

Bill Rea ? Gas prices went up and down

There are some who know the appeal of crunching numbers.

I admit I avail myself of this pastime occasionally. Just as some people kill idle moments with doodling, I play around with figures, using basic addition and multiplication.

And as all number crunchers, both professional and amateur, well know, this is a time of year when such habit can come in handy. Justin Trudeau and his people are expecting us all to produce documentation by the end of next month of our financial activities in 2016. There are a lot of numbers involved, and I am starting to get into it.

For tax purposes, I keep track of the amount of money I spend to keep my car on the road, and out of curiosity, I also keep track of things like fuel efficiency of said vehicle. It is a fact that I am required to do a lot of driving in the course of my job. And the government allows me to claim some of the expenses I have been put to in order to reduce the taxes I have to pay. Those expenses include maintenance, depreciation on my vehicle, insurance, etc. It also includes the gas I pump into the car at regular intervals. Compiling figures on the amount of gas I have purchased over the year yields information that I will need when it comes to filling out my return in the weeks to come. These numbers carry a certain amount of detail over the year that ended about three months ago. The previous year (2015) ended with the car I had been driving for the previous seven years dying on me. I had been harbouring hopes that I might be able to get another year out of it (I was really hoping for another two), but reality intervened.

Although the timing was rather bad (I had to spend the Holidays driving a vehicle on loan), I realized I had little about which to complain. I was able to put almost 340,000 kilometres on those wheels; more than 200,000 miles. My late father traded in the first car he ever owned (a second-hand Volkswagen) when I was about seven, claiming he had just about driven into the ground. It had 60,000 miles on it (?That's twice around the world,? I remember him declaring).

The point is the first major expenditure I made in 2016 was a new car, and I have a complete record of the amount of gas I have pumped into its tank, and what I paid for it.

I have a habit, probably a bad one, of letting the gas tank get close to empty before I fill it. The advantage is there's a certain consistency in the figures that I have been compiling.

Here are the figures.

I filled the tank of this car 78 times during 2016. The last fill-up was Dec. 30, and that took place while my wife and I were taking a brief holiday in Muskoka. There is an Esso station in Port Carling, and that's where I pumped in 55.08 litres, paying \$1.129 for each of those litres (I have a VISA statement to prove it). Incidentally, those were the most expensive litres of gas I bought all year. Some wise person has made pithy observations about going out on a high! Incidentally, Dec. 30 is the last day I have definite statistics for, although I know I did very little (if any) driving New Year's Eve. For the purposes of this column (and what I'm going to tell the government), that last fill-up represents year-end stats.

The car was driven 44,907.5 kilometres in 2016, meaning I drove an average of 576 kilometres between fill-ups.

Now things start to get really interesting, in a number-crunching sort of way.

I bought the car new early in '16, meaning all the kilometres I put on it prior to the aforementioned Dec. 30 are relevant to the topic at hand. Those 55.08 litres I pumped into the tank brought the total to 4,277.37 for the entire year.

Now let's talk more about money.

While I do not keep track of how much pay each time I fill up the tank, I do maintain a running total, and the number of litres at each stop at a pump are recorded, as well as the prices paid, meaning the amount paid out each time can be calculated.

But the actual money spent on gas during the year came to \$4,311.37, meaning the average litre cost \$1.008. Not surprisingly, the price of gas fluctuated during the year. I first filled the tank Jan. 12, pumping in 54.25 litres of regular gasoline at a cost of 95.7 cents per.

The cheapest fill-up came Feb. 18, and each of those 55.48 litres cost me 81.9 cents.

In the interest in making readers gnash their teeth in anger, I will report that I have gas records of every car I have owned for years. I bought a new set of wheels in June 1999. I pumped in 39.32 litres June 15 of that year, and each individual litre cost 50.9 cents.

Don't you just long for the good old days?

In terms of fuel economy recorded at each fill-up, the numbers ranged from 8.95 kilometres per litre to 12.69. Taking into consideration the year-end grand totals, 2016 saw me getting 10.5 kilometres per litre. For the benefit of those of you who went to school before we adopted the metric system, I do keep track of what these figures work out to in miles per gallon. I did a bit of Googling and learned that one should take the kilometres-per-litre figure and multiply it by 2.8248093627967. That's a little long, so I have always let it go at 2.8. That means my car, at the end of the year, was getting approximately 29.4 miles per gallon. That makes

me long for the good old days.

The first new car I ever bought was a 1987 Chevy Sprint, which cost me a little less than \$8,000. I came close to averaging 20 kilometres per litre, which worked out to 56 miles per gallon.

And yes, many people have told me I need to get a life.

