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Remember to protect your pocketbook at pump

By JOEY FITZPATRICK personal Finance

GAS PRICE regulation became the law in Nova Scotia this month, but if the experience on Prince Edward Island is any indication, regulation is unlikely to make much difference in the price at the pump.

It's more a case of a government that wants to appear to be "doing something" about the situation.

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It will be up to individual drivers to take action to reduce the impact of high gas prices on the pocketbook.

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Author Ron Hollenbeck says most drivers can cut their fuel consumption by as much as 30 per cent.

In his new book, *The Gas Mileage Bible*, Hollenbeck and co-author Kenny Joines identify more than 40 individual actions drivers can take to get better fuel economy. And that's without even considering alternative transportation like cycling, mass transit and carpooling.



"The most important thing to do is to change your attitude and choose to make a difference," Hollenbeck says. Everyone can make small lifestyle changes like getting up a little earlier so you don't have to rush to work.

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"By learning to relax and plan ahead a little bit, you can slow down to save gas and save money," he says. "Rather than hunching forward at the wheel and darting in and out of traffic, try to enjoy your time in the vehicle." Among the steps Joines and Hollenbeck recommend:

Keep your tires properly inflated. If the tire pressure is low, you will increase your gas consumption significantly. A soft, mushy tire creates more friction and resistance.

Buy the lowest octane grade of fuel recommended for your vehicle.

"Unless it's a high-performance vehicle, premium gasoline doesn't really make your car run better."

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Make sure your wheels are aligned. Tires that are pointed inward or outward will increase rolling resistance.

Use a high-quality synthetic engine oil. "It will be expensive the first time, but it will last longer, and in the end, will cost the same or maybe a little bit less."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"When you've got something to prove, there's nothing greater than a challenge."

Terry Brennan

Lighten your vehicle weight by removing all unnecessary baggage and payload and make it more aerodynamic by dropping anything that creates wind resistance like luggage racks or car top carriers. If you have a pickup truck, drive with the tailgate up in the closed position.

Hollenbeck warns drivers to be wary about many of the fuel-saving gimmicks and gadgets on the market. Some of these products are outright fraud, while others don't make a big difference in your gas mileage.

A recent example of this is the Texas lawsuit brought against BioPerformance Inc., maker of fuel additives that have been shown to actually reduce gas mileage. Consumers are also warned to be cautious about multi-level marketing schemes that have cropped up around these gas saving gimmicks.

You can order the Gas Mileage Bible online at www.GasMileageBible.com, www.BuyBooksOnTheWeb.com or www.Amazon.com.

All of the steps listed above will have a cumulative effect. The simplest, most effective thing to do, Hollenbeck advises, is to drive as if there was an egg under your pedal foot. Accelerate too fast or brake too suddenly, and you break the egg.

"Acceleration and fast driving burn gas faster than anything else."

Instead of pushing the curve and going as fast as you can, slow down. Come up to cruising speed slowly and coast to a stop. On the downhill slope let gravity do the work. Instead of tailgating, slow down and leave space in front of your car as a buffer to minimize sudden braking. The even pace will be both safer and more relaxing. You will also be amazed at how much money you will save.

Joey Fitzpatrick is a Halifax writer.

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