Beck Taxi Deputation #2: Comparisons to New York

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When discussing standardization of vehicles or paint colours, all comparisons to New York City are inappropriate. We are not just comparing apples to oranges – we are comparing apples to dolphins.

New York City yellow cabs have no dispatch services. All yellow cabs are hailed on the street. There are NO phone numbers you can call to order a yellow cab: you must go to the street and hail one. Dispatch services are only for "black cars" which are not currently allowed to pick up street fares and charge a flat rate without meters, as limousines do in Toronto.

Any comparison of having standardized colours or standardized vehicles in Toronto because they have them in New York is a nonsensical debate.

In Toronto, well-managed private sector brokerages compete to provide the highest level of service to customers. Our colours are part of our branding and part of that competition. So are our phone numbers and our high-quality dispatch services. New York YELLOW taxis have no competing branding, no phone numbers, and no dispatch services.

In Manhattan, if you need a cab, you can hail one. If you are in an area in which no licensed cabs cruise, you are out of luck unless you call a flat rate limousine or hail a "bandit" cab.

In Toronto, you can call a cab from any neighbourhood, no matter how distant from downtown, and still get service using the meter. We doubt very much Torontonians want to give up these benefits to become more like New York.

The attempts at standardization of vehicles in New York has encountered tremendous resistance, and resulted in multiple lawsuits[3]. The vehicle that was chosen most recently has been opposed by many including Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Torontonians are happy with the cab service they receive and have never asked for New York-type service, standardized cabs or standardized colours.

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[3] See attached article, "Potholes await 'Taxi of Tomorrow" Daily News, Sept. 12 2012
http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/potholes-await-taxi-tomorrow-article-1.1163164

We think comparisons to New York should be eliminated from future versions of the Report, or, if they are used, they must represent both the positive and the negative aspects of New York's system as it compares to Toronto.

Fairness

The Preliminary Report quotes unnamed representatives of the "hospitality industry" as being in support of a standard colour for cabs.

Toronto's cab industry is an integral part of its hospitality industry and as noted in the report[4], the public is happy with the service being provided.

We cannot imagine the City dictating to Toronto's restaurants and hotels that all restaurants should be the same colour and design, that all hotels should be the same colour and design. Starbucks or Coffee Time? Royal York or Holiday Inn?

Restaurants and hotels expect to be allowed to make marketing choices in the running of their business. In fairness, the cab industry must be allowed the same choices.

Freedom, choices, options, transparency. There are 10,000 licensed cab drivers who can't all be "owner-operators". Drivers deserve to be able to participate on a part-time or full-time basis. They deserve to be able to rent a plate just like people often rent an apartment before they commit to buying a house. They deserve to be able to buy if that is what they want to do. They should be able to choose who they want to work with. The public deserves to receive service provided by people who have the freedom to choose. Happy drivers make happy customers.

[4] "Toronto's Taxicab Industry Discussion Paper," page 18, 'Customer Service Excellence'