

Montreal towing industry riddled with corruption: inspector general

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Collusion and organized crime are at the centre of Montreal's towing industry, according to a report by Montreal's inspector general.

Released Monday afternoon, the report by Inspector General Denis Gallant said for the past decade there has been widespread collusion, adding that many towing companies are controlled by organized crime.

[Read the full report here \(French only\)](#)

The report said organized crime groups used intimidation, threats and even acts of violence like arson and vandalism to control Montreal's towing industry.

That way, they were able to charge between four and eight times more for towing.

Gallant reported that each company had highly controlled turf - essentially small kingdoms - that were aggressively controlled, and that any outsiders were driven out.

Workers have agreements of mutual respect and won't tow cars outside their own zone.

Gallant said that owners of towing companies are often members of criminal organizations or have links to organized crime.

One witness cited in the reports is the owner of a towing company who said had to pay between \$500 and \$700 per week in protection money to the Hells Angels if he wanted to keep operating without competition. If they refused to comply, they were warned: 'it's hard to eat steak when you don't have teeth.'

The report also detailed how owners of some companies were able to get around regulations put in place to keep them from getting public contracts.

A group of entrepreneurs who was given five-year bans for bidding on contracts used their spouses' names or set up a shell company to keep operating.

Roadrunner towing owner Jean Loranger, who has been in the business for 10 years, said he's shocked by what's in the report.

"I'm badly surprised. I don't see anything like that either downtown or on the West Island. We all know each other and no one bothers anyone," he said.

The question now is how to correct it.

Gallant recommends the city award exclusive contracts so that one company stays in one area and is controlled.

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