



COPKA Corner

Citizens for Respectful Policing

WHO DECIDES WHERE YOUR CAR GETS TOWED?

When the OPP are present where towing is required, most people assume that they have the right to choose the tow company before the OPP place the call. Our local tow companies also expect fairness, in sharing the calls where the driver has no preference.

The OPP have told COPKA that they choose a tow company using the following criteria, in order of priority:

1. Vehicle Owner's Choice
2. Nearest Towing Company Operator
3. Next Towing Company on the OPP list

Problems with tow call distribution has been raised with the OPP many times in the last 10 years by municipal representatives, COPKA and by tow operators themselves. Little has changed in that time. COPKA has received information indicating that the OPP are distributing tow calls unfairly. One tow company got 4 calls out of more than 400 made by the OPP in 2011. This year they have received only 2 since January. Another operator told COPKA that when a particular sergeant is on duty, "I might as well take a holiday".

As for the above criteria:

- **Vehicle owner's choice:** Officers may not give the driver an option;
 - one vehicle owner told COPKA that he was not given a choice by the officer.
 - Another stated that an officer tried to persuade the owner to change their choice of tow operator to another "who we generally use."
 - Another car owner requested her choice of operator, but was shocked to discover, when she was released from hospital, that her car was not towed by her chosen operator. The OPP had ignored her request and called another tow operator. When COPKA raised this case at the Community Policing Advisory Committee (CPAC), Staff Sergeant Dowdall responded that the officer had "made a mistake".
- **Nearest operator:** COPKA was told about one incident where the nearest operator was less than three kilometers away. The next nearest was 15 km. The OPP chose to call an operator from 30km away without asking the owner for his choice.

Recently COPKA requested at CPAC that the OPP provide municipal representatives with a monthly summary of tow calls. This would include date, officer's name, location of vehicle, choice of tow company, and reason for that choice. Staff Sergeant Dowdall refused, saying that this report would require "hours of work".

COPKA recommends that the OPP follow their own policy to ensure equal distribution of tow calls. This will provide fairness and respect for tow companies and drivers alike. As well, it will help to improve the relationship between the police and the public they serve.

*Co-Operative Policing Killaloe Area (COPKA) is a local, community-based, non-profit organization, whose motto is **Citizens for Respectful Policing**. COPKA's mission is to improve relations between the police and the public they serve. More information: www.copka.ca or 613-757-3104*