

"Avoid smoking up and driving at all costs"

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of the campaign's initiative.

The campaign is out to prove that smoking up impairs you, even if you are more aware than you would be, say, driving drunk. Unlike efforts to curtail drinking and driving, however, the campaign takes an interesting swing.

The poster for the Pot and Driving campaign features two pilots taking up before take-off, baring the slogan, "If it doesn't make sense here, why does it make sense when you drive?" A provocative thought indeed.

Niebudek knows the poster is doing what it should be doing.

"I think the choice of two pilots makes a lot of sense; when you look at it, it certainly attracts attention. You walk by a poster with it, and you get the same reaction from everyone: they do a double take. Why? Because it doesn't make sense, pilots taking up before taking off with the airliner."

He goes on to explain that, "we did choose that because we thought it was a very clever way of attracting attention, and that the comparison was very real. When someone is driving under the influence of drugs, they're putting themselves and other people in danger."

What's the scariest case scenario?

According to Niebudek, "we even have young adults that are the designated driver, that avoid alcohol during a party, which is great, but they take up and don't realize that it is also an issue."

"They're taking up because they feel that they're safe drivers, and that's the message that we're trying to get out there - that that's not the case."

Buddy disagrees - and even if he's wrong, from past experience, sometimes it's the only option.

"I've driven home from parties high. It's not something that I'm overly concerned about. But if I'm high driving, I'm aware that I'm high, so I automatically focus and consciously try to pay attention," Buddy says.

"And the other thing that factors in, is that when I'm going home or driving someone home, I'm driving somewhere familiar; like, I know the road bends at this part, and I know the road turns here. I don't really need to pay attention to my speed, or the curve

of the road; I can focus on watching the side of the road for moose, or watching the other cars around me."

So what does Buddy feel about driving high in varying situations?

"I don't feel that my attention to detail is reduced because I'm high," he says, "but that's only in situations where I'm familiar with my surroundings. If I was high and I was driving to a place that I've never been before, I would definitely say that my abilities would be impaired."

He also admits that "when you're high, it's not the same as when you're sober. Things can make more sense, but also, things can make less sense. You can easily miss details that are important or key."

How do others feel about the situation? Another student, 'Alex Mack,' is simply scared of herself.

"In my experience driving while high, I feel like I'm going to screw up and not drive right. But I drive extremely well because I'm so cautious, and for some reason my body just takes over while my mind is fucked up."

Fellow student 'Jimmy Jay' has only driven while high once before, but needless to say, he's got friends in high places.

"We're in a little potato field, and he decides to park the car there," Jimmy Jay explains. "We listen to some music while he starts smoking it. So then, after he's done his session, he puts on his shades, we drive out of the little field and right back onto the two-lane highway."

"We're going towards my house. The road to get there is really twisty, and as we're going downhill across a bridge, and as he's bringing up different things about his childhood, he looks up and me and says: 'I don't want to scare you or anything, but, every so often, you should remind me where I'm driving towards.'"

Jimmy Jay wasn't too happy about it when he first heard it.

"It scared me shitless the first time. It's not that he can't drive - it's that he forgets where he's going. If we kept him stoned, he could drive straight across Canada and wouldn't even notice it."

Concerns like that may seem minor, but they're the reason the CPHA are trying so hard to get the word out that it's not a smart

idea to drive under the influence of pot.

According to the official website, <http://www.potanddriving.com>, young Canadians have one of the highest rates of marijuana usage in the world.

This obviously correlates with the usage of pot while behind the wheel. Niebudek urges people to understand that before they choose to get behind the wheel, that "there are a few dangers involved. Mainly, [marijuana] affects concentration; also, it affects short term memory."

A lot of young drivers have limited driving skills because they're inexperienced to start with. This increases with the amount of THC, which is the substance in marijuana that gives you a high. For example, the studies found that people who are using marijuana or cannabis tend to drive slower. Why? Because they can't concentrate when they're high. It also affects your short term memory, which may be an issue when

you need to respond to something, and if the attention of the drive is not complete, it becomes a problem."

"For some reason my body just takes over while my mind is fucked up."

• 'Alex Mack' •

A NewScientist.com article published December 2 [<http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn8407>] asserts that, according to a recent study in France, cannabis nearly doubles the risk of fatal motor vehicle crashes.

Taking in a total of 10,748 car crashes for the study, it was found that "even after accounting for factors such as the age of the drivers and the condition of the vehicle, the researchers conclude that cannabis caused a significant number of the fatalities, with 2.5 per cent of the crashes directly attributed to cannabis use. Alcohol was the direct cause of about 29 per cent."

It was also found that mixing both cannabis and alcohol together increased the risk of a fatal crash to nearly 16 times that of a completely sober driver. This is

due to what is called the 'synergistic effect,' where the powers of two drugs do not have an additive effect, but rather one similar to multiplying their properties.

As a result of the increased research into awareness, policing units are now looking into more effective ways of proving drug use for drivers who've taken the drug and choose to go behind the wheel.

According to Niebudek, "right now we have to basically rely on the smell of cannabis, and looking at some of the symptoms." The plans, however, are to pass a bill through the new government for funding for better recognition ability across Canada.

"We now have the DRE, which is the Drug Recognition Expert program, so that our police officers on the street can deduct symptoms from persons who have taken marijuana. As opposed to alcohol, we do not have any mechanisms or technical tool on the street as we do with alcohol."

"That bill will allow funding for police services to train more DRE's, Drug Recognition Experts, which we badly need."

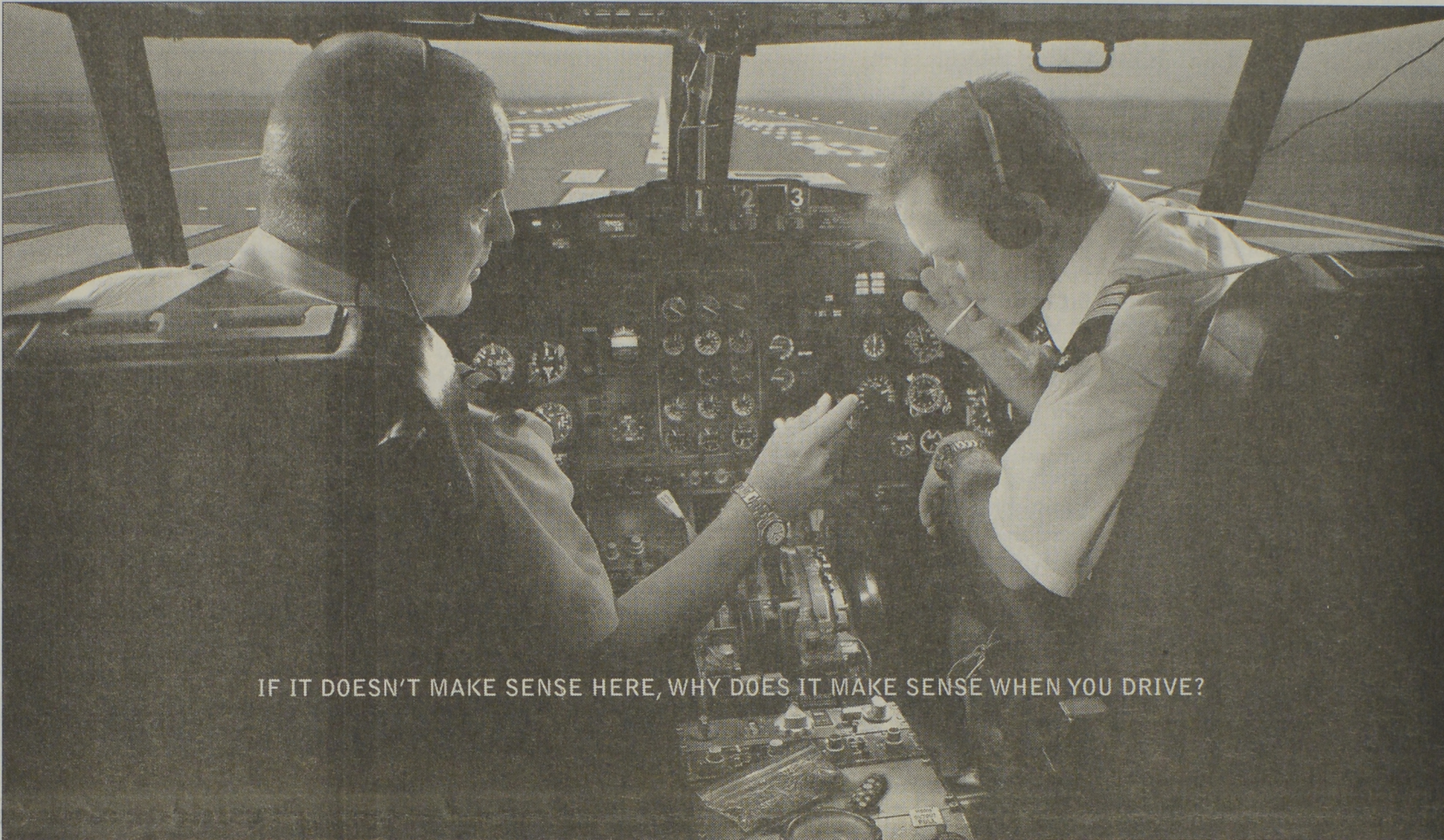
All in all, Niebudek urges drivers to listen to what he the CPHA's campaign have to say, because it could, and will, save lives.

"Avoid smoking up and driving at all costs. Treat it the same way as driving after taking too much alcohol. I think it's important to have a designated driver that will be clean of any substances, and that they should think of their own safety as well as that of their passengers."

Buddy, however, is still not worried.

"I consider myself a very competent driver. My friends all agree." However, he explains, "I try, if I am high, to not be overconfident. It's something that I really do take a lot of care in doing. I try and pay a lot of attention driving anyway, because driving is very dangerous. When I'm high, I realize I have to do an even better job, because I am high. It's not something that I actively pursue."

"It's not like every time I get behind a wheel, I light up a joint... I don't smoke pot before I 'do' anything; it's something that I do to relax. I'm not going to smoke pot before I drive to go get groceries."



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