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B.C. Towing Companies Grapple with Issue of Impounded and Abandoned Recreational Vehicles

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as a result of the rising high cost of living, many marginalized individuals are turning to alternative forms of housing, including living full-time in recreational vehicles (RVs). Currently, more than 320,000 RVs are registered in B.C. and approximately 2,000 RVs are impounded each year by towing companies due to municipal bylaw infractions, police impoundments, vehicular accidents, or simply being abandoned on B.C. highways and municipal streets.

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Disposing of an RV is significantly more complex than disposing of other types of vehicles due to the possible existence of hazardous waste, fuels, and other materials, not to mention their size. These vehicles present serious occupational health and safety and environmental hazards.

The cost of properly disposing of an RV ranges from \$1,200 to \$1,500 or higher, and only a few recycling facilities are equipped to handle them. The burden of these costs often falls on the towing industry, which is unsustainable.

70% of impounded or abandoned RVs are never claimed by the owner due to lack of insurance coverage, inability to pay impoundment fees, or the cost of release exceeding the RV's value. 50% of towing companies have some form of agreement to help cover disposal costs, but only 25% receive full reimbursement.

Improper disposal of RVs can have significant environmental impacts and health risks due to the hazardous materials contained



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within these vehicles.

Towing companies are often forced to bear the high costs of disposal, which is economically unsustainable. As well, many abandoned RVs contain personal belongings that have been left behind, adding to the disposal costs and negatively affecting the lives of vulnerable individuals.

The Automotive Retailers Association (ARA) is urging the B.C. government to intervene and help alleviate the financial burden on towing companies. Specifically, the ARA is asking for the following:

1. Amendment to Section 68 of the Transportation Act: Expand the definition of 'abandoned vehicles' to include unclaimed or abandoned RVs on B.C. highways, police impoundments, or municipal roadways. This section currently includes compensation for abandoned vehicles removed by the Ministry or Police on a B.C. highway.
2. Establishment of an Environmental Fund: Create a formal process for applying for financial assistance to cover the costs

associated with the environmentally responsible disposal of RVs.

3. Establishment of a Formal Process for Claiming Compensation: There is currently no formal process for tow companies to claim compensation for the disposal of RVs. Each jurisdiction is different, leading to administrative confusion and inequality.

The proper disposal of impounded and abandoned RVs is a complex and costly issue that cannot be left solely to the towing industry. With the number of RVs used as alternative housing on the rise, this problem will only grow. The ARA states that the B.C. government must take action to ensure the safe and environmentally responsible disposal of these vehicles, alleviating the financial burden on towing companies and addressing the broader social and environmental impacts.

The ARA encourages non-members to consider joining the association to support ongoing advocacy efforts and to benefit from the full range of membership advantages. To become a member, please visit ara.bc.ca. ■