



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: September 24, 2024
Contact: Sarah Hicks
Contact No.: 604.873.7546
RTS No.: 16536
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: November 13, 2024
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on City Finance and Services
FROM: Chief Licence Inspector and General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Impoundment Towing Rates and Electronic Tow-away Notice

Recommendations

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, an increase to the rates and fees that tow truck operators are authorized to charge for vehicles and other chattels impounded from public and private property under the *Impounding By-law* and the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* as discussed in this report and as shown in Appendices A and B;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment an amendment to the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* and the *Impounding By-law* in accordance with Appendices A and B.

- B. THAT Council approve amendments to the *Licence By-law* to add an electronic Tow-away Notice as a method for commercial parking lot operators to request and authorize removal of unlawfully parked vehicles as described in this report;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment an amendment to the *Licence By-law* generally in accordance with Appendix C.

- C. THAT Council approve amendments to the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* to add an electronic Tow-away Notice as a method for tow truck drivers to receive authorization to remove unlawfully parked vehicles in commercial parking lots as described in this report;

FURTHER THAT the Director of Legal Services be instructed to bring forward for enactment an amendment to the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* generally in accordance with Appendix A.

Purpose and Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to respond to the need to regularly review the rates and fees for vehicles impounded from private and public property and to assist the tow truck industry in Vancouver to streamline their administrative process for Tow-away Notices.

The City of Vancouver regulates the tow truck industry in support of consumer protection for motorists and the economic viability of the private tow truck industry. The rates and fees for vehicles impounded from private property are set in the *Vehicles for Hire By-law*. Vehicles towed from City streets and parks (public land) are charged rates and fees as enumerated in Schedule A of the *Impounding By-law*. The impoundment rates and fees in both by-laws generally align with [Insurance Corporation of British Columbia's Towing Rate and Payment Schedules](#) (ICBC Payment Schedule) for accident tows.

Staff propose increasing towing rates and fees for vehicles and other chattels impounded from private and public property as set in the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* and the *Impounding By-law* to match recent changes made by ICBC to its rate payment schedule and fuel surcharge. In addition, as the multi-level parkade fee is not referenced in ICBC Payment Schedule, staff propose a corresponding increase.

Staff also recommend adding an electronic Tow-away Notice as an additional and efficient method for requesting, authorizing, and removing unlawfully parked vehicles in commercial parking lots. If approved, commercial parking lot operators will be able to request and authorize vehicle removal using electronic means.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- [Section 272](#) of the Vancouver Charter authorizes Council to make by-laws for the regulation and licensing of any business, trade, profession, or other occupation, within certain limitations.
- The Vancouver Charter, [section 317\(1\)\(cc\)](#) authorizes the City to make by-laws dealing with the impounding of vehicle and other chattels unlawfully placed, left, kept or driven on the street.
- In [May 2023](#), Council approved amendments to the *Impounding By-law* and the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* to increase the fuel surcharges and tow truck fees to match ICBC's latest fuel surcharge and the rates and fees that tow truck operators are authorized to charge for vehicles and other chattels impounded from public and private property under the *Impounding By-law* and *Vehicles for Hire By-law*.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendations.

Context and Background

Impoundment rates and fees in Vancouver

Private impoundment includes the seizure, removal and detention of any vehicle which is unlawfully placed, left or kept on private property. The rates and fees for vehicle impoundment can include any towing, release, storage and other charges related to removal, transport and detention of a vehicle.

The City also regulates fees for public towing, which covers vehicles on city streets or in public parks. For public towing, All Tech Transport Ltd., which operates as Busters Towing, was awarded a seven-year contract in 2019 by the City for towing services from city streets and parks. Upon the City receiving notice from the towing service provider that ICBC's rates have either significantly decreased or increased, the contract states that Council is obligated to consider amendments to the *Impounding By-law* within 120 days. Council is not obligated to enact any by-laws as a result.

Since 2020, both the City's private and public towing rates and fuel surcharge has generally been aligned with ICBC's Rate Payment Schedule. The ICBC Rate Payment Schedule is structured for towing and storage services provided on all ICBC authorized claims. All fees within the ICBC Payment Schedule are province-wide, apart from storage fees, which are specific to zones. Zone 1 has the highest storage fees and includes the city of Vancouver, the city of Burnaby, and the city of North Vancouver. The City is aligned with the ICBC Payment Schedule for most of its fees, apart from the inclusion of a \$10.00 multi-level parkade fee. This fee was introduced in 2020, due to the city having more multi-level parkades as it is more densely populated than other BC municipalities and these types of tows are more complex and time-consuming.

The City's most recent public and private impoundment rates and fees update was in May 2023. In that report, staff committed to regularly review the rates and fees for vehicles impounded from private property as set out in the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* should ICBC make any changes in response to industry concerns. ICBC Payment Schedule was most recently updated in August 2024, which included an increase to basic towing fees, use of a dolly fee, and storage fee.

Many BC cities have by-laws to regulate private impoundment of vehicles and for setting maximum rates and fees that can be charged for vehicles impounded from private property. The cities of Surrey, New Westminster and Prince George directly reference ICBC Payment Schedule.

The cities of Burnaby, Abbotsford and Richmond directly reference the *Motor Vehicle Act's [Lien on Impounded Motor Vehicles Regulation](#)* (Motor Vehicles Regulation). The Motor Vehicle Regulation grants police the authority to impound vehicles for safety violations. Until September 2024, the ICBC Payment Schedule and the Motor Vehicles Regulation were nearly identical, with minor differences in the administrative costs related to reclaiming a vehicle. Effective September 1, 2024, the Motor Vehicles Regulation rates were increased significantly above ICBC's rates, by 38 per cent for a flat-rate towing fee and up to 96 per cent for storage fee increases.¹ The rationale for the fee increases was to place higher penalties on drivers who engage in reckless behaviour such as impaired driving, excessive speeding, street racing or driving without a licence. These increases are intended to deter reckless behaviours that put

¹ [B.C. substantially increases dangerous driving impound fees](#)

lives at risk, so are not applicable to either the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* or the *Impounding By-law*.

Tow-away Notice

Electronic Tow-away Notices are intended to be a more convenient and efficient method for parking lot operators and tow truck operators to request, authorize, and remove unlawfully parked vehicles in commercial parking lots, while ensuring that the vehicle owners remain informed. Current regulations within the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* allow commercial parking lot operators to authorize vehicle removal only after they have completed a paper Tow-away Notice in triplicate. One page is left on the vehicle to be removed for the tow truck driver, a duplicate is to be left on the vehicle for the owner, and the triplicate is to be retained by the issuer. The parking lot operator informs the towing company of the vehicle to be removed, most commonly done through a phone call. Under the current process, the vehicle owner receives the paper copy of the Tow-away Notice on their vehicle when they pick it up from the impound lot.

The process of using a paper copy Tow-away Notice to authorize removal of a vehicle from a commercial parking lot has been in place since 1978 when regulations for commercial parking lots were added to the Licence By-law. Commercial parking lots include areas where the lawful parking of motor vehicles is provided for a fee or when no fee is charged, the area can be used for customers of a business, or tenants in buildings. The regulations for commercial parking lots do not apply to residential-only buildings with parking lots.

Discussion

Impoundment rates and fees in Vancouver

For vehicles towed from public and private property, staff recommend amendments to the *Impounding By-law* and the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* to align with the revised ICBC Payment Schedule and fuel surcharge rate as of August 1, 2024. The changes represent a three to four percent increase in fees, summarized in the table below:

Fee	Current amount	ICBC amount
Regular tow (up to 3,000 kg)	\$79.78	\$82.18
Regular tow (3,000-6,300 kg)	\$84.25	\$86.78
Regular tow (6,300-9,072 kg)	\$133.56	\$137.58
Regular tow (greater than 9,072 kg)	\$177.64	\$182.98
Dolly	\$35.00	\$36.05
Storage (up to 6.1 m)	\$23.98	\$25.18
Storage (6.1-10.7 m)	\$47.96	\$50.36
Storage (more than 10.7 m)	\$71.94	\$75.54
Storage (Motorcycles)	\$11.99	\$12.59

Staff recommend retaining the previously approved multi-level parkade fee within the *Vehicles for Hire By-law* and increasing it to \$11.00, given the added complexity of removing a vehicle from a multi-level parkade.

Should ICBC make any further changes to their tow rate structure, staff will review its own rates to determine if further changes are warranted.

Electronic Tow-away Notice

An electronic Tow-away Notice is a more secure and efficient method for tow truck companies, and it improves record-keeping compared to hardcopies. As all tow requests sent and received electronically have a digital footprint, it provides an easy way for towing companies to access, organize and retain records compared to hard copies.

For commercial parking lot operators, it reduces the time to request and authorize a tow by combining processes into one step (sending an email) compared to manually completing a paper-tow away notice, displaying it on the windshield of the vehicle to be removed and calling a tow truck company for their service. The email sent by commercial parking lot operators to tow truck drivers to authorize vehicle removal will require the same information that currently must be completed using the paper Tow-away Notice. If Vancouver commercial parking lot operators and tow providers do not want to use an electronic notice, they will still have the option to use the paper copy in triplicate.

Vehicle owners would observe minimal difference in the Tow-away Notice process. Whether a vehicle is authorized for removal using a paper or electronic Tow-away Notice, they will receive a copy of the Tow-away Notice. Rather than seeing the paper Tow-away Notice on their vehicle’s windshield when claiming their vehicle, they would be provided a copy of it upon payment.

The City has a contract with Busters Towing to tow and impound illegally parked vehicles from city streets and parks, under the *Impounding By-law*. The move to an electronic Tow-away Notice in commercial parking lots generally aligns with the process already in place for impounded vehicles on City streets in that the tow provider receives an electronic notification from the City to remove the vehicle.

Financial Implications

Towing fees for City vehicles and equipment that require towing are a variable expense for City departments that utilize towing services. The table below shows the towing costs year over year since 2021.

Year	2021	2022	2023
Annual cost	\$1,111,659	\$1,377,388	\$1,477,809

Assuming the costs for 2024 are similar to 2023, the proposed increase would add approximately \$43,152 spread across all City departments who utilize towing services. This increase will create a negligible risk to the operating and capital budgets of these departments.

Legal Implications

If the Recommendations in this report are adopted by Council, they will result in by-law amendments in accordance with the Appendices to this report.

* * * * *

APPENDIX A
DRAFT By-law to amend Vehicles for Hire By-law No. 6066
regarding increased towing rates and fees
and electronic Tow-away Notices

Note: An amending by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.

1. This by-law amends the indicated provisions and schedules of the Vehicles for Hire By-law No. 6066.

2. Council strikes out sections 17(10) and (11) and substitutes the following:

“(10) No driver of a tow truck shall remove any motor vehicle from a commercial parking lot unless upon the specific instruction of the owner of such vehicle or unless:

(a) there is displayed on the vehicle a Tow-away Notice issued pursuant to the provisions of section 10.5(a) of the Licence By-law; or

(b) the driver has received an electronic Tow-away Notice issued pursuant to the provisions of section 10.5(b) of the Licence By-law.

(11) Where a vehicle is removed by the driver of a tow truck:

(a) pursuant to a Tow-away Notice displayed on the vehicle under section 17(10)(a) above, the driver shall:

(i) at the time of removal, endorse such time on the original and duplicate Notice and initial the same,

(ii) leave the duplicate on the vehicle in a conspicuous place, and

(iii) retain the original Notice for a period of thirty days, which Notice shall be subject to inspection upon demand by the Inspector; and

(b) pursuant to a Tow-away Notice received under section 17(10)(b) above:

(i) the driver shall at the time of removal, endorse such time on the original Notice and initial the same,

(ii) the impound lot operator shall provide a printed or electronic copy of the endorsed and initialled Notice to the owner at the time the vehicle is released to the owner from the impound lot, and

(iii) the driver shall retain a copy of the endorsed and initialled Notice for a period of thirty days, which Notice shall be subject to inspection upon demand by the Inspector.”.

3. Council strikes out Schedule C and substitutes the Schedule C attached to this by-law.

4. This by-law is to come into force and take effect upon enactment, except that section 3 will come into force and take effect on January 1, 2025.

ENACTED by Council this day of , 2024

Mayor

City Clerk



Schedule “C”

Rates and fees for private impounded vehicles (towing fees will have GST added)

1. Towing fees

- (a) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of up to 3,000 kg or less
 - Regular tow.....\$82.18
 - Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$2.41 per km
 - Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
 - Plus, for a tow that requires a dolly\$36.05
 - Plus, for a tow in a multi-level parkade\$11.00
- (b) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of between 3,000 kg to 6,300 kg
 - Regular tow.....\$86.78
 - Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$3.02 per km
 - Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
 - Plus, for a tow that requires a dolly\$36.05
 - Plus, for a tow in a multi-level parkade.....\$11.00
- (c) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of between 6,300 kg to 9,072 kg
 - Regular tow.....\$137.58
 - Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$3.41 per km
 - Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
- (d) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight greater than 9,072 kg
 - Regular tow.....\$182.98
 - Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$7.26 per km
 - Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates

2. Release (unhooking) fees

Where towing service has commenced hook-up and the owner or person in charge requests delivery of the vehicle before it is towed:

- (a) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of up to 3,000 kg or less

(i)	Regular tow.....	\$41.09
	Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate	
(ii)	Tow with dolly.....	\$70.21
(iii)	Tow in multi-level parkade	\$57.68
(iv)	Tow with dolly in multi-level parkade.....	\$75.71
(b)	Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of between 3,000 kg to 6,300 kg	
(i)	Regular tow.....	\$43.39
	Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate	
(ii)	Tow with dolly	\$73.13
(iii)	Tow in multi-level parkade	\$60.61
(iv)	Tow with dolly in multi-level parkade.....	\$78.63
(c)	Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of between 6,300 kg to 9,072 kg	
	Regular tow.....	\$68.79
	Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate	
(d)	Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight greater than 9,072 kg	
	Regular tow.....	\$91.49
	Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate	

3. Storage fees

The daily fee for storage of a vehicle at a storage facility before it is released to its owner:

Length of vehicle

(a)	Up to 20' (6.1m)	\$25.18
(b)	> 20' (6.1m) to 35' (10.7m).....	\$50.36
(c)	> 35' (10.7m)	\$75.54
(d)	Motorcycles.....	\$12.59

Schedule A

**Impounding Expenses for Vehicles
(GST will be added to towing charges)**

1. Towing fees

- (a) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 2,999 kg or less
- (i) regular tow\$82.18
 - (ii) tow with dolly\$118.23
- Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$2.41 per km
- Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
- (b) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 3,000 kg to 6,300 kg
- (i) regular tow\$86.78
 - (ii) tow with dolly\$122.83
- Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km\$3.02 per km
- Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
- (c) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 6,301 kg to 9,072 kg
- Regular tow\$137.58
- Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$3.41 per km
- Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates
- (d) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 9,073 kg and over
- Regular tow.....\$182.98
- Plus, for a towing distance greater than 6 km.....\$7.26 per km
- Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates

2. Release (unhooking) fees

Where towing service has commenced hook-up and the owner or person in charge requests delivery of the vehicle before it is towed.

- (a) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 2,999 kg or less

- (i) regular tow.....\$41.09
- (ii) tow with dolly.....\$59.12

Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates

- (b) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 3,000 kg to 6,300 kg

- (i) regular tow \$43.39
- (ii) tow with dolly\$61.42

Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rates

- (c) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 6,301 kg to 9,072 kg

Regular tow \$68.79

Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate

- (d) Vehicle with a gross vehicle weight of 9,073 kg and over

Regular tow \$91.49

Plus fuel surcharge of 27% on the above rate

3. Storage charges

For the first day, or portion thereof, and each subsequent day, or portion thereof, that the vehicle is impounded and stored:

- (a) for vehicles up to and including 20 feet in length (6.1 m).....\$25.18
- (b) for vehicles more than 20 feet in length (6.1 metres) up to and including 35 feet in length (10.7 metres).....\$50.36
- (c) for vehicles more than 35 feet in length (10.7 m)\$75.54
- (d) for motorcycles\$12.99

4. Other charges

- (a) discharge of any outstanding liens \$12.50-\$26 per lien
- (b) registered owner search BC \$12.50 per search
- (c) registered owner search outside BC \$12.50 -\$19.00 per search
- (d) registered mail \$10.82
- (e) clearing of grey/black water tanks \$19.47

APPENDIX C
DRAFT By-law to amend Licence By-law No. 4450
regarding electronic Tow-away Notices

Note: An amending by-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions and Schedules of the Licence By-law No. 4450.
2. Council strikes out sections 10.6(5) and (6) and substitutes the following:
 - “(5) Before authorizing any removal pursuant to this section, the owner, occupier, operator, or a duly authorized agent of such owner, occupier or operator shall first:
 - (a) complete and issue a Tow-away Notice in the form prescribed in Schedule “D” of this By-law; or
 - (b) complete and issue a Tow-away Notice electronically that contains the information prescribed in Schedule “D” of this By-law.
 - (6) Every Tow-away Notice issued:
 - (a) under subsection (5)(a) above shall be issued in triplicate and:
 - (i) the original and the duplicate copy shall be placed on the windshield of the vehicle described in the Notice, and
 - (ii) the triplicate copy shall be kept by the person issuing the same for a period of thirty days and shall be subject to inspection upon demand by the Inspector; or
 - (b) under subsection (5)(b) above shall be kept by the person issuing the same for a period of thirty days, and shall be subject to inspection upon demand by the Inspector.”.
3. In Schedule “D”, Council:
 - (a) renumbers sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 as sections 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively;
 - (b) adds a new section 1 as follows:
 - “1. Every Tow-away Notice issued under section 10.6(5)(b) shall contain the information in the form shown above, except that additional information, including diagrams, may be added.”
 - (c) in section 2, adds “issued under section 10.6(5)(a)” after “Every Tow-away Notice”;

- (d) in section 3, strikes out “The form” and substitutes “A Tow-away Notice issued under section 10.6(5)(a)”;
 - (e) in section 4, adds “of a Tow-away Notice issued under section 10.6(5)(a)” after “The printing stock”; and
 - (f) in section 5, strikes out “of the form” and substitutes “of a Tow-away Notice”.
4. A decision by a court that any part of this by-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this by-law, and is not to affect the balance of this by-law.
5. This by-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this _____ day of _____, 2024

Mayor

City Clerk

