



**AUTOMOTIVE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION**  
*Driving Industry Excellence*

## **Advocacy Brief for the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation**

### **Issue: Disposal of Unwanted, Impounded, and Abandoned Recreational Vehicles (RVs) by BC Tow Companies**

#### **Context**

As homelessness and the high cost of living continue to rise in British Columbia, many marginalized individuals are turning to alternative forms of housing, including living full-time in recreational vehicles (RVs). Currently, over 320,000 RVs are registered in BC. As these vehicles age, more people are likely to use them as alternative housing solutions.

#### **The Problem**

Approximately 2,000 RVs are impounded each year by towing companies due to municipal by-law infractions, police impoundments, vehicular accidents, or simply being abandoned on BC highways and municipal streets. Disposing of an RV is significantly more complex than disposing of other vehicles due to their hazardous waste, fuels, and other materials. 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.

#### **Key Statistics**

- **2,000 RVs** are impounded or abandoned annually.
- **70%** of these RVs are never claimed 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.

#### **Impacts**

- **Environmental and Health Risks:** Improper disposal of RVs can lead to significant environmental damage and health risks due to the hazardous materials contained within these vehicles.



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- **Economic Burden:** Towing companies are forced to bear the high costs of disposal, which is economically unsustainable.
- **Loss of Personal Belongings:** Many abandoned RVs are also homes, and their owners may leave behind personal belongings, adding to the disposal costs and affecting the lives of vulnerable individuals.

## **Request from the Automotive Retailers Association (ARA)**

The ARA is urging the BC 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 BC highways, police impoundments, or municipal roadways. This section currently includes compensation for abandoned vehicles removed by the Ministry or Police on a BC 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.

## **Conclusion**

The proper disposal of impounded, unwanted, 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 BC 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.

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We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and look forward to working together to find a sustainable solution.

Sincerely,

Ken Hendricks  
Senior Advisor  
Automotive Retailers Association (ARA)