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HEADLINE: It's TV Viewer Beware for used-car dealer documentary

BODY:

The Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council - the industry regulator for car dealers in Ontario - supports any sincere attempt to inform consumers of their rights when making a purchase as important and complex as an automobile.

However, W-FIVE's story Buyer Beware, which aired on television last Saturday, falls well short of the mark since it was neither sincere nor informative.

It instead is a prime example of what happens when a television show's search for ratings aligns itself with the Automobile Protection Association's (APA) drive for members: mock outrage, slanted reporting, hysterical warnings and, in the end, irresponsible journalism.

In spite of a lengthy interview in OMVIC's offices, W-FIVE's program incorrectly identified the Ministry of Transportation as the "body which oversees standards and investigation of used car dealers."

It made no mention of the free complaint handling services provided by OMVIC.

It made no mention of the millions of dollars returned to consumers through OMVIC's efforts.

It made no mention of the Motor Vehicle Dealers Compensation Fund (which in some cases can reimburse consumers up to \$15,000).

And it made no mention of the fact that the vast majority of retail transactions made through Ontario's 8,800 registered dealers are completed without complaint.

Three of the four dealers profiled in the story acted deplorably, put the public at risk and clearly are not deserving of registration as dealers or salespersons.

The fourth one appeared to give accurate information regarding how to buy a car "as is" and pointed out the appropriate additional information necessary on the

front of a standard car contract, which needs to be initialed by a consumer in such a case.

Regarding the others, OMVIC has already revoked the registration of Auto Connection Star, begun proceedings against International Trading Centre and withdrawn the right of a Montreal-based dealer, called Discount Auto, to do business in Ontario. W-FIVE had nothing to do with OMVIC's actions in these cases as we did not know the identity of the dealers involved until the show aired.

These actions are among the hundreds of similar revocations OMVIC has initiated as a result of consumer complaints and non-compliance issues.

Are these the actions of an organization that the APA characterized as having "lost its will to regulate" and one that has "cut resources"? We think not.

Is there still work to do? Yes.

We strongly recommend that consumers looking for a car check the history of the vehicle using the Used Vehicle Information Package (but it only records owners in Ontario, not other jurisdictions) and Internet sites such as Carfax.com, and most importantly have the vehicle inspected prior to purchase by an impartial and reliable mechanic.

Consumers who have a complaint against a registered dealer for odometer tampering, accident non-disclosure or other concerns can call OMVIC's complaint handling line at 1-800-943-6002, 416-226-4500 or reach us at www.omvic.on.ca.

Carl Compton,
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