



Wheels

On the Used Car Lot...

Saskatchewan consumers complain more about buying used cars than about any other product. This is partially because problems with used cars are usually expensive to repair. However, it is also because many do not know how to avoid such problems before buying a car. In most cases, the problems would not have happened if the people involved had known a few things about the used car market place.

Most complaints involve the poor condition of cars that seemed okay at the car lot. Many people also complain about dealers who are unwilling to repair cars free, particularly when there is a problem right after the purchase of a car. Others have said that it is difficult to know if a "deal" is a fair one. There is always some risk involved when buying a used car. Here is some advice that you can use to help you to decrease the risk of problems.



Once you sign an "offer" to purchase a used car and the dealer signs it, it is legally binding.

Never make a decision to buy a car based only on the mileage shown on the odometer. A low mileage car may be on the lot because the previous owner had a lot of trouble with it.

Always check a car for a fresh paint job. If a car has just been painted, you should take care to find out what might have been covered up. Look for rust. A small magnet will help you locate patches of body putty used to repair damage to a car.

If you get as far as the driver's seat, compare the condition of the brake pedal with the mileage registered on the odometer. A badly worn pedal should not be found in a "low-mileage" car.

Then, turn the key to "on" and check all the warning lights, gauges and other electrical things to ensure they work.

Saskatchewan law requires that the brakes, horn, muffler, lights, mirror and dimmer switch must be intact and working when a car is sold by a dealer.

Take the car for a test drive on both a smooth highway and a rough road. Make sure it operates safely under both conditions.

Always take the car to a mechanic. Have the mechanic check it over thoroughly for both mechanical and safety reasons. Ask the mechanic for a written report and take it with you back to the dealer.

For information on car prices, you can contact your financial institution or the library.

A motor dealer, knowing the vehicle being sold is intended for highway use, is prohibited from selling or giving in exchange a motor vehicle that is not properly equipped or mechanically fails to meet vehicle equipment safety standards.

Reference S.15 of *The Motor Dealers Act* and S.47 of SGI's *Vehicle Administration Act*.

The Deal.....

If you can agree on a price, your next step will be to "deal" on the car. This involves making an offer to buy the vehicle.

The offer can be called various things such as a "purchase order" but, regardless of its name, you should understand that once you sign it and the dealer accepts it, the offer becomes legally binding on both you and the dealer.

Before you sign anything, make sure you want the car. Arrange for financing, if necessary, beforehand. If you make a down payment and later find you cannot get the financing, you may lose the deposit. You also cannot return a car to a dealer for a refund of your money if you find later that you are not satisfied with it.

Statutory Warranties...

Whenever you buy a used car from a dealer, you will receive several basic warranties called Statutory Warranties by law. They are:

- that you should be buying clear title to the car. It should not have any liens against it as a result of a previous owner not have

- paid out a loan to originally buy it;
- that the car should be of acceptable quality, depending on the price you pay for it and whether or not defects were obvious or pointed out to you beforehand;
- that if you tell the seller you have a certain purpose for the car, the car should be fit for that purpose; and
- that the car must be durable for a reasonable period of time after purchase. Parts and repair facilities must be available for a reasonable period of time too (not necessarily within Saskatchewan).

For information about buying used cars, including repair histories, fuel consumption ratings or values, drop in to your local library.

For more information contact:

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