

TOWING TASK FORCE

Executive Summary

September 2020



Executive Summary

Since 1998, The Provincial Towing Association of Ontario (PTAO), has been the largest towing association in Ontario. It has been working tirelessly with external Towing Industry stakeholders over the past year to identify a centralized Provincial Towing License solution.

To accelerate the process, the PTAO invited government officials, educational tow truck training company representatives, the Ministry of Transportation, Police and the CAA to an inaugural and open panel discussion hosted at the 2019 Tow Show. The panel discussion was live streamed, and so successful, that there was a consensus to form a 'Towing Task Force' (2019) to address the problems of the towing industry.

The "Towing Task Force Committee" met throughout 2019-2020 with the goal of providing an Operational Model and Provincial Towing solution to the Provincial Government.

Through the extensive collection of information from Stakeholders discussions, the PTAO understands the framework necessary for a Provincial Licensing Model as part of the towing solution in Ontario.

With increasing criminal activity and unregulated towing practices, there is an urgent need to activate a Provincial Licensing Model to ensure Consumer Safety.

BACKGROUND:Data Findings & Feedback

Many provinces have struggled for years with the problems associated with the Towing Industry resulting in a lack of consumer protection including challenges such as;

- Excessive towing rates and storage costs charged
- Attracting Criminal Activity in an unregulated industry
- Unsafe tow operators with reckless driving to be the 'first-to-the scene/accident'
- Lack of qualified and trained towers
- Improperly insured Tow Operators based on the definition of a Tow Truck/Company

Understanding these challenges and concerns in the Towing Industry, the PTAO convened the first 'Towing Task Force' meeting in December of 2019 with a broad perspective of Towing Stakeholders to capture their concerns and recommendations.

Meetings with other towing companies, government agencies and towing associations also contributed perspectives on towing licensing models in other Provinces and in the United States.

Media interviews and communications to PTAO members and stakeholders provided updates and progress of the Towing Task Force.

The perspectives from those that are associated with the Towing Industry greatly assisted in forming an identified 'Provincial Towing Solution' and Model discussed in the next section of this report.

The Solution*:

Details of the Provincial Towing Licensing Solution for the Towing Industry will be further discussed within formal meetings and consultations with the Provincial Government. However, the PTAO is pleased to provide key areas of focus resulting from the Towing Task Force feedback for further discussion with the Provincial Government.

These discussions will enable the 'operationalizing and implementing' a solution that the Provincial Government can move forward in an expeditious manner.

The following summary recommendations are consolidated from the stakeholder discussions reflecting on 'current state' of towing and envisioned 'future state of towing standards and practice';

1. Safety & Protection Of Consumers' Interests upheld through mandated Provincially regulated Tow Licensing (Provincial Licensing Model Framework to be discussed with Provincial Government)
2. Definition of Tow Truck and Operator Defined (completed) to align with qualified and insurable towers
3. Ensuring passenger and commercial vehicles are charged reasonable rates for services on all roadways in Ontario (centralized framework available for adoption)
4. All roadways, Provincial highways - 1 phone number or app for towing, breakdown and collisions
5. TOW app to provide quick reliable service and understandable/approved pricing (app currently available)
6. Qualified companies within an area are 'first call' for service implemented (database amended)
7. Qualified companies meet criteria and education standards for tow operators (3rd party training - currently available)
8. Establishment of discipline board/tribunal for non-compliant Tow Operators and Towing Companies

*Logistical and Budgeting Information will be developed in consultation with the Provincial Government

Conclusions & Call To Action

The PTAO and the Towing Task Force have been instrumental in advancing the need for a Provincial Licensing Model in Ontario.

Given increasing criminal activity within the Towing Industry, there can be no further delays in engaging in a dialogue with the PTAO and the Towing Task Force to operationalize the recommendations and develop a business proto-type model as approved by the Provincial Government of Ontario.

The following steps summarize the progress and framework recommended by PTAO and the Towing Task Force during 2019-2020:

Phase I : Stakeholder Research – Complete

Phase II: Summary of Findings – Complete

Phase III: Meeting & Consultations with Provincial Government To Advance Provincial Licensing Model – Pending

Phase IV: Provincial Licensing Model and Implementation

Government engagement is required to confirm not only interest in moving forward with a Provincial Licensing Model for the Towing industry, but to take a leadership role to elevate the Standards of Practice to better serve the general public. Once interest is formalized through the Provincial Government endorsement (readings), the operational, budget and oversight infrastructure for the Provincially regulated Towing Model can be activated.

Concluding Comments

Considerable time, resources, and expertise by the PTAO and the Towing Task Force have provided the Provincial Government with the necessary input and perspectives to move onto Phase III in the Towing Task Force mandate.

Phase III consultation and Phase IV implementation of a Provincial Licensing Model are integral in improving the towing standards and consumer protection. However, the PTAO is also able to pass the completed and valued research on to its' members to advance the association's mandate of elevating professionalism in the towing industry.

We are grateful to those who have contributed to this research and advancement of the Towing Industry.