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Tire and Rubber
Association
of Canada

L'Association
canadienne du pneu
et du caoutchouc

TRAC ***Winter Tire Report***

Getting a grip on
Canadian winter
driving

Getting a grip on Canadian winter driving

Introduction

Despite having one of the world's harshest winter driving environments, too many Canadian drivers resist winter tires. This resistance is unique among industrialized countries that commonly experience harsh winters. In Northern Europe and Japan, for example, most drivers switch over to winter tires for the cold-weather driving months.

Canada's winter tire usage rate, while gradually improving, remains comparatively low. A 2014 national survey commissioned by the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada (TRAC) found that outside Quebec, where winter tire use is mandated by law, only **half** of Canadian drivers use winter tires. This finding should concern decision makers. Winter tires are without doubt the best and safest option for cold-weather driving. The large number of drivers currently not riding on winter tires poses a clear threat to the safety of Canada's roadways in winter.

It is TRAC's belief that the best way to counter this threat is a partnership between government, industry and stakeholders to educate consumers about the potentially life-saving benefits related to the use of winter tires.

About this Report

The *TRAC 2015 Winter Tire Report* is an information tool for use by government, industry, media and other stakeholders, such as car makers, tire retailers and road safety advocacy groups, to build understanding of the value to individuals and society of widespread use of winter tires.

During this report's preparation, TRAC reviewed a broad range of market research, data and consumer perceptions related to winter tires. This information was then analyzed to provide recommendations for educating Canadian motorists about the safety and performance benefits of winter tires.

Winter Tires: A Public Safety Issue

Winter tires play a *measurable* role in protecting drivers and increasing road safety. Their widespread use contributes to:

- preventing collisions, injuries and fatalities
- reducing health and hospital emergency costs
- reducing police and ambulance emergency responses during winter
- lowering the frequency and size of insurance payouts
- reducing traffic congestion

Winter tires save lives, reduce accidents

The superior traction and braking capabilities of winter tires have proven to save lives and reduce personal injury accidents. The Quebec experience is instructive.

A 2011 study by the ministère des Transports du Québec demonstrates the road safety benefits of legislating winter tires. After the first two seasons of enforcement (winter 2008-2009/2009-2010):

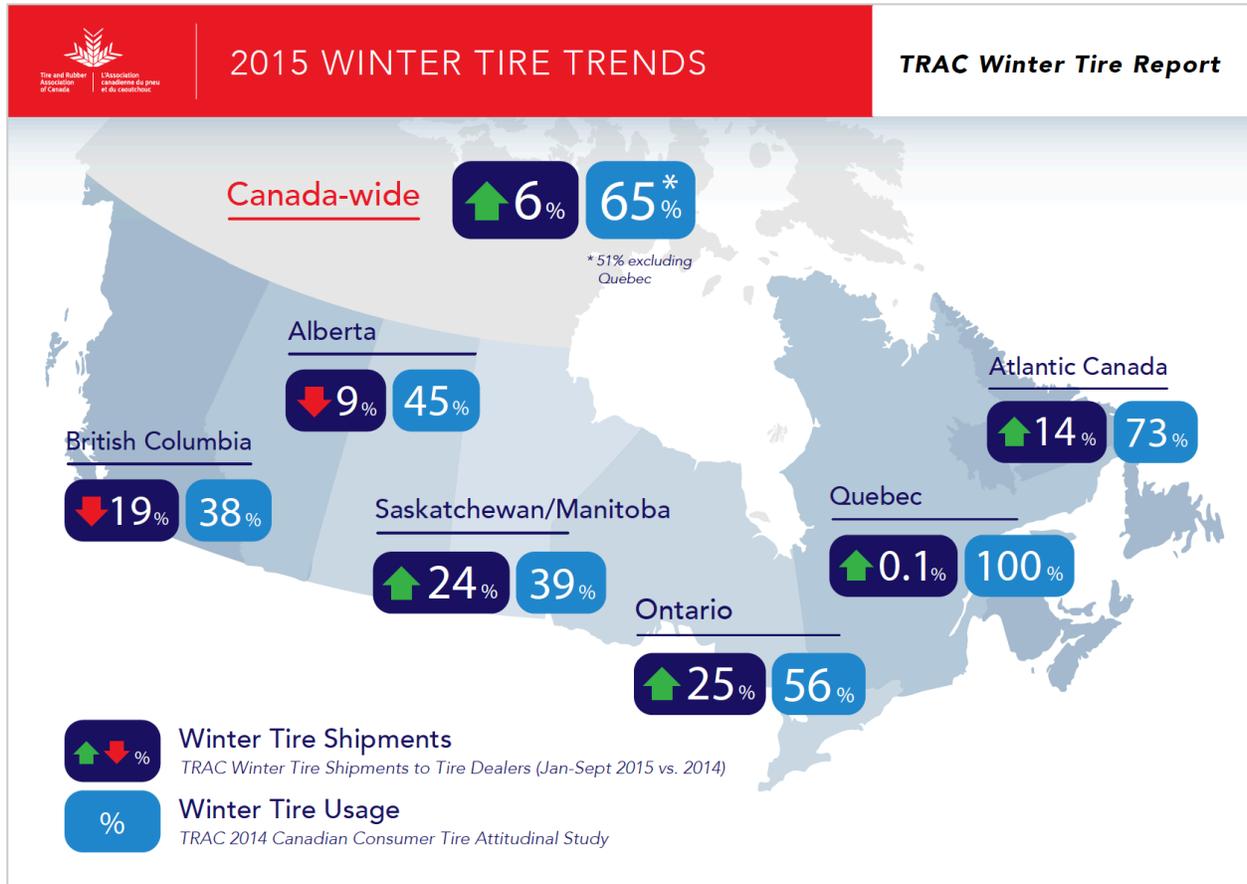
- Road accidents in winter decreased by five per cent
- 574 fewer people were injured annually in winter road accidents
- Deaths and serious injuries due to winter road accidents decreased by 3 per cent

These findings are supported by a report from the *Traffic Injury Research Foundation* (TIRF) that cites a range of studies that show conclusively that winter tires provide superior traction, braking and cornering in all cold-weather driving conditions whether the road surface is dry, wet, icy or snow-covered.

Consider the impact if all drivers in Canada used winter tires. Road-accidents during winter would drop sharply, many lives would be saved and thousands would be spared the trauma of injury.

Winter tire usage rates by region

Winter tire utilization has nearly doubled since 1998. At that time, 35 per cent of Canadian drivers used them. By 2014, national usage had grown to 65 per cent. But, as noted earlier, TRAC's 2014 national survey revealed that, outside Quebec, only **half** of Canadian drivers are currently using winter tires.



Winter tire use by region (Source: TRAC 2014 Canadian Consumer Tire Attitudinal Study):

- Atlantic Canada – 73 per cent
- Quebec – 100 per cent
- Ontario – 56 per cent
- Manitoba/Saskatchewan – 39 per cent
- Alberta – 45 per cent
- British Columbia – 38 per cent

The survey's finding clearly demonstrate that many drivers do not understand the advantages of today's high-tech winter tires. Among those that reported not using winter tires:

- 63 per cent said that all-season tires are "good enough" for winter driving
- 27 per cent cited cost as a barrier for not using winter tires
- 22 per cent said they don't drive enough in cold-weather months to merit winter tires

"Frankly, we were surprised at how many drivers still aren't using winter tires given their proven superior capability. Public dialogue and consumer education are clearly needed."

– Glenn Maidment, President of TRAC.

2015 winter tire shipments

The latest winter tire shipment statistics compiled by TRAC show that tire retailers are anticipating higher consumer demand for winter tires. Overall, **winter tire shipments into Canada in 2015 increased by 6 per cent** compared to 2014. And there is strong evidence that measures by government and industry to educate drivers about the superior traction and stopping distance performance of winter tires are having a major impact.

In particular, TRAC reports there has been significant growth in winter tire shipments to dealers, with a **35 per cent increase in Manitoba**, a **25 per cent increase in Ontario**, and a **14 per cent increase in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI & Newfoundland**.

There are many reasons why tire dealers are ramping up for increased consumer demand for winter tires, but it is no coincidence that it is the provinces who are showing leadership in terms of government programs are also showing the largest increases in winter tire shipments.

- In Manitoba, the provincial government implemented an innovative low-interest winter tire financing program in 2014 and is continuing the program for the 2015/16 winter.
- In Ontario, the provincial government recently introduced a mandatory insurance discount program for drivers who use winter tires as part of their initiative to improve road safety and to lower insurance premiums for Ontario drivers.

This sharp uptick in winter tire shipments is good news, but analysis of shipments to other provinces tells a different story. In British Columbia shipments actually **decreased by 19 per cent**, while shipments into Alberta and Saskatchewan **declined by 6.5 per cent**. While the exact reasons for these decreases cannot be verified, the economic downturn in Western Canada is likely playing a role.

In Quebec, 2015 witnessed a .01 per cent increase in tire shipments into the province. However, this market is mature and winter tire sales peaked in the years immediately following the legislation.

"It's no coincidence that winter tire shipments are up sharply in provinces where government initiatives are in place. These innovative provincial programs are exerting a strong influence and promise to make our roadways significantly safer. Tire makers applaud these efforts and will continue to do their part to educate drivers about the importance of using winter tires."

– Glenn Maidment

Helping Canadians Shop for Winter Tires

When it comes to purchasing winter tires, Canadians have lots of choice. TRAC acknowledges this can be confusing and has taken steps to simplify the winter tire buying process.

Identifying a winter tire



A winter tire is easily identified because it features a highly recognizable symbol on its sidewall. Any tire that displays the **Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol** (also referred to as the 'Alpine Symbol') is considered a winter tire because it meets the industry snow traction performance requirements.

Winter tire testing is rigorous, reliable and sophisticated. Winter tires that are marked with this symbol must follow the ASTM F-1805 tire test on medium-packed snow in standardized testing conditions to ensure their snow traction performance *meets or exceeds* minimum industry snow traction requirements. TRAC has prepared an up-to-date list of winter tire products manufactured by its members that meet these standards, which can be viewed by visiting news.tracanada.ca/winter-tires

Dedicated winter tires versus all-weather tires

Advances in rubber compounding and tire design now offer more choice for consumers when it comes to tires for winter driving. Some winter tires are designed to be better in snow, while others are designed to perform better on ice. More recently, consumers have been introduced to "All-Weather" tires, which display the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol. These tires meet the winter tire definition, but – unlike a dedicated winter tire designed *specifically* for Canadian winters – are made to be driven in warmer months as well. Consumers should be encouraged to become informed about the range of winter tire options available and choose the one best suited to their winter-driving needs.

However, for the very best performance and safety in winter driving, TRAC recommends tires manufactured *specifically* for winter road conditions. These tires are designed only for use during the winter months and it is recommended that they be removed during the non-winter seasons as the tread compound is much too soft for summer driving.

All-season and M+S tires

As noted earlier, almost two thirds of drivers not using winter tires believe that all-season tires offer sufficient traction for winter road conditions. This is a misconception.

While an all-season tire may suggest that it performs in *all* weather conditions, these tires do *not* carry the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol. This means that all-seasons do not meet the necessary snow traction requirements to be considered a winter tire, and therefore are a compromise tire choice for the winter months.

“All-season tires are primarily designed for driving conditions above 7°C. This is not the Canadian winter we all know. TRAC takes the position that winter tires are a far superior option because the traction and braking capabilities of a tire designed specifically for winter far exceeds that of an all-season tire.”

– Glenn Maidment

Winter Tire Safety and Performance Benefits

Improved traction and braking on all road surfaces

The superior grip of today's high-tech winter tires is the result of softer rubber compounds that improve flexibility and provide superior traction even at extremely cold temperatures. These specialized rubber compounds, coupled with sophisticated tread designs, allow for greater control and braking capability on all cold-weather road surfaces—whether dry, snow covered, icy or slushy.

Shorter stopping distances in emergency braking situations is a primary safety feature of today's advanced technology winter tires. Research detailed in the TIRF study shows that:

- Even on dry pavement at temperatures just below freezing, stopping distances for vehicles with winter tires are as much as 30 per cent shorter than for vehicles with all-season tires.
- Winter tires deliver better traction on an ice or snow-covered road surface at -30°C than all-season tires at 4°C.

Temperature is everything with winter tires. At or below 7°C winter tires outperform all-season and conventional summer tires, which start to harden and lose traction once temperatures fall below this threshold.

Leading the Way

Government and industry leadership

Government leaders are playing a key role in encouraging winter tire usage. With further encouragement from government and increasing promotion from the tire industry and other stakeholders, Canada can achieve a usage rate nearing 100 per cent. What's required is a coordinated and ambitious effort to give drivers the facts about winter tires and encourage them

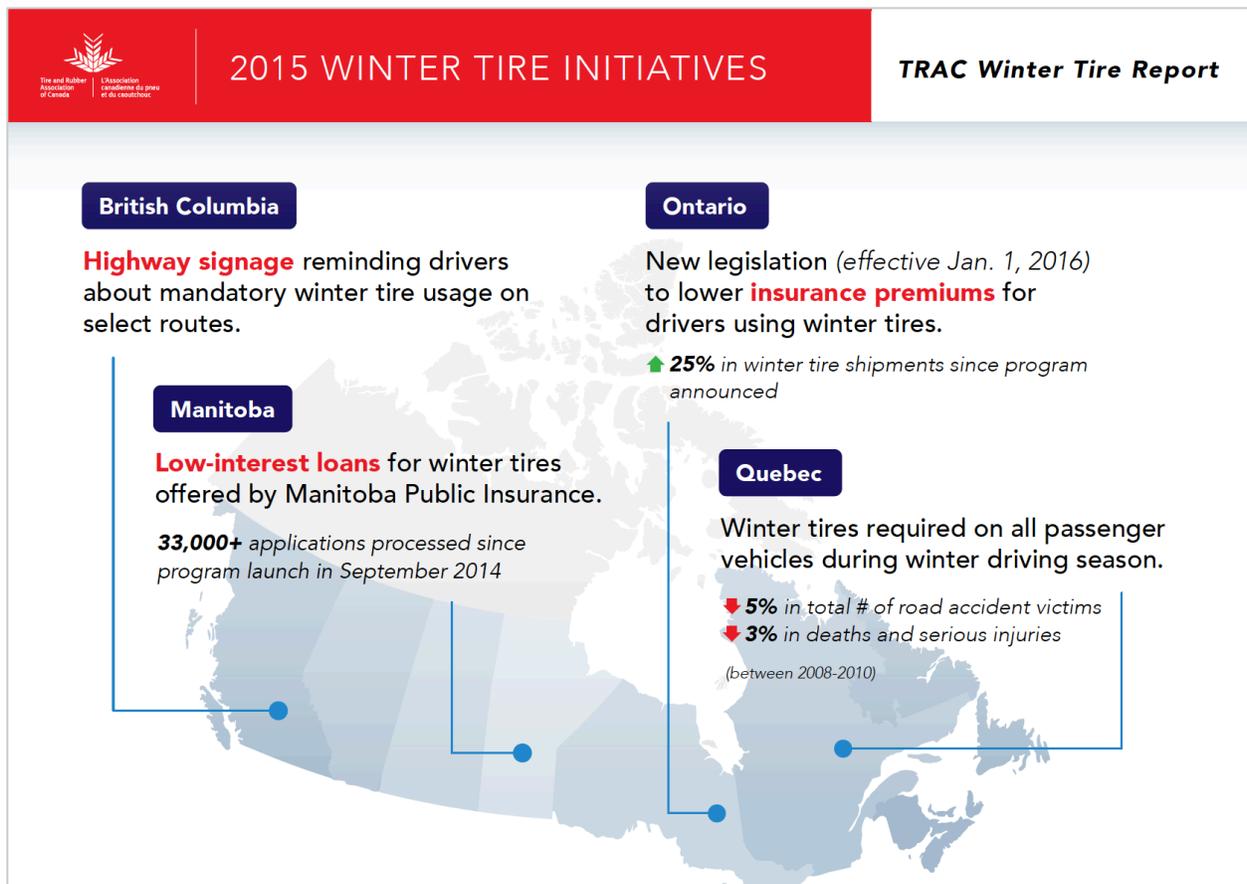
to carefully consider their safety and performance benefits. Wider advocacy would contribute to an important reduction in winter road accidents and reduce injuries, anxiety and costs for many thousands of Canadians motorists and their families each year.

“There are many effective ways provinces can further promote road safety and increase usage of winter tires. Initiatives could involve providing more educational resources to drivers; offering special incentives, or restricting access to roads that are potentially too dangerous due to harsh winter conditions. TRAC encourages all provinces to become engaged and we stand ready to help develop and support such programs.”

– Glenn Maidment

Winter tire incentives across Canada

Government actions to achieve greater utilization of winter tires are integral to improving winter road safety. The following is a summary of current provincial initiatives:



British Columbia

- British Columbia recently updated the language on signage for certain mountainous highways, indicating the need to use tires marked with the Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake Symbol.

Manitoba

- An innovative program from the government of Manitoba, and administered by Manitoba Public Insurance, offers low-interest loans for the purchase and installation of qualifying winter tires. The program was first launched in September 2014, and since then, more than 30,000 applications have been processed. This program provides loans to a maximum of \$2,000 per vehicle, for up to 48 months at the rate of prime, plus two per cent. More information on this low-cost loan program be found at www.mpi.mb.ca

Ontario

- The government of Ontario recently implemented a new legislation (effective January 1, 2016), requiring all insurance providers in the province to offer a reduction in auto insurance premiums to drivers that have four winter tires installed on their personal passenger vehicles.

Quebec

- In 2008, the Province of Quebec introduced a law to mandate winter tires on all passenger vehicles. Winter tires are required from Dec. 15 to Mar. 15.

The tire industry's role

TRAC's role is to educate government leaders, industry and the public on the safety and performance benefits of winter tires. We are happy to provide education, leadership and guidance on ways both government and industry can encourage increased winter tire usage nation-wide. Some examples of measures taken by the tire industry include:

- Promoting the safety benefits of winter tires through **educational resources, websites, campaigns**
- Promoting **winter tire usage on government fleet vehicles**
- Winter tire messaging on **highway signage**
- Incorporating winter tire **messaging into driver training and handbooks**

Resources

A wide range of detailed information and resources about the safety and performance characteristics of winter tires are available at news.tracanada.ca/winter-tires

About TRAC's 2014 national survey

A survey of 1,002 Canadian motorists was completed online between April 7 and April 11, 2014, using Leger's, *LegerWeb* panel. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

About the Tire and Rubber Association of Canada

The Tire and Rubber Association of Canada (TRAC) is the national trade association representing tire makers, rubber products manufacturers and importers as well as rubber recyclers and suppliers of goods and services related to the industry. TRAC is committed to educating drivers about proper tire care and maintenance. A key advocacy goal in the cold-weather months is to raise awareness about safe winter driving and the safety and performance benefits of winter tires. www.tracanada.ca