

Thank you for airing the W5 program investigation on Project Bumper. The investigation shows hugely inappropriate activities involving some repair facilities, but only a few shops that frankly, were not on the association's "radar" and were seemingly and understandably active in avoiding our scrutiny. The vast majority of shops attract customers from good work and honesty. These few shops appear to only find work if they can pay the tow operator for it and then inflate the costs of repair to cover that payment. Payments that are in violation of the new tow truck legislation in Ontario. Some of the tow truck drivers in your program suggested "their" bodyshop is "certified" by a car maker. No car maker would tolerate this shop behaviour.

Consumers should always be on guard when tow trucks show up at an accident scene and recommend repair facilities.

Consumers (and insurers) should have a greater degree of trust and security in what happens when their vehicle is given to a repair facility.

For an industry like collision repair, this program serves to remind the large number of legitimate repair facilities that some operators continue to give the industry sad examples of a few shops that do not reflect the advances made in the industry to ensure consumer trust and safety.

Since 2002, the collision repair industry in Ontario has worked to assist consumers and stop the kinds of abuse seen in your program. Nine shops do not an industry make, nor are they reflective of the care and confidence given to our industry by the majority of car owners and insurers.

The answers to this challenge are clear:

The Collision Repair Standards Act of 2002 legislation was passed but not put into regulation by Ontario. This Act, once passed, would have allowed a management of collision repair shops that long ago would have eliminated the problems you witnessed.

The work done by our industry trade association, Collision Industry Information Assistance (CIIA) with Ontario, two years ago to enact new towing rules and control the "chase" or "vulture" tow trucks that get kickbacks from some shops (leading to false invoicing by the shop to recapture those excess fees) would work to stop this abuse, yet little enforcement is coming from the province.

Shop technicians are required to possess a skilled trades license in this industry issued by the Ontario College of Trades. It is unlikely that these workers would meet that legal criteria. If they did, the College could take action against them and can revoke their ability to work on cars. Again, although enforcement is active, any future actions often rely on funding to ensure compliance. Technician and repair facility information from those found to violate these skilled trades standards are public and posted on the College's web site.

Because the Collision Repair Standards Act was not enacted, industry has moved ahead and created accreditation and standards programs, which still remain voluntary without the province's assistance. These accreditation and audit programs, often offered by the "banner" or "chain" repair facilities and often through insurance company "preferred" shops, as well as industry generated provincial accreditation standards and audit program like "RoadTrust", serve to commit to an improved and professional industry. As you can note from your program, our association and the industry lacks the enforcement tools from the province to make this work with shops that may not want to (or can't) meet the standard. Sadly, this challenge with the small number of repair facilities you identified could have been avoided if industry was allowed to correct it with Ontario enacting the legislation that industry provided to them in the past.

Insurers can help themselves by reporting abuse and fraud, allowing their customer survey satisfaction reports to finally become public and simply following the recommendations already provided to them to not pay for repairs from un-accredited repair shops that don't meet a minimum standard and not paying for repairs at facilities that do not have the mandatory skilled trade licensed staff. Cutting off insurance funds to repair shops that are non-compliant is the first and easiest way of ensuring good quality repairs and eliminating the abuse shown on your program. (and lowering premiums!)

Consumers are allowed to use any repair facility they want, but as an industry we have an obligation to ensure that the shop has the ability, skill, competence, honesty and customer care to perform that job well.

Our industry continues to offer our co-operation with insurers and government to make these reported "horror" stories a thing of the past.

Please call anytime.

Best wishes,