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Conference on curbers

Multi-agency effort to thwart illegal auto sales

The VSA hosted the first ever conference on curbers at the end of March, bringing together multiple agencies concerned with illegalities surrounding misrepresented "private" sales of motor vehicles by those called "curbers."

Among the participants in the conference were the RCMP, ICBC, Canada Revenue Agency, Crown Counsel (Commercial Crime), Canada Border Services Agency, municipal bylaw enforcement officers, the B.C. Transportation Ministry's Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement and the Vehicle Sales Authority (VSA).

Representing the VSA were President Ken Smith, the Registrar of Motor Dealers, Deputy Registrar Ian Christman, who is also Director of Licensing, and Privacy Officer, Denis Savidan, Manager of Compliance and Investigations, Hong Wong, Manager of Licensing, and the VSA Compliance Officers and Licensing staff.

The VSA estimates that in the Lower Mainland "curbers" represent as much as half the vehicles currently being advertised privately in the newspapers, in trade magazines and through Internet links. Many of these individuals are, as the saying goes, "known to the police" and/or have previous criminal convictions that bar them from obtaining a salesperson or dealer licence.

Various speakers outlined how curbers victimize so many people. There is high degree of odometer tampering, imported salvage vehicles banned in other jurisdictions, wrecked vehicle rebuilds (often fronts, rears or chassis from different wrecks welded together) and other safety and misrepresentation issues. Curbers entice buyers with sales tax savings if they agree to sign paperwork showing a less than actual sales price.

This compromises the buyer into an offence under law that prevents the buyer from making a complaint to authorities if there are problems with the vehicle after the sale.

The agencies involved at the conference agreed to improve information sharing, and combine efforts to educate the public and to pursue improvements in Legislation. The goal is to ensure that proper dealer licensing cannot be bypassed by using terms such as "auctioneer, broker, wholesaler" or any of a number of other euphemisms to disguise illegal curber behaviour.

The VSA message to consumers on this topic is presented in an informative series of videos that can be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/mvsabc>

See page 2 for an outline of the multi-agency agenda adopted by the conference

The following objectives were among the many items discussed at the conclusion of the conference.

- Information-sharing among all agencies is required and cooperative efforts in investigation.
- Better funding of bylaw enforcement.
- Creating a multi-agency project team to pursue prolific curbers.
- Participation in B.C. municipalities' conferences by the VSA.
- Stop importing salvage vehicles into Canada from the U.S.
- Confirming vehicle VINs by the Canada Border Services Agency.
- ICBC registration is currently being revamped, including new protocols for Autoplan agents, such as verification of VINs on transfers, recording odometer readings and having both buyer and seller sign the APV9T in the agent's presence.
- Requiring a VIN for all trailers regardless of GVW.
- Refusing registration of vehicles with tampered odometers.
- Only releasing vehicles sold by dealers after they have been registered to the purchaser.
- Licensing and registration of wholesalers, auctioneers and others who are actually dealers.
- Increasing the fine for unregistered motor dealer (curber) from \$288, and enabling the Registrar of Motor Dealers to directly levy fines.
- Requiring dealers to sell/lease only to licensed wholesalers, private individuals, businesses and auto wreckers or through licensed brokers or exporters.
- Disallowing the sale of salvage vehicles for rebuild purposes, or at least imposing tighter controls on rebuilding and requiring mandatory inspection processes on rebuilt vehicles.
- Educating all consumers, especially new immigrants, and stakeholders about curbers and also about the work of the various agencies attempting to deal with the problem.
- Placing ads on Craigslist and other websites cautioning prospective purchasers about dealing with curbers.