

BUSINESS [Laptop](#) [Desktop](#)




THE NEW VOSTRO™ V13 LAPTOP
Featuring Intel® Core™2 Duo processor technology.
Compact, lightweight, and ultra-thin.

Powered by 

NOW \$649
Offer expires 01/14

[SHOP NOW](#)

'Fine' idea heads to council

By **MICHAEL PLATT**

Last Updated: 23rd December 2009, 4:57am



Snowy conditions like those seen here on Memorial Dr. are far from uncommon on city roads, and Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart says Calgarians should drive carefully or pay a price. (Mike Drew, Sun)

Achtung, baby.

The streets of Calgary, already peppered with Bavarian cars, may soon be getting a taste of Germanic law, as one alderman tries to regulate more responsible winter driving.

"I believe this is a far better approach," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, of her decision to stall on a motion for mandatory winter tires, in favour of a German-style law for Calgary drivers.

In the land of BMWs, Volkswagens and Mercedes, the polizei can fine you for having the wrong tires, if you lose control.

Cause a crash or clog traffic, and police will examine your tires -- if they aren't winter treads, you'll be fined around \$70, if the German formula is followed.

Of course, it's one thing to admire a German law and another thing to convince Alberta lawmakers to copy the Teutonic example.

But Colley-Urquhart will try -- she's bringing the idea to the Calgary Police Commission and city council, to determine how to make it work here.

She wants Calgary drivers to share the burden when it comes to keeping traffic moving in the winter months, and Colley-Urquhart believes bad driving on sub-par tires is as much to blame as a paltry snow budget. It's hard to argue, when a single compact car can turn Deerfoot into a walking-pace procession of frustrated motorists.

It was just after 9 a.m. yesterday when a red hatchback landed in the ditch just north of 16th Ave., requiring fire trucks, tow trucks and police to clear the crash scene.

Meanwhile, thousands of motorists -- workers, shoppers, truckers and so on -- inched pass, their time wasted.

The road, so often blamed, was as plowed and groomed as a Calgary freeway gets during a mid-December deep freeze.

Perfect road conditions, relatively speaking, yet the driver of the red car somehow lost control, spun around, and then ended up in the ditch, impacting thousands of people in the process.

And that, in one annoying example, explains why Colley-Urquhart won't abandon her belief that motorists need to take more responsibility. Instead of compulsory tires, she wants fines.

That's good news for those who were nervous about mandatory snow treads and a possible tab in the range of \$800 for four winter tires.

Colley-Urquhart is no longer convinced provincial tire regulation is the answer.

She says the loud outcry over her upcoming motion to make winter tires the law in Alberta has convinced her that forcing people is not the way to go.

"With the feedback to this point, I'm leaning toward filing (the motion)," said Colley-Urquhart.

She drafted the motion after a blizzard of complaints reached the city, with angry drivers blaming a tight-fisted city council for skimping on snow clearing and causing mayhem on the streets.

Pouring millions more into the snow-clearing budget may help, but Colley-Urquhart said drivers must shoulder some responsibility, and that should include proper tires for the conditions.

Now, she's changed her mind, but not about motorists taking more responsibility.

Inspired by an editorial penned by this scribe on Sunday, Colley-Urquhart has asked Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson and city Transportation boss John Hubbell to study the German law.

That country passed its winter driving rule in 2006, after considering a mandatory snow tire law like Sweden and Finland.

Just like Calgary last week, there was an outcry from German motorists unhappy about the expense, despite well-documented tests showing snow tires improve traction, braking and cornering.

So, Germany left the decision up to the driver, with a warning -- or achtung, as it were.

Choose all-season tires, and you choose to drive carefully -- because if you get stuck, there's a fine of about \$35. Cause a traffic snarl, like the little red compact in the Deerfoot ditch yesterday, and the fine doubles.

Colley-Urquhart thinks the German model for winter motoring leaves the decision on tires up to the driver, while encouraging safer, more sensible winter driving.

"Everyone has to do their part -- drive safely and have proper equipment for road conditions," said Colley-Urquhart.

MICHAEL.PLATT@SUNMEDIA.CA