

For Immediate Release

**Aging Neons, luxury Audis enter
Canada's Top Ten Stolen Vehicles list:**

List highlights need for renewed efforts to combat auto theft and vehicle export

Toronto, ON – December 17, 2008 – Canada's car insurers released their annual list of the most frequently stolen vehicles today, with luxury Audis and aging Neons making appearances on the list. The sharp contrast reflects the different purposes of auto theft. Luxury vehicles are often stolen by organized crime for export, while low-end vehicles are stolen for transportation, parts or for use in other crimes.

The Top Ten Stolen Vehicles are:

1. 2000 Honda Civic SiR 2-door
2. 1999 Honda Civic SiR 2-door
3. 2004 Subaru Impreza WRX/WRX STi 4-door AWD
4. 1995 Dodge/Plymouth Grand Caravan/Voyager
5. 1995 Dodge/Plymouth Caravan/Voyager
6. 2002 Acura RSX Type S 2-door
7. 2001 Audi TT Quattro Roadster
8. 1995 Acura Integra 2-door
9. 1996 Dodge/Plymouth Neon 2-door
10. 1996 Dodge/Plymouth Neon 4-door

"I'm sure a lot of people with decade-old Neons don't think that anybody would want to steal their car, but this shows that thieves aren't just interested in new or high-value vehicles," said Rick Dubin, Vice-President, Investigations, Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC). "These older vehicles are easier to steal, they have no approved anti-theft electronic immobilizers, and there are so many of them on the road that a stolen one can just blend in. That's why they tend to be used to commit other crimes."

Thieves that steal sporty vehicles like the 2002 Acura RSX and 2001 Audi TT Quattro Roadster may have different motivations. While their built-in immobilizers make these vehicles harder to steal, sophisticated, organized crime rings can make a strong profit by shipping them overseas, chopping them for parts, or re-identifying them and selling them to unsuspecting consumers.

“Thieves are stealing high-end four-wheel drive vehicles like the Hummer H2, Cadillac Escalade, Lexus RX350, BMWX5, Mercedes Benz GL450, Lincoln MKX and Toyota RAV4 in greater numbers. Vehicles like these are often stolen to order by organized crime rings, and shipped to places like West Africa and the Middle East, where they are well-suited to the terrain,” said Dubin. “The recovery rate for stolen vehicles in Canada continues to decline. Canadians pay a huge cost for these kinds of thefts.”

Auto theft by the numbers:

- In 2007 auto theft cost Canadian insurers \$542 million, which averages out to \$35 per auto insurance policy.
- According to Statistics Canada, 146,142 vehicles were stolen in Canada in 2007, a drop of 7.9%.
- In 2008, IBC investigators working in partnership with law enforcement stopped 295 stolen vehicles from leaving Canadian ports, and repatriated 139 from abroad with a total value of more than \$13 million.

In an effort to combat auto theft for export, in 2008 IBC partnered with law enforcement to identify and seize stolen vehicles that were being smuggled through two Canadian ports. In addition, IBC investigators travelled overseas to train law enforcement and customs officers in Ghana, which led to the return of hundreds of high-end Canadian stolen vehicles. But despite progress, law enforcement still faces an uphill battle against auto theft.

“Unfortunately our legal system hasn’t kept up with the modern reality of auto theft. It’s time for the federal government to do its part by giving law enforcement the tools it needs,” said Dubin.

IBC is urging the federal government to reintroduce Bills C-53 and C-343. Bill C-53 specifically targeted the activities of organized auto theft rings. It would have amended the Criminal Code to make it a crime to tamper with a vehicle identification number (VIN) or traffic in stolen parts. In addition, the bill would have empowered Canada Border Services Agency to identify and seize stolen vehicles destined for export. Bill C-343 would have made auto theft a separate offence under the Criminal Code. Currently auto theft is treated as a simple property crime, despite its serious and often violent nature. Both bills were dropped when the 2008 federal election was called.

“Auto theft kills and injures numerous innocent Canadians every year. It threatens our security because auto theft funds organized crime and terrorism,” said Dubin. “We hope that the federal government will take the strong steps needed to curb this growing threat to community safety.”

The Least Stolen Vehicles are:

1. (tie 1st) 2003 Cadillac Deville 4-door
2. (tie 1st) 2002 Lincoln Continental 4-door
3. (tie 1st) 2001 Lincoln Town Car 4-door
4. 2007 Chevrolet Impala 4-door
5. (tie 3rd) 2001 Toyota Avalon 4-door
6. (tie 3rd) 1999 Toyota Tacoma 2WD
7. (tie 4th) 2005 Buick Terraza EXT
8. (tie 4th) 2003 Buick Regal 4-door
9. (tie 4th) 2002 Toyota Highlander 4-door 2WD
10. (tie 4th) 2000 Ford/Mercury Taurus/Sable Wagon

The data on stolen vehicle frequency is based wholly on actual insurance claims information collected from companies that write almost 100% of all automobile insurance in Canada. This data can be found in the 2008 release of IBC's "How Cars Measure Up," which compares the insurance claims records of the most popular models of cars, passenger vans, SUVs and pickup trucks across the country. Consumers can also access information on the best and worst models according to collision, comprehensive and theft claims cost experience. This information can be extremely useful to consumers before they buy a new or used car. "How Cars Measure Up" is designed to help consumers understand how theft, collision and other claims costs affect insurance premiums. For more information, visit IBC's website at www.ibc.ca and click on "How Cars Measure Up" under "Quick Links."

Insurance Bureau of Canada is the national industry association representing Canada's private home, car and business insurers. Its member companies represent nearly 95% of the property and casualty (P&C) insurance market in Canada. The P&C insurance industry employs over 108,000 Canadians, pays more than \$6 billion in taxes to the federal and provincial governments, and has a total premium base of \$36 billion.

For more information or to arrange an interview with Rick Dubin, Vice-President, Investigations, IBC, please contact: Ellen Woodger at 416-483-2358 or James Geuzebroek at 416-362-2031, x4364.