

SUV woes: activists add insult to injury

Patrol city streets issuing fake tickets to 'gas-guzzling, oversize vehicles'

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THE GAZETTE

Montrealers who drive sport utility vehicles were dealt a double blow yesterday.

As gasoline prices surged to a record high of 114.9 cents a litre, a group of local activists placed fake \$50 tickets under the windshield wipers of SUVs across the city.

The infraction? Owning an oversize, gas-guzzling vehicle, one of the protest's organizers said.

"There are a lot of people out there who are really tired of big cars that burn a lot of fuel and pollute," said Annie Roy, the co-founder of Action Terroriste Socialement Acceptable. The group calls itself a non-profit organization that aims to raise public awareness through artistic means.

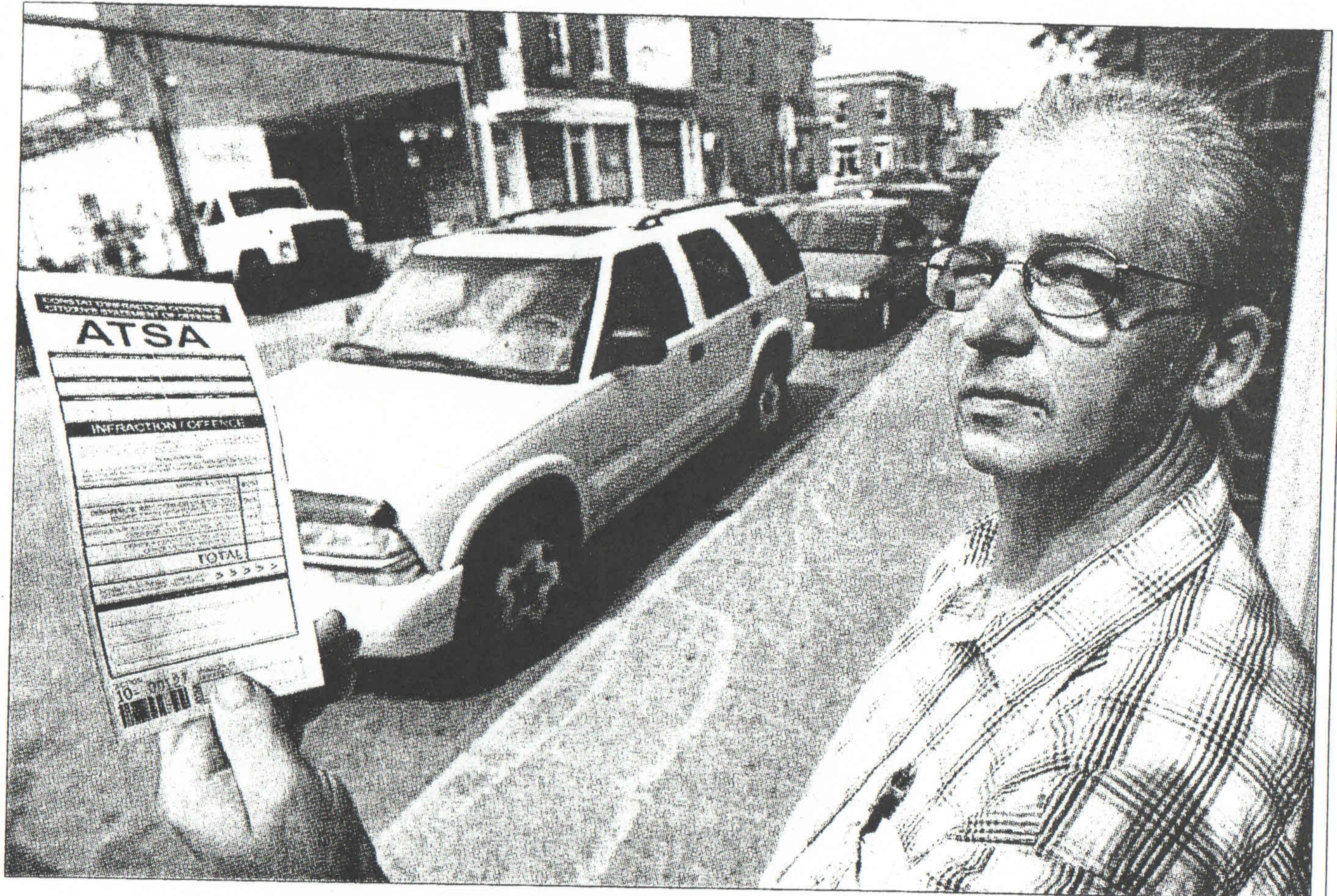
All personal four-wheel-drive cars equipped with a six-cylinder engine or bigger run the risk of being ticketed.

Idling cars are also fair game for the 150 "brigadiers" who will patrol the streets of Montreal over the next month with the intention of doling out 10,000 fake tickets.

A copy of each ticket will be sent to the city of Montreal. Another copy will be pinned to a wall in what will become a massive art display open to the public, Roy said.

But concern for the environment was not the only reason for the protest.

"We're really targeting the spread of big vehicles and the



SUV owner Albano Sá was none too happy with the ticket an activist group placed on the windshield of his SUV yesterday. JOHN KENNEY THE GAZETTE

publicity that brings that about," Roy said. "Visually, it lacks respect to own a vehicle that takes up a lot of space in the urban landscape."

For some participants, the exercise helped let off steam.

Louise Labelle, 43, returned to the group's base camp on Drolet St. in the Plateau Mont Royal neighbourhood to stock up on tickets after handing out the 10 she started with.

"I have to go back for that Hummer," she said, catching her

breath.

"Why do people have to buy such huge cars? It makes no sense," the smiling CLSC worker said before speeding off on her flower-adorned bicycle.

But at least one SUV driver didn't enjoy the joke.

Albano Sá, who owns a fruit business on Villeneuve Ave. in the Plateau, said the protest against SUVs comes at the wrong time.

"I have enough trouble making it as it is," he said. "The price of gas is high, our delivery guys

are getting parking tickets all the time, and now this."

Try as he might, the 61-year-old was at a loss to understand the motives behind the ticketing campaign.

Asked about pollution and gas consumption, Sá insisted he never drives faster than 95 kilometres per hour.

He bought the SUV five years ago, he said, to avoid being stuck in the snow in winter.

"I don't understand," he said. "If they want money for the

poor, they should come and ask me, and I'll give it to them. But why do it like this?"

Roy said the ticket is clearly symbolic and drivers are not obliged to pay it.

But she had a message for people who worry about their wallet when they see the ticket on the windshield of their SUV: "They should instead worry about the fate of the planet."

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