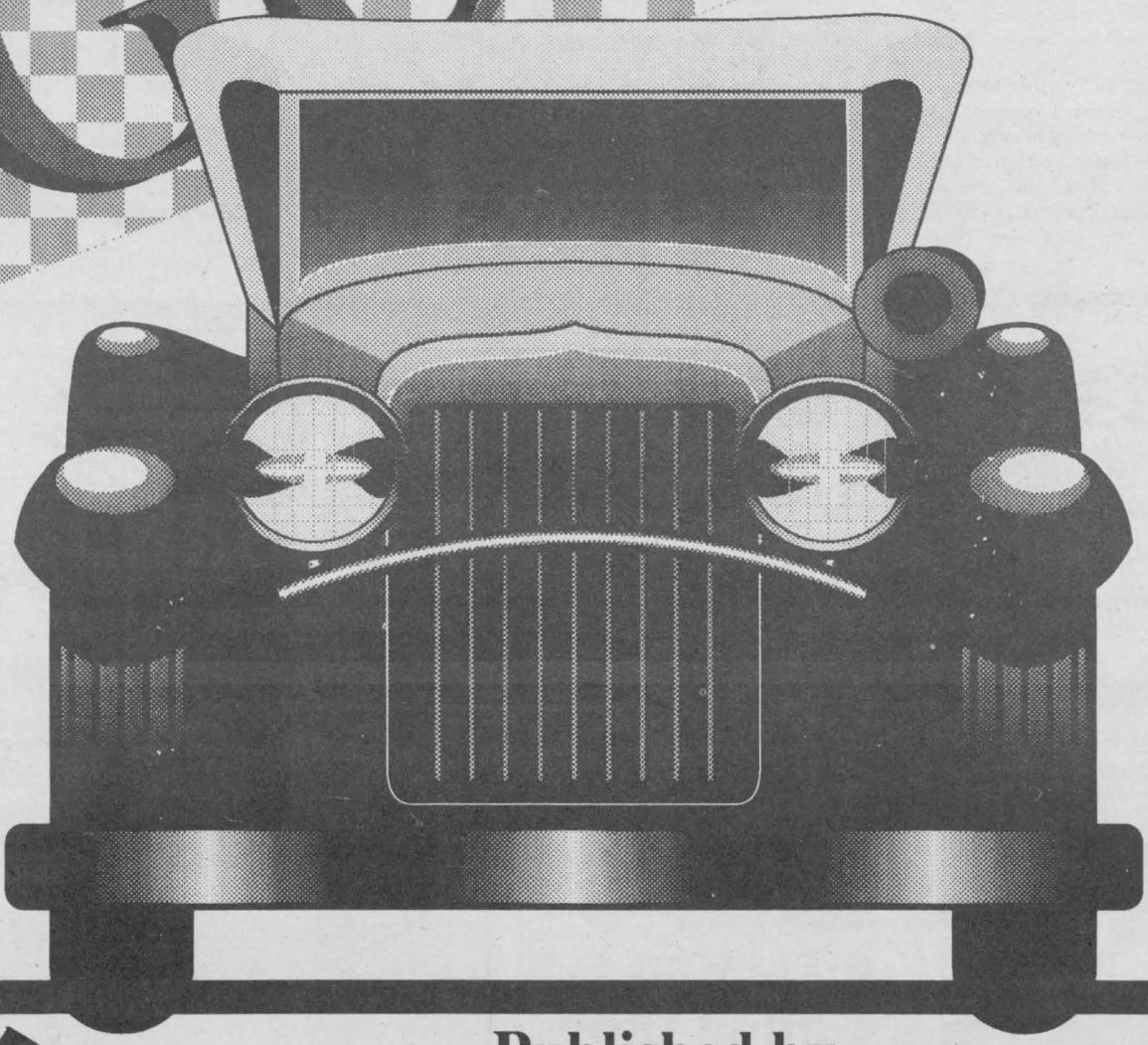
CAR CARE & Buyer's GUIDE

FALL



Published by
THE CHIEFTAIN PUBLISHING CO.
September 11th, 2002

Winter can be tough on your vehicle's appearance- protect your car now

by Rebecca Comfort
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Winter is a very harsh season, especially for your vehicle. Snow, rain, ice, road salt, and gravel can all contribute to the deterioration of the finish on your vehicle. Caring for your car's paint finish through the winter months, and throughout the year, is a good investment, as a well maintained finish enhances a vehicles resale value.

The best way to protect your vehicle's paint finish is to park out of the elements, whenever possible. If you have to park outdoors in the winter don't use the ice scraper on anything but the windows. Scraping ice or snow off painted surfaces is likely to damage the finish.

When road maintenance crews are using salt to melt ice or snow from the roads, you should frequently clean or rinse areas of the vehicle where salt might collect, and cause oxidation to occur, including the engine compartment, wheel wells, lower trim pieces and inside door edges.

Gravel is another hazard to your vehicle's finish year round. When travelling gravel roads you should slow down, not only to avoid losing control of your vehicle, but also to reduce the amount of gravel kicked onto your vehicle and the vehicles behind you. Make sure to keep a safe distance from other vehicles, stay far enough back so that you are not driving into a spray of gravel.

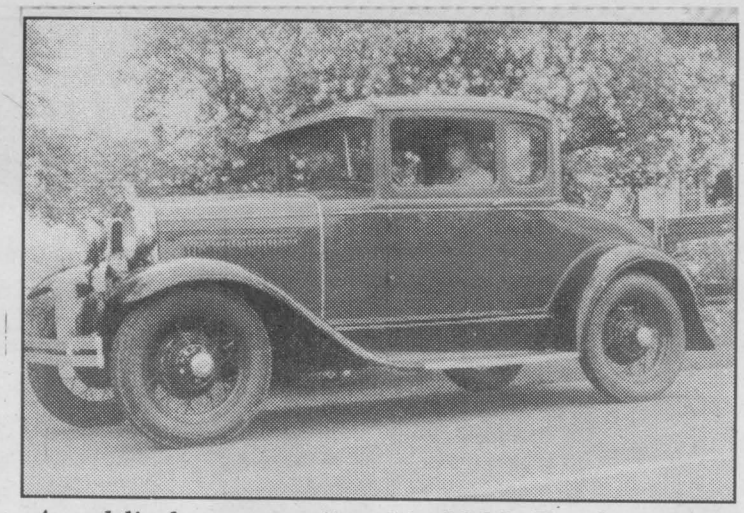
However, this is Canada. There are other ways to extend the looks of your vehicle, namely rust proofing. Rust proofing is recommended for vehicles "that are a few years old." At Canadian Tire they use a rust proofing system called, "Corrosion Free." Corrosion Free is clean, clear, drip free corrosion protection, that has all the benefits of an old-fashioned oil spray treatment. It provides a barrier between your car's metal surfaces and the elements. Reapplication is necessary every eighteen months.

Keep in mind, your vehicle is probably your second biggest investment, and you can't afford not to take the time to protect that investment. There are several ways to protect your vehicle's paint finish year round.

Avoid parking in direct sunlight, but try to avoid parking under trees that may drip sap on your vehicle. Remove tree sap, bird droppings, gasoline, and other harsh materials from your vehicle's finish as quickly as possible.

Wash your vehicle once a week, and always wash your car after rain or snow to remove acid rain and road salt. Your car should be washed when it is cool and parked out of direct sunlight. Wet it down thoroughly, then wash using warm water, a clean, soft wash mitt or sponge, and a car-wash soap. Never wash any panel unless it is thoroughly wet. Start with the roof and work your way down and around, rinsing each section as you finish. To rinse, take the nozzle off the hose and just let the water flow freely over the entire car. Dry it with a clean chamois or soft towel.

Wax your vehicle at least twice a year. Wax only when the vehicle is clean and cool. Having it in a garage or enclosed area will help prevent dirt and dust from blowing onto the finish while waxing. Use a high quality car wax, apply it with a wax applicator, and remove it with a clean, soft cloth. Most new cars have a clear coat finish. This coating helps in the battle against the elements, it is no substitute for regular washing and waxing.



An oldie but a goodie, this 1930 Ford purrs.

Don't Run Out - 3 Reasons

Reason #1 - On fuel injected vehicles the fuel pump, mounted inside the gas tank, is cooled by the gasoline that surrounds it. Insufficient gas in the tank can allow the pump to overheat. Replacing a fuel pump on a typical car can cost $500 or more according to the Car Council.

Reason #2 - To reduce the danger of running out of gas, of course.

Reason #3 - To prevent contamination from getting into the gas line. Whatever moisture or sediment may be in the tank is nearly empty. That can cause the engine to run poorly or stall out completely.

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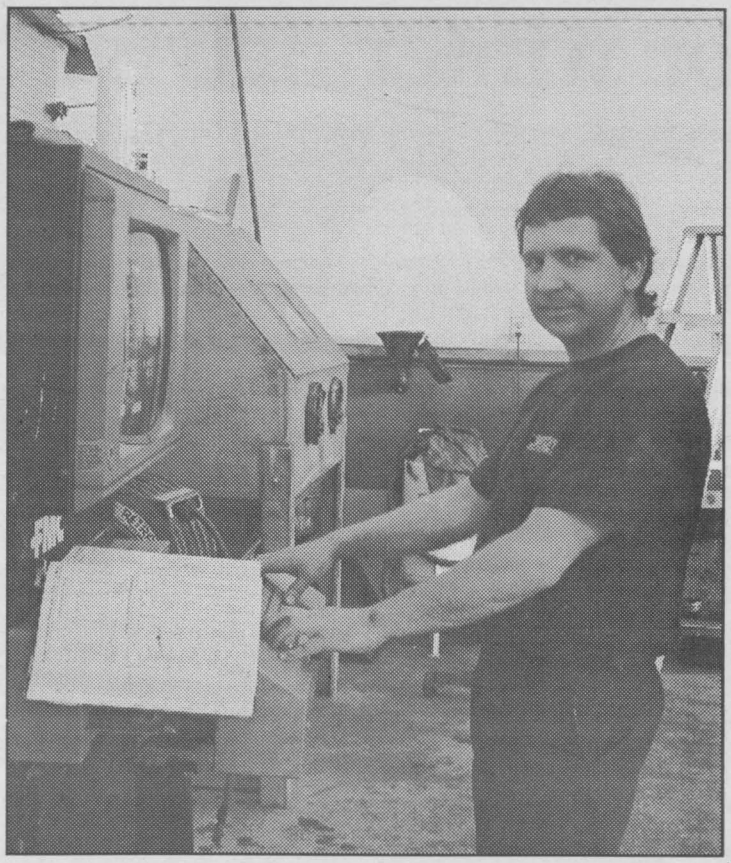

Gary's Automotive will diagnose any problem
Chieftain Photo by Rebecca Comfort

Tips for winter driving

Be Prepared this winter With a well maintained car, a good set of tires (preferably winter tires) and some flexible, common sense planning, winter can be a pleasant time to take a road trip.

A check list is a good idea and needs to include:

* Take your vehicle in for a full mechanical inspection including the tires, cooling system, (radiator should contain a 50-50 mix of water and anti-freeze) battery, hoses, belts and water pump.
* Plan your route and ensure you have good maps.
* Let someone know your planned route.
* Make a list of items to carry with you in the vehicle...extra blankets, cell phone, food, water, shovel, sand (or gravel or litter), chemical heating packs (available at camp supply/sports stores), windshield washer fluid, flashlight, flares, boster cables, matches, candles and a first aid kit.
* Use extra care when crossing bridges and overpasses in winter, they are exposed to cold air and winter winds above and below, so ice can form even when the road on either side of the structure is ice free.
* Becasue there is less traction on wet, snowy or icy surfcaes, avoid sudden inputs on the steering wheel, brakes or accelerator. Instead, make gradual movements to avoid upsetting the balance of the car. If the car starts to skid, ease off the gas, steer into the skid and look where you want the car to go.
* When winter strikes, SLOW DOWN. Wet, snowy and icy roads make it harder to slow down and turn. Slowing down allow your tired to make better sue of the available grip on the road.

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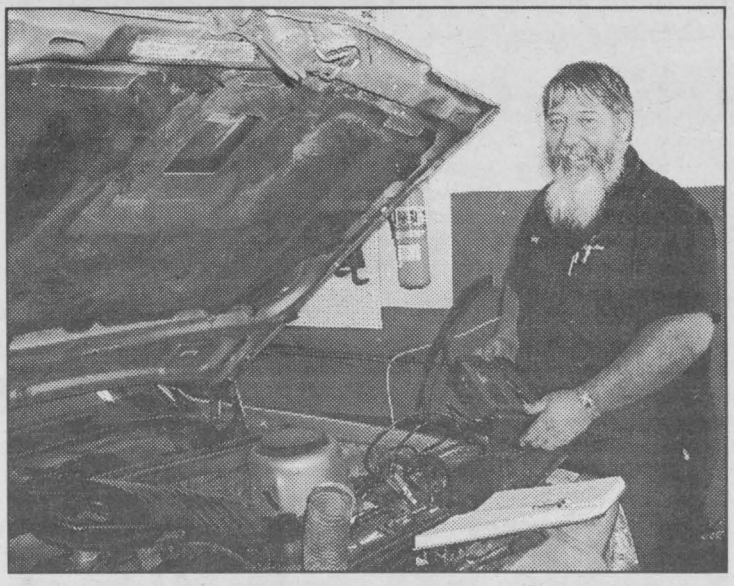
How best to arm yourself for winter driving



Mechanical Diagnosis *Photo by S.L. Johnston*

Garry Tracey of GT Auto checks a car over with a modern diagnostic tool to ensure the true nature of the problem is detected.

by Rebecca Comfort
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Driving in a blinding snowstorm is not fun. But, if you have no choice in the matter, it's reassuring to know that your car is up to the task. There are three things necessary to driving in these adverse conditions. They are plenty of windshield washer fluid and good wiper blades to ensure clear vision and most importantly "good tires," says Canadian Tire technician Francis St.Amand. St.Amand also adds that in a front wheel drive car "your best tires should be on the rear of the car." Cindy Wolfe, owner of Morrisburg Auto Pro explains that people often put off getting snow tires until the snow falls, when it is very important and should be done "before the snow falls." This will do two things, ensure your safety for the first snowfall, and allow you to avoid the rush.

The Canadian Tire repair technicians stress the importance of having a wheel alignment and rotating your tires every six months as is recommended in the owners manual. Tire rotation is important because the front tire wear out twice as fast as the back tires on a front wheel drive vehicle. The staff at Canadian Tire offer an excellent tire balancing service thanks to a "state of the art" tire balancer, which simulates driving on the road.

The purpose of balancing a tire is to eliminate excessive wheel vibration that can lead to excessive tire wear, damage to suspension and steering parts, and unsafe steering and handling. The tire balancer at Canadian Tire measures both wheel balance and force variation.

An unbalanced wheel causes vibration when spinning because of a heavy spot in the wheel. Balance is measured by spinning the tire. Force variation causes vibration because of uneven stiffness in the tire sidewall or tread, or because the wheel is out of round when rolling. It is measured by placing the tire and wheel assembly under load to simulate actual road force. The two can affect one and other and the ride of your car. With the machine at Canadian tire, technicians are able to match the stiff point of the tire with the lowest spot on the wheel therefore eliminating the vibration.

Tires are often ignored, in a spot cheque by the American Automobile Association, nearly a third of the vehicles were found to have low tire pressure, and eleven percent had worn tread. This is a dangerous trend, as your tires are the only thing between you and the road. Never are they more important than in the winter.

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A little attention now can save a lot of hassle later

by Rebecca Comfort
Chieftain Staff Reporter

There a few easy steps to protect yourself against winter car trouble. Being stranded with a broken down car is always a hassle, but is especially difficult and dangerous in the winter. There are a few things you can do now to help you make it through the winter with your car problem free.

Local automotive repair technicians offer advice to their customers. Cindy Wolfe, owner of Morrisburg Auto Pro urges people to, "get your car checked before the snow falls," suggesting a fall tune up. This tune up gives a mechanic a chance to check several key items. But you to can have a look under the hood. Clare Tatton, a technician at Upper Canada Motors suggests checking your battery, belts, hoses, and heating system.

One of the best ways to protect against winter car trouble is to be certain your battery is fully charged and in proper working condition, as the most common cold-weather breakdown cause is a weak or dead battery. The Canadian Automobile Association recommends motorists closely monitor the condition of their vehicle's battery, especially batteries more than two years old.

The most common sign of a weak battery is an unusual sound coming from the starter motor when the ignition key is turned, indicating difficulty in turning over the engine. If the vehicle is difficult to start, check that the battery connections are tight and no corrosion is present on the battery terminal. An old tooth brush and a solution of baking soda and water can be used to clean the cable connectors and terminals. Next, inspect the tension of the drive belt, keeping in mind that they should flex no more than half an inch. If no problems are found and the vehicle is still difficult to start, take it to a service station to have the battery and charging system tested, and if necessary replaced. This is money well spent if it keeps you from being stranded.

In addition to the checking the battery, a comprehensive pre-winter check-up is recommended. This check-up will include the battery, fluids including engine oil and radiator, belts, hoses, filters and tires, including the spare. Fall is also a good time to test the vehicle's heating system, to ensure that no leaks or any other problems have developed over the summer. Because of the difficult driving conditions often encountered in the winter you should also ensure that lighting systems, brakes, windshield wipers, and washer are functioning properly as well.

Because even the best vehicles sometimes breakdown, the automobile association suggests that motorists prepare a winter survival kit. Suggested items for the kit include; flashlight, blankets, booster cables, flares/reflective triangle, small bag of sand/cat litter, paper towels, ice scraper, and a small shovel.



Cindy Wolfe suggests a fall tune-up before the snow
Chieftain Photo by Rebecca Comfort

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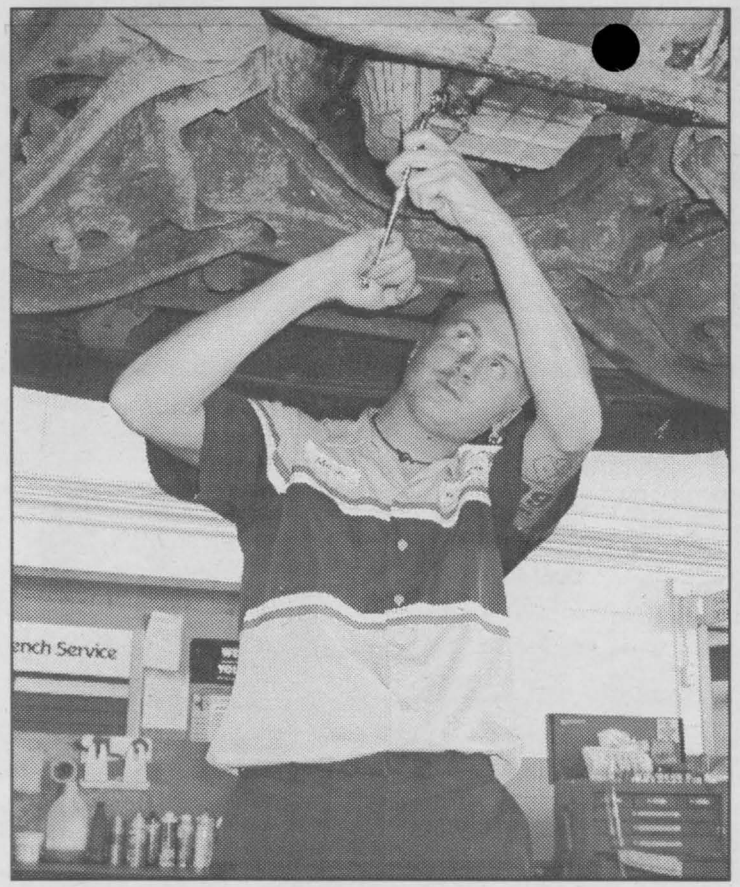

Full Service

Upper Canada Motors offers a full range of service. Mark Sayeau works on an oil change. Drive Clean Testing will soon be available at the facility.

Chieftain Photo by S.L. Johnston

Good tires are a must for safe winter driving

So many tires, so little time. With the wide array of winter tire choices on the market today, how can you find the tire theat will best protect your family and best suit your driving needs against the sever winter driving conditions we experience?

For those of us not tire experts, the task can seem daunting. It is indeed not all that difficult. All we need to do is search out the pictograph, the mountain/snowflake logo. Launched last year by the Rubber Association of Canada (RAC) it can be located at the bottom of the sidewall of tires that have met stringent performance criteria in severe snow conditions.

To qualify a tire maker must certify that teh tire is at least 10% better than a Standard Reference Test Tire in start-up snow traction, precisely defined by a recognized test procedure. tires meeting this crtierion cane wear a mountain/snowflake logo next to their existing mud and Snow nomenclature.

For you and your family this means

Speaking about the Alpin, Gord Sandler, Brand Manager at Michelin says, "This ultimate winter traction radial is highly designed to ensure the same confidence on ice and snow one would expect from riding on Michelin tires the rest of the year." The patented torque-locking zig-zag sipes (full depth cuts in the treads block that provide more biting edges for exceptional traction and control on snow and ice.) that provide nearly 55 metres of felxible, snow garbbing edges per tire can also interlock for rigidity when high torque is applied, delivering firmer control on hightraction surfaces. Their innovative high-contact tread design puts more tread rubber on the raod for greater traction and control on ice and hard packed snow, while delivering a quiet ride. Arrowhead grooves continually trap and eject snow and sluch for reduced treat packing and better traction.

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The RAC mountain/snowflake makes it easier for you to select the tires that will provide the safest winter driving performance. Teh guessing game is over, only the tries with the pictograph will have earned the right to be designated "ultimate traction tires" in the most severe snow.

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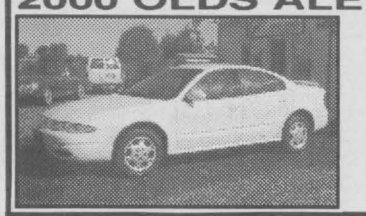

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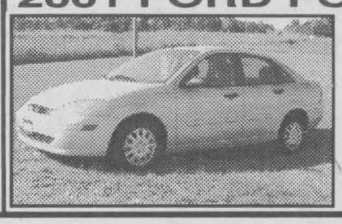

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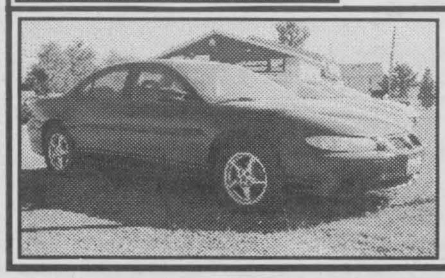

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Drive Clean Emissions Tests have arrived at local garages

by Rebecca Comfort
Chieftain Staff Reporter

The Drive Clean program regulating emissions standards in Ontario was implemented this summer. Vehicle with an odd model year number (ie. 1999, 1997, 1995, etc) are required to pass an emissions test, either in full, or conditionally in order to renew licence for that vehicle this year. Next year even numbered model year vehicles will also be included in this inspection required every two years.

Canadian Tire in Morrisburg has been offering Drive Clean testing since the program's July start date. Francis St. Amand is the Canadian Tire technician responsible for Drive Clean testing at the facility. He comments candidly about the reaction of the public to the new test, "people are very mad about Drive Clean." He adds however that if a new vehicle has proper maintenance, "there's no reason it shouldn't pass, but nothing in this world is perfect, things wear out."

"Your vehicle can run good, but be a gross polluter," explains St. Amand. Right now, about eighty percent of the vehicles that pass through the Canadian Tire Drive Clean Inspection Station are passing the emissions test. Those that aren't passing, aren't passing because they have not been properly maintained. "Proper maintenance is the key," says St. Amand.

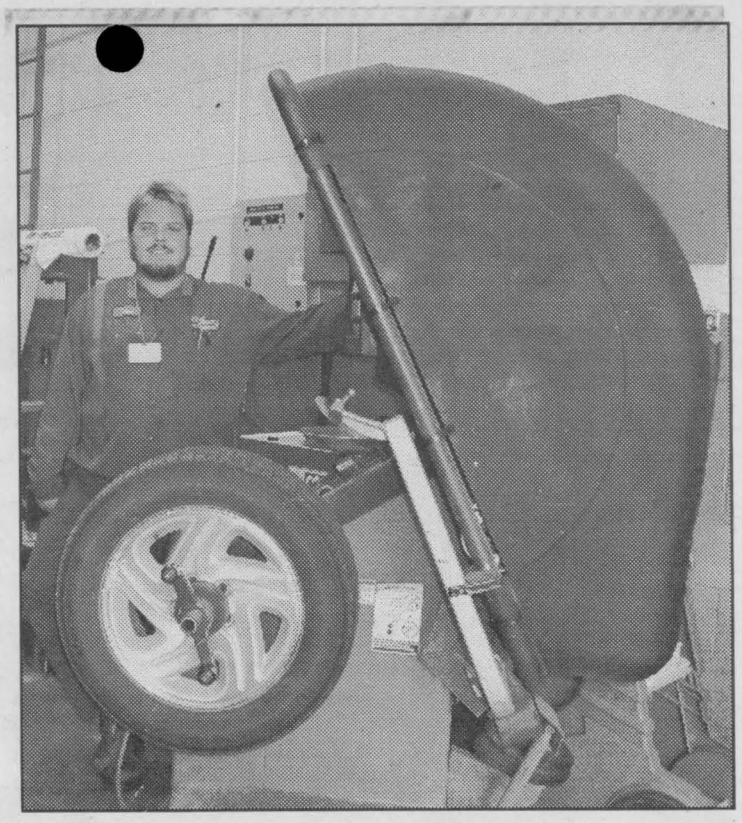
By proper maintenance, St. Amand means oil changes especially.

Cindy Wolfe owner of the Morrisburg Auto Pro, agrees that maintenance is the key. "The single best (and easiest) way to pass and emissions test is to have regular tune-ups every year. A properly tuned vehicle should pass any emissions test easily every time. If you haven't had your car serviced regularly, getting a thorough tune-up before you have it tested is still your best bet to getting through an emissions test without problems." You yourself can check your car for obvious signs of potential or developing emissions problems such as loose or cracked vacuum lines, loose or corroded electrical connections, rusted or corroded air intake and exhaust pipes, cracked or swollen spark plug wires, and dirty or clogged filters. You must however take your car to a trained professional for trouble shooting other problems critical to your vehicle's emissions including; the oxygen sensor, fuel injector, EGR valve, etc.

St. Amand also warns motorists to heed their vehicles warning lights in order to save themselves a lot of expense later. It is safe to drive your vehicle with a check engine light lit, but your car is telling you there is a problem, and every minute you drive your car with this light on you are doing damage to your engine.

Upper Canada Motors in Morrisburg will soon be offering Drive Clean testing as well. They have all of the equipment necessary for the testing in place and are simply waiting on paper work to get up and running. They expect to be up and running "in the next couple of weeks," says service manager Marc Goupil, barring any more hold ups.

Canadian Tire and Upper Canada Motors have Drive Clean testing facilities in Morrisburg. The key to getting your vehicle through these mandatory tests is proper maintenance which is available from all of the service centres in the area.



State of the Art Equipment

Canadian Tire mechanic Allan Markell demonstrates the features of this tire balancer. The mechanics are proud of the state of the art equipment in the repair shop. *Chieftain Photo by S.L. Johnston*

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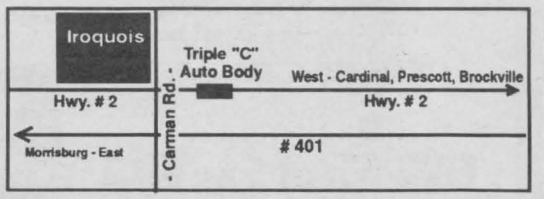

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