumulates.

Yesterday, Friday, December 13th, plows were seen spreading their salt/sand mixtures likely in preparation for the upcoming storm. However this Saturday morning the plows are gone and snow is accumulating on the roads.



View of a typical London intersection in the late morning of Saturday, December 14th, as snow plows appear to have been taken off the roads and snow begins to accumulate.



Pedestrians walking through the streets of London still had reasonable walking conditions on Saturday morning, but by the evening they may be begging for a lift from Santa's sleigh. Weather forecasters are predicting a white Christmas in the area as temperatures continue below normal and snow is especially heavy north of London, east of Lake Huron.

Decisions regarding the timing of plowing are complicated. Waiting until most of a snow storm passes might be more efficient as more snow is removed in a single pass. Yet, during the time that road crews wait for that larger accumulation there is a greater danger to the public than if road crews just continue plowing operations during a storm. Unfortunately, the public's vehicles get in the way of plowing operations and this also can be a danger as collisions with plows have to be considered. It is likely that plows may be called in later in the evening or through the night when there is less traffic. But who knows? (And just as we complete this news item we hear the rumble of a snow plow past our office window)

UPDATE: DECEMBER 15, 2013; 1000 HOURS

While snow plows were expected though the day Saturday, December 14th, they did not materialize until into the late evening. Examination of the major arterial roads in London in the late afternoon of December 14th showed that they were still snow-covered with no sign of any plowing as shown in some of the photos below.



A westward view along Oxford Street near the intersection with Quebec Street near sunset showed that snow had not yet been cleared away on this major arterial road.



Close-up view of snow compressed by the tires of road traffic. Although the snow accumulation was not deep the cold prevented melting and caused the snow to remain between the tires and asphalt road surface. This made acceleration more difficult and dangerous at intersections.



As shown in this example, drivers who need to accelerate from a stop onto a major road found that their tires would spin on the snow and their entrance and clearance of the major road took much longer than normal. This is a dangerous situation that can lead to impacts into the side of a crossing vehicle with possible major injury or worse. This is why snow plowing and sanding/salting need to be performed regularly even when snow is still falling.



View, looking east on Dundas Street just west of Highbury Avenue. This view confirms that snow was not removed from this major arterial road near sunset of Saturday, December 14th.



View, looking south, along Highbury Avenue south of Florence Street, showing that this major arterial roadway was snow-covered near sunset on Saturday, December 14th, indicating that snow plows were not sent out throughout any of the major roads in London, Ontario.

## **Winter in Fall Continues To Make Traffic Conditions Interesting in Vicinity of London, Ontario**

As citizens in the London area move through the Christmas season they have been faced with a month full of winter weather and winter does not officially arrive for another week. These conditions present situations and that both drivers and pedestrians need to be aware of.

With the cold temperatures and wind pedestrians are more interested in keeping their heads warm while failing to recognize that their ability to see clearly is affected by their head gear. Below is typical pedestrian who has decided to make a mid-block dash, only his age turns that dash into a crawl, at best.



In cold conditions pedestrians' thoughts are more concerned with the cold than the traffic. Here an elderly pedestrian attempts a mid-block crossing while his vision is hampered by the hood on his head.



As the pedestrian looks in one direction he cannot see traffic approaching from behind.



The mystery man moves on to face another day, but we should all take note of these special circumstances. As drivers, this person could be encountered in busy traffic conditions without expecting his present.

We must also appreciate that some cute sayings are just cute, and not accurate. So the common saying that there are only two seasons, Winter and Construction, is not quite accurate. There can be both, Winter and Construction at the same time.

For example, the photo below shows a typical lane closure where a large boom is used for various work. We would expect this work to stay within the confines of the closed lane.



We are often used to seeing smaller areas of lane blockages as utility repairmen work with a tall bucket to make adjustments on utility poles and the like.

But not always, as shown in the photo below...



Booms of various types should remain within the confines of a closed lane, not hanging over passing traffic such as occurs in this photo. While most drivers might believe that this is a hazard for large trucks, it should be remembered that, when large trucks collide they do not always stop, and their post-impact path could be directly into other traffic. Things can be complicated and you must anticipate such dominos effects.

We must always pay attention to what is ahead of us. The taillights of vehicles ahead will not always provide the essential information needed to make the correct response, as shown in the photo below.



Is it turning right or braking? Only its high-mounted brake light knows for sure. Non-functioning tail-lights can be confusing but they can be more so in winter conditions when snowfall makes it more difficult to capture all the essential information.

Winter has been around for over a month in the vicinity of London, Ontario. The weekend of December 13th and 14th provides a new storm system that will provide a blanket of snow throughout south-western Ontario. This means that road surface conditions will continue to be difficult to interpret and we should not expect that those conditions will remain the same on every road we travel.

**December 13, 2013**

**Fourteen-Year-Old Driver, Jaden Swanson, Remembered at Collision Site on Admiral Drive in East London**

A candle-light vigil was organized yesterday evening around the site of the tree where 14-year-old Jaden Swanson's Pick-up truck collided and he was killed on Wednesday, December 11th.



View of the memorial around the tree where Jaden Swanson's Ford Pick-up truck collided and he was killed.

With the opening of the roadway by police following their investigation it would normally be possible to examine the road for any pre-crash evidence that would help to

explain how Swanson's pick-up truck entered into a loss-of-control. Unfortunately, even as police were still conducting their investigation as the morning sun rose on Wednesday, intermittent snow-squalls kept the site covered with a light layer of snow.

Our re-examination of the site yesterday afternoon showed that the road surface was still wet and any evidence on it would be difficult to detect. However our visit helped to clarify the issue of the utility junction box that was struck and was found underneath the front end of the truck at final rest.



View of pieces of green junction box trapped underneath the front bumper of the Ford Pick-up truck at its final rest position.

In fact there were two such junction boxes. The anchorage point of one of those was underneath the right-front tire of the truck at its rest position while a second one was located just behind the vehicle.



View of site, looking west along the south side of Admiral Drive. One of the struck junction boxes was at the orange covering shown in this photo while a second one can be seen in the background which has been repaired and re-covered by the original light-green surround. It appears that both boxes were struck by the truck.

The reason why we mention this point is that, the pointing angle of the truck might be determined, as it approached the tree, by matching the anchor point of the junction box to any damage on the vehicle. The pointing angle of the vehicle could help provide clues about where the vehicle was located further up-stream of the evidence. Such evaluation is needed since the roadway evidence leading to the impact has been covered by the snow so that tire marks, if they existed, cannot be used to identify what happened.

In many instances of a vehicular loss-of-control there is an element of the road geometry that contributes to the consequences. Very often there is a curve in the road or an elevation change for example. But when we looked at this roadway it was essentially straight and level for a considerable distance to the west of the impacted tree.



View, looking west along Admiral Drive, from the location of the impacted tree, showing that the roadway is straight and level for several hundred metres on approach to the tree.

When we go several hundred metres to the west and then turn around to face toward the tree we see that there is a change in direction of the road as well as a change in its elevation as shown in the photo below.



View, looking east, from several hundred metres west of the accident site showing that the roadway contains a change in direction along with a downgrade before it straightens out in the vicinity of the accident site.

The photo below provides another eastward view that is a little closer toward the tree and we can see how the road straightens out and levels out in the background where the tree is located.



View, looking east on Admiral Drive showing how the roadway straightens out and levels out on approach to the struck tree. This zoomed in view collapses the distance and makes the background appear closer than it really is.

We have often cautioned investigators to look “very far back” from where a loss-of-control vehicle comes to rest because the initial loss-of-control can be hundreds of metres away. And it can surprise one that, at very high speeds, the initial loss-of-control can seem unusually far back from the vehicle’s rest position. So readers might expect that we would suggest that the noted road feature was where the loss-of-control occurred.

Well, we are just not comfortable with that conclusion, the distance just seems too far. Yes, we understand that witnesses suggested the vehicle was travelling very quickly, and police also confirmed that belief to news media. However, we would like to evaluate any further information before we would believe the distant road feature was a factor. This is especially so since we have not had an opportunity to see any evidence such as tire marks due to the road conditions. Police will have taken photos before the snow fell so an evaluation could be made from examining those photos.

Since the roadway was straight for a long distance we wonder what additional information police have uncovered, such as the presence of another vehicle, that they have not yet revealed. We understand that it might be possible for one of the junction boxes to have made contact with the left-front fender of the vehicle. We are not in a position to compare the heights to be certain but we are doubtful. The presence of the small bit of damage on the left front of the vehicle is suspicious to us. The damage on the fender looks a little too high to come from that junction box. And there may be other damage on the vehicle on the right side for example that we cannot see. This is where a detailed examination of a vehicle clarifies many of these uncertainties. But overall, why these collision events occurred may be more complicated than is possible to determine from the limited available evidence.

As a side note, we cannot help to consider the young age of this deceased driver. Many parents might not believe that their children could be involved in such an event at such a young age. We also understand the difficulty some parents experience when a young teenager decides to make decisions for himself, which are not always wise. The mother of this young man noted to the media that parents should come to know their children's friends as "getting in with the wrong crowd" can be a tipping point. We could not agree more. It is not uncommon however when parents are overwhelmed by a rebellious child. Parents, teachers, friends and relatives must all pitch in to help each other when they recognize that help is needed. Knowing when and where to apply the proper pressure upon a rebellious child can be a difficult thing but we must remember that in some instances it can be life-saving.

**December 12, 2013**

### **Continued Dysfunctional Relationship Between Police and SIU Indicative Of Our Collective Heads In Sand**

Officially and socially we express our collective wish to remove crime. We parade our heroic police in bright uniforms, complain about the rising costs of policing and become entrenched in those camps that either support or do not support police. Yet the extent of our true commitment to improving the situation for all is reflected in our willingness to accept the dysfunctional relationship that persists between police and Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU).

The extent of that dysfunctionality was revealed again with a Toronto Star Newspaper article that described a series of 100 letters sent by the Director of the SIU to Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, apparently describing a parade of breaches by the Toronto Police Service of their responsibility to cooperate with the SIU's investigations. Reportedly none of those letters received a response by Blair because it was not required by law that Blair "report to" the SIU. Instead, Chief Blair reportedly conducted his own secret investigations of his officers' conduct then he reported on the outcome of those investigations to the Police Services Board (PSB). Of course then the PSB simply kept that correspondence confidential.

Incredibly, Toronto's Mayor Ford has received worldwide publicity about his drug use and relations with shady characters while Chief Blair's battle with him presented the Chief as a suffering champion of law and justice. While we have no response for the actions of Ford, we have to ask how much more ethical are Chief Blair's actions with respect to the SIU? The law may not require Chief Blair to "report to" the SIU but the ethical responsibility of the Chief is to cooperate in any way possible with efforts to remove those bad apples on his force that cause tremendous damage to the reputations of police. We would like to believe that police are as honest and polished as they are sometimes portrayed, but clearly, the message sent to the general public is that police are crooks, just like the persons they try to catch, because they attempt to cover up their wrongdoings. This blanket is thrown not just onto those that deserve it but all those honest and hard-working police who are attempting to make a difference and do not deserve it.

It is likely that the complaint of police is that the SIU is incompetent and often performs their investigations improperly or with a certain bias. What is the true problem with SIU investigations? We do not seem to have a clear and objective answer that considers the viewpoint from both sides. After so many years of dysfunction, one would think that Ontario's Attorney General's office would intervene as the office should oversee the functioning of both sides. Yet the Attorney General's office is essentially silent, and just as dysfunctional.

In a more sarcastic mood, we would advise that all involved should be ordered to wear clown suits, but this is a real and serious issue. Cute and empty comments do nothing to reach a solution, yet the only commitment we get from the general public are such

useless phrases. Ontario needs a clear-headed and determined public that is committed to apply the proper pressure where it is needed to clear up this prolonged mess.

**December 11, 2013**

### **Ontario's Revised Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) Fail To Require Proper Roadway Inspections**

We have expressed criticism of Ontario's Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) through several articles on this website. This is because this legislation is being used to prevent the development and maintenance of safe roads in Ontario by preventing those jurisdictions that are negligent from being held accountable for their negligence. We have prepared another article in this series focusing the MMS flawed failure to prevent proper roadway inspections. This article can be read in its entirety on the Articles page of this website.

### **Fatal Ford Pick-up Impact With Tree on Admiral Drive In London**

This morning, shortly after 0200 hours, a Ford Pick-up was travelling eastbound on Admiral Drive when it rotated and struck a tree with the direct contact occurring at its driver's door. The photo below shows the vehicle at its rest position.



View of Ford Pick-up at its final rest position against a small tree on Admiral Drive in east London, Ontario

News media are reporting that the driver has died.

Not all the damage evidence on the vehicle can be attributed to the tree impact. Note in the above photo that the left front headlight is missing and that there is light damage along the left front fender. This type of damage is unlikely to be from the tree impact and the question remains whether this was caused prior the tree impact and part of the reason why the driver ended up losing control of the vehicle.

The photo below shows a closer view of the left side and the damage at the vehicle's left front fender.



Left side view of Ford Pick-up truck showing the additional damage at the left-front fender.

Although witnesses may have seen this vehicle travelling very quickly at some point prior to the impact, one must be careful about mis-interpreting the speed of the vehicle

at impact simply by looking at the extent of the intrusion of the tree into the cab. The actual impact speed is likely much less than what is being described in the various news media.



Extent of intrusion onto the driver's seating area of the truck can be misleading when determining actual impact speed.

It can be recalled that a vehicle possesses kinetic energy by virtual of its combined speed and mass. That kinetic energy must be dissipated in order to bring the vehicle to rest. So we need to look at all the evidence that indicates a dissipation of that kinetic energy. The only available evidence is the damage to the Pick-up truck. But there is less energy dissipated in this narrow contact than if the vehicle had struck a broad object, like a wall, whereby more of the structure became crushed. Generally any time there is a narrow impact by a pole, tree, etc. it will result in a lot of intrusion but less dissipated energy than a broader impact. Now, that is not to say that this truck did not lose a lot of kinetic energy from pre-crash events such as sliding and skidding before impact. That may be so but that information is not available at this time because police have closed

the roadway and a close-up examination for tire marks cannot be made. But in most collisions the kinetic energy is dissipated from pre-impact actions such as skidding, then there is an impact which results in additional energy being lost, and finally there is a post-impact motion to rest where the remaining energy is dissipated. In the present instance there is no additional post-impact motion so that part of the energy dissipation is not there, and we know very little about the pre-impact motion of the vehicle so that energy loss also cannot be considered. What is left is the impact itself and, on its own it does not support the conclusion that the vehicle was travelling at tremendous speed (+100 km/h) when that impact occurred.

Despite this lack of evidence some facts can be deduced from just looking at the vehicle. For example, the windshield wipers are in an up position and this often indicates that they were used. So this suggests that some type of precipitation may have existed and that the roads may not have been dry.

There is also evidence of a light-green, plastic object that is attached beneath the left front bumper area of the vehicle and part of this object is also lying in front of the vehicle. This is likely from a utility junction box that was located directly behind the final rest position of the vehicle. Possibly, the damage to the left front fender of the Pick-up could also have been caused by contact of that junction box.

It is clear that the Pick-up truck was travelling eastbound on Admiral Drive when this loss-of-control occurred. Admiral Drive is straight and level for a fair distance west of the impact so the events cannot readily be blamed on the geometry of the road.

Some news agencies such as the London Free Press are presently stating that the vehicle is on Bonaventure Drive and that is an error which will likely be corrected soon. The impacted tree is on the south side of Admiral Drive just west of Bonaventure Drive.

**UPDATE: DECEMBER 11, 2013; 1740 HOURS**

News agencies are now reporting that there was another occupant in the Ford Pick-up truck when the collision occurred and that this individual fled the site after the collision. The fact that his person was able to transport him or herself from the vehicle on their own confirms what we stated about the impact speed of the vehicle and the “change-in-velocity” or “Delta-V” of the crash. Although it can be expected that occupants seated on

the opposite side of the zone of direct damage should sustain less injury, they are still at the mercy of the fact that, if the Delta-V is extremely high, they will experience high accelerations that will result in their injury or death. So it is very very unlikely, or let us say impossible, for a right front occupant of this Pick-up truck to have walked away from this collision if the Delta-V was anywhere near 100 km/h. There are just so many miracles given out each year and our maker sticks to a quota.

The fact that this vehicle was reported stolen back on November 29th, 2013 should not be used as a red herring in concluding anything about the events of this present collision. While it might prove to be true that the driver in this incident was driving recklessly an objective assessment involves taking stock of what witnesses say and then attempting to confirm whether that witness information is reliable. Again, this is not meant as a judgment upon the information provided by witnesses in this particular case, but it is a warning based on our previous experience in many other investigations.

Investigators, whether they may work for police agencies or otherwise, must gather all the evidence and perform some form of reconstruction of what actually occurred. One might see some of the police investigators in the news media photos of the present crash as they use a total station (electronic measuring device) to capture measurements at the site. Some members of the Identification department will be assigned the job of taking proper photographs. And others may conduct examinations such as the mechanical fitness of the vehicle. And still others may be assigned to document statements from all persons involved. Often a single person, a Reconstructionist, is assigned the primary duties of performing the “reconstruction” with the assistance of the information obtained from the other investigators.

It is an absolute necessity that all investigators not be blinded by their preliminary judgments and this is often a problem when they hear statements from drivers, witnesses or other investigators. This is the largest problem in an investigation: that a conclusion is drawn and then all the remaining actions of the investigator are left to gathering supporting data that will plug the holes in the conclusion.

It is not uncommon that what is believed to be in the early stages of an investigation, turns out to be false and it takes discipline and honesty to accept this. Unfortunately the deeper an investigator digs the firmer their shoes get planted, much like stepping into

quick-setting cement. After a period of time the investigator's mind can be set as solidly as concrete and equally as difficult to pry open.

In re-examining our photos of the vehicle we now believe that we may have mis-stated observation that the Pick-up truck's windshield wipers were in the up position. In fact, the left one looks to have moved forward, as if from the impact force while the right one appears to be resting in a non-used position. So there goes the point about mis-interpreting the evidence in the early stages of an investigation!

**December 10, 2013**

### **Police Crashes During Emergency Response Receive Media Silence**

During times of tragedy it is difficult to move beyond the emotions and take logical steps to prevent those tragedies.

In the case of the traffic death of Toronto police Constable John Zivcic the media has provided the public with the sadness and sorrow surrounding the memorial and funeral. Yet almost nothing has been said about the circumstances that led to the collision and Zivcic's death. The argument expressed by many is that we should honour those who have passed away in the line of duty, and that is understandable. However, when we only focus on this activity of honouring and sorrow, we fail to address the issues that could prevent the next similar circumstance.

The only information about the events preceding Zivcic's collision is that he was responding to a report of a drunk driver. Without further information the obvious question to us is why did it require Constable Zivcic to travel at high speed through such urban streets to deal with a drunk driver? We are not saying there was anything wrong with the response. What we are saying is that there is something wrong in not providing the information about why such a high speed was required. The presence of a drunk driver could involve many circumstances, none of which have been clarified.

Similar scenarios have played out many times in recent years. It was March 14, 2013 when Guelph Police Constable Jennifer Kovach was killed when her cruiser collided at high speed with a transit bus while responding to an emergency situation in the City of Guelph, Ontario. Kovach was reportedly not wearing a seatbelt and it was argued that

this did not matter due to the severity of the side impact. If we had questioned that reasoning along with the need for high speeds could we have prevented a future tragedy? Was there something that could have been done to prevent Constable Zivcic's death? In the absence of any reasonable information we do not know.

A reasonable question to ask is whether Constable Zivcic was wearing a seatbelt and what instructions are given to police about using a seatbelt when they enter into an emergency response. The answers are not easily found. While many would conclude that, since Constable Zivcic was ejected from his cruiser he had to be unrestrained, that is not necessarily so. While little information is available, what we have seen of the damage to the cruiser, suggests that a substantial force was applied from the rear, at an angle. Similar forces have caused front seat occupants to collapse a seatback and cause the occupant to slide backwards out of a seat-belt. In such instances the occupant moves toward an eventual impact head first and serious head injuries are common. This is the kind of information that needs closer examination.

With the existence of a great quantity of gear within the occupant compartment of a police cruiser there is no opportunity to conduct sufficient testing to make sure that some equipment is not causing unreasonable potential of injury to the officer. For example, in the vicinity of the driver's seat there is likely to be some form of cage that separates the front interior from the rear. That cage often has stiff anchorages that may exist just behind or to the side of the officer's head. In a substantial impact force from the rear an officer's head can be projected backwards against such a cage. One of the reasons why seat-belts are not installed in school buses is that researchers understood how difficult it was to cover the stiff frames of a seatback with enough energy absorbing material to prevent serious head injuries to lap-belted children. A similar situation applies to the rearward motion of an officer's head and attempting to provide sufficient protection. These are the kinds of issues that are not known or addressed.

**December 9, 2013**

**Repairs to CPR Truss On Western Road – Finally!**



View of CPR railway truss on August 21, 2013.

Well, without any notification to us, CPR is making repairs to its overhead bridge spanning Western Road just north of Oxford Street. It was several months ago that we contacted CPR police to report that a driver had found a heavy piece of wood on Western Road that had fallen from the bridge. As we had no further response to our notification we returned to the location and found nothing further had been done. So we wondered.

Now, months later, and with no indication to us that any work was contemplated, work has begun. Western Road has been closed and this had caused an inconvenience to many students of the University as well as to the many drivers who use the road to travel to the northwest portions of London or who travel southward into downtown. It is unknown what work is being done or, if it relates to the fallen wood, why it took so long

to do something, and why there was no acknowledgement that CPR even followed up with our complaint.

Thanks actually goes to the driver who spotted the large piece of wood on the road and contacted us. He had his reasons for not making the complaint himself and we respect that. If he had not stepped up to do something who knows what could have transpired. But many citizens like this perform work to the benefit of society without any fanfare. So, to that private person, we say thanks from us and the citizens of London. However to CPR we say you could be a little more communicative.

**December 7, 2013**

### **Position of Deceased's Pick-up Truck In Wrong Lane Could Mean Very Little Without Witness/Driver Statements and Further Analysis**

A fatal collision reportedly occurred this morning, December 7, 2013 on Queen's Line just west of Chatham, Ontario, where the deceased Pick-up truck was reportedly in the wrong (eastbound) lane at the instant of impact. Chatham-Kent police Sergeant Mike Domony was correct in choosing his words carefully, saying that the deceased "...was westbound, as though he was passing". Those words are important because the quick conclusion might be drawn that the deceased was in fact passing and was totally at fault for the collision. It is notable that Sergeant Domony then added: "We believe there were other vehicles that were westbound at the time and we'd love it if those drivers, or passengers, would come forward and give us a statement if they happen to know anything about it".

The Pick-up truck was in a collision with a "grain hauler". Although that wording could mean several things, it suggests that there was a slow-moving, farm vehicle, although it cannot be certain whether there was a vehicle pulling one or more gravity trailers, as is often the case. This causes many complications as drivers in the vicinity of such vehicles or combinations tend to perform unusual actions centred around getting past the slow-moving vehicle. There are also likely to be a number of vehicles in the vicinity of such a crash as typically there are a number of vehicles that could be lined up behind a slow-moving farm vehicle. So if police have not heard from any witnesses, or an insufficient number of witnesses, the understanding of how this collision occurred could be hampered.

As usual, the news media have not provided enough photos of the area (only one photo accompanies the news article) and an interpretation of what transpired becomes more difficult. The obvious fact is that the Pick-up truck was consumed by fire and that should raise additional concerns whether the fatal consequence was related to that fire. Yet, the single photo also suggests that the left front end of the Pick-up truck sustained a large crush/compression that resulted in the straightening of the left A-pillar and buckling of the roof. Such results occur when the collision severity (change-in-velocity) is comparable to highway speeds but it is also common when a pick-up truck striking a higher and more massive vehicle at a substantial offset of 50% or less of the Pick-up's front end. In such instances there is often substantial structural intrusion into the seated area of the occupant and many safety devices, even air bags, many be unable to save the driver.

Judging by the degree of debris scatter on the road and the location of the Pick-up truck on the roadside suggests that the Pick-up truck lost most of its impact speed in the crash, suggesting that, even though there could have been a substantial offset at the front end, the Pick-up truck was attempting to return to its own side of the road when the impact occurred and this angle resulted in the impact force being applied closer to its centre-of-gravity, and therefore the explanation for why the change-in-velocity was so high. Such a sequence of events is very common in head-on collisions and it is an issue that we have discussed on numerous occasions where we complain that the testing of vehicle safety for compliance with federal standards and NCAP fail to address this type of head-on collision. In such head-on collisions the impact force is not only directed from the front rearward but also from the left toward the right and often involves pre-impact, counter-clockwise rotation. This lateral component of the impact force and rotation are what reduces the impacted vehicle's ability to rotate away and protect the driver from the impending intrusion.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) is the only group that has recently publicized the problem but then they have nothing to lose and everything to gain, whereas, for the Feds, there is no easy solution, which we are sure they are aware of, and the Feds would rather not discuss it. Even the IIHS test does not have it quite right because they do not replicate the real-life circumstance where the pre-impact rotation and minimal rotation during the crush phase are deadly factors. But then it is very difficult for any controlled test to create this pre-impact rotation reliably and it comes with a complication and additional testing costs. But at least IIHS is on the right track.

**December 1, 2013**

## **Death of Senior Driver In Moderate Severity Frontal Impact – Awaiting Explanation**

It is doubtful that a proper explanation will be provided why a 75-year-old male driver was killed after his SUV struck a tree on Proudfoot Lane in Northwest London earlier this afternoon. The photo accompanying the news story clearly showed that the SUV struck the small tree with its front end (even though the news photo tried to hide that fact). There was no evidence of any substantial deformation to hood, left front fender or windshield and there was no evidence of any structural intrusion into where the driver was seated. Even an elderly driver should not sustain fatal injuries in this severity of crash.

So what happened? The air bag at the steering wheel deployed. Was the driver struck and killed by the air bag? Was there a pre-impact medical condition such as a heart attack? The public should be provided with some reasonable answers when drivers die in accidents where they clearly should have survived.

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