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## **Victimized Kamloops car buyers to be compensated**

BURNABY, B.C. (23 May, 2006) - A Kamloops motor dealer, suspended as a result of multiple business practices violations - including evidence of odometer manipulation - has been reinstated on a probationary basis pending restitution to affected consumers.

On March 16 the Registrar of Motor Dealers, Ken Smith, suspended the licence of BMI Bartram Motorcars Inc. and the salesperson licence of its principal Paul Bartram. At a hearing April 19, an agreement was reached to reinstate these licences if strict conditions are met.

The Registrar said:

***". . . Bartram Motors will forthwith on a best-efforts basis move to resolve all outstanding consumer claims. We understand there's approximately nine of those, and there will be a ceiling of approximately \$30,000 needed to resolve those claims. Secondly, Bartram Motors will pay agreed costs for the investigation and hosting of these hearings of \$10,000. These costs are to be payable by December 31st, 2006. . . . we will expect continued co-operation and full collaboration with our investigation staff. And failing that, we will immediately reconvene these hearings.***

The investigation determined multiple violations of statutes, including: entering into consignment agreements and taking in consignment vehicles contrary to what was stipulated in the dealer licence; displaying and selling vehicles with tampered odometers; and, inadequate record keeping.

With respect to the decision, Eray Karabilgin, MDC's Director of Regulatory Services, said: "under the circumstances the Registrar decided that it would be in the best interest of these consumers to allow the dealer to settle outstanding consumer claims and keep him on a tight leash by imposing a probation period of nine months."

At the centre of the present dispute was Bartram's relationship with a tenant, Hubert Puetz, the owner of Kamloops Expert Car & Truck, which would import high kilometre vehicles from Alberta, and then replace the instrument clusters, including odometers. Seven separate vehicles were part of the current investigation, each of which was sold through Bartram Motors showing a far lower odometer reading than what was the actual case.

Evidence was so egregious the matter was discussed with Crown Prosecutors with a view toward possible criminal charges. Replacing odometers is not a crime, but knowingly defrauding the public with false information is. It was determined that attempting to prove Bartram's prior knowledge may make prosecution uncertain, and of no benefit to the affected consumers.

The Registrar decided that restitution to consumers and strict probation would be the speediest and most effective resolution of this chapter in an ongoing story.

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