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Re: Protective Shields to Improve Taxi Driver Safety

Dear Chair and Members of Licensing and Standards Committee,

In recent weeks there have been several violent attacks on taxi drivers in Toronto. These incidents are not anomalies: driving a taxi is one of the most dangerous occupations in the City and drivers face unsafe conditions every day.

Although the City has introduced several safety measures such as video cameras and exterior emergency lights, many drivers have called for a mandatory taxi shield program as in other jurisdictions. A previous survey of taxi drivers ranked protective shields highest amongst a range of options for improving taxi driver safety.

In 2006, Council called for Municipal Licensing and Standards to conduct a comprehensive poll of drivers to determine the level of support for a shield program and to look at options for financing those shields. The poll was not completed.

Currently, the City is undertaking a broad review of the Taxi Industry, including safety issues. The introduction of taxi shields could be examined in this context. Therefore, we recommend that:

Council request the Director of Municipal Licensing and Standards to:

1. undertake a consultation process with taxi drivers, including the possibility of conducting a poll, to determine industry support for a protective shield program in Toronto;
2. include in the Taxi Industry Review report, scheduled for May or June 2013, recommendations on protective shields and other safety measures for taxi drivers.

Sincerely,

Janet Davis

Paula Fletcher