

Road Snow Conditions - Kudos and Darts

Last night was one of the biggest snowfalls we have seen in a very long time. March 1, 2016 definitely came in as a Lion (looking forward to the Lamb). We live near Walters Falls, the snow capital, high atop the Niagara Escarpment ... a beautiful part of God's Country. Although travelling in heavy snow or storm conditions is not advisable, my wife and I felt it was necessary because my Mother was in CCU with a heart attack. As we set out in the morning for Owen Sound, the roads were snow covered but visibility was good. We were concerned that no snow ploughs had been out, and driving was quite rutted, but we thought the ploughs would likely come along soon.

We are used to driving in poor conditions, by necessity. There was a time when the Grey County Roads Department was better than all the rest. During the past 30 years living in the Walters Falls snow capital, like it or not, we have travelled through many very abominable winter conditions. We always had faith that the County roads would probably be better maintained than the Provincial highways. In many cases, we would never have made it through except for the good County roads maintenance. Over the past few years that impeccable record has become tarnished. There has been a very noticeable decline in regular winter snow maintenance. On many occasions, we have driven on unsafe roads due to low frequency maintenance.

Last night, we could not make it home. Not because it was too stormy ... there was a steady snow, but visibility was good. Obviously, the County had not been on the roads all day. Accumulation was very high (I didn't measure but it had to be over 1 foot deep on the roads - well over the bumpers).

When we headed home around 9:00 pm, the Provincial highway was ploughed and driving conditions were fine. As we started homeward along County Road 18 (the Derry Line), conditions were noticeably deteriorated. The further along we travelled the worse it got. We were literally ploughing as we went, and our winter snow tires were not up to the task ... we wished we had a four wheel drive vehicle. We were in a precarious position, because turning around was not an option. We had to try to keep moving forward. We feared for our safety. Once we reached Bognor, we were no longer able to continue. We were marooned in the middle of the road unable to budge because of the deep snow.

The police were not even able to find out if the ploughs were coming or not. A police cruiser was also stranded trying to come to our aid. The County let us all down for no good reason. The ploughs should have been on the roads, and there would have been no problem because visibility was good despite the steady snow.

The County should consider itself negligent. They have ignored the public trust in favour of what ? Certainly the road budget must be in good shape with the record mild winter this year. Sure the snow was going to continue and require additional upkeep after ploughing, but is there a rule that you can't plough more than once per snowfall ... and only after everything has grinded to a halt ? What if there had been a fire, police or ambulance emergency ?! If the County deliberately ignored their duty to clear the roads (despite no apparent reason), then they should have closed the roads for travelling. Who is responsible for deciding or ignoring public safety ?

We don't know what other stranded drivers were able to do. We were fortunate that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] from Owen Sound Towing was conveniently located to get to us from his home in Bognor. He was actually en route to assist several other stranded travellers, but became stranded himself. The snow was so deep with ice beneath that traction was impossible, even for the tow truck. Kudos to [REDACTED] for his perseverance to keep trying. We did make it part way, but had to turn around. [REDACTED] offered to let us stay at his place until help arrived. We knew that was not going to happen until the roads got ploughed.

Suddenly, at about 2:30 am, along came [REDACTED] in his four wheel drive vehicle. He lives in Bognor and was the only one able to make it through the deep snow. We had seen [REDACTED] previously helping other stranded drivers make it home. He offered to take us home and refused to accept any reward. A true Good Samaritan, [REDACTED] said "... that's what neighbours are for".

We do not blame the County roads crew for last night. Those guys do a great job and work through some very treacherous conditions to make roads safe for us to drive. We do blame the switch controllers ... the administrators who decide when the ploughs go out. They risk our lives with their budget based lack of proper road care.

The Marooners - John and Bev Tennant