

## **Taxi industry *ad hoc* fee structures and inequality for persons with mobility disabilities**

The purpose of the project is to research and expose the fee structures that exist within the taxi industry which impacts on persons with mobility disabilities within the City of Toronto.

Under the project, it was discovered that the taxi industry practices unfair and questionable practices resulting in regular overcharging of fees for passengers using wheelchairs and scooters. The practice of charging fees for travel toward persons using larger mobility device is done on an *ad hoc* basis, and said fees violate the *City of Toronto Municipal Code Section 545*, and of note is the fact that none of the taxis that were researched had a meter, among other things. The researchers found that generally and overall, that this practice is discriminatory, and targets only persons using electric wheelchairs and scooters.

The project clearly shows through the use of video clips that were filmed in plain sight, how and what these infractions are, as well as the various excuses used by taxi operators to attempt to justify their actions.

It is our desire, as the researchers to have this addressed at the highest levels of city government and to put an immediate end to this discriminatory practice that preys upon persons who already experience barriers and many of whom are greatly marginalized in society due to misconceptions about disability. Many of the people affected by this *ad hoc* fee structure are among those who are least able to afford them and the additional fees are not applied to persons who do not require taxi services that are accessible.

Accessibility is not only for persons who have the financial means, but rather, accessibility must be universal and made available without an additional financial burden attached for simply providing a service. Accessibility and fairness of services and treatment is a right.

The researchers can see no logical reason why there should be a higher *ad hoc* fee structure created for accessible transportation. If one was to apply the logic of, for example, the vehicles cost more money; then the same

logic would apply to all accessible travel across the board, but this is not the case. Under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, there are comprehensive accessibility standards in all areas of daily life, and we, the researchers, believe that the existing unequal taxi fares that exist and that are practiced on a purely *ad hoc* basis, and implemented each and every day by various taxi companies, is in direct contravention to the *Act*. We are calling on the City of Toronto – to enforce the *City of Toronto Municipal Code Section 545*, and to appropriately fine the offending taxi companies for each offence.

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