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Councillor Cesar Palacio
Chair, Licensing & Standards Committee
100 Queen Street West, Suite B37
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

April 14, 2016

Sent via email: Councillor_Palacio@Toronto.ca and lsc@toronto.ca

RE: LS10.3 A New Vehicle-for-Hire Bylaw to Regulate Toronto's Ground Transportation Industry

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of Licensing & Standards Committee,

As have many of my colleagues, I have spent a considerable amount of time reviewing LS10.3 A New Vehicle-for-Hire Bylaw to Regulate Toronto's Ground Transportation Industry. I reviewed this report through the lens of the various discussions held on this issue at Licensing & Standards Committee and City Council, as well as the behaviour of the various industrial players in the City of Toronto and in particular, the experiences of various jurisdictions who have required Court orders to uphold legal requirements.

As Vice Chair of this Committee, I would be remiss if I did not try to offer some solutions to this contentious issue. These solutions, if adopted, may create a more equitable Vehicle-for-Hire framework without compromising the goals of our committee as stated on our committee page on the City of Toronto website and within Chapter 27 of the Toronto Municipal Code:

“The Licensing and Standards Committee's primary focus is consumer safety and protection, with a mandate to monitor, and make recommendations on the licensing of business and enforcement of property standards.”

While there is merit to many of the ideas considered in this report, it is my contention that these recommendations, as presented, have yet to create an even playing field for all participants. Nor does it put front and centre the safety concerns of both the drivers and the riding public.

To that end, I am proposing a series of motions which in effect would ensure that all vehicles for hire would be licensed and these licenses would be reviewed and approved directly by the Municipal Licensing & Standards Division. This is not an unreasonable requirement.

Jim Karygiannis, Councillor
Ward 39, Scarborough-Agincourt
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If puppies and kitties need to be registered directly with the City of Toronto, then surely any driver picking up my loved ones must be as well.

In addition, to requiring all drivers, owners, and companies to register directly with the City; there should be one type of safety and commercial insurance standard for all vehicles. This to my mind includes camera specifications, snow tires, commercial insurance, and vehicle inspection criteria. There should also be the expectation that all drivers have a proficiency in speaking and understanding the English language.

Some will try to say that these changes are too onerous to have a part time driver do; that a student or mom or newcomer is only doing this part time and these requirements would deter them from working in this industry. First of all, there are many who work as licensed cab drivers who are in these same circumstances and are expected to follow all of these rules and requirements. Secondly, we as a regulator should be working towards enhancing this business class in order to ensure a level of professionalism and security for anyone who is picking up passengers, to act as our ambassadors, and more important to be able to hold to account those who are not living up to those standards.

We as a City Council should not be diluting safety standards for any classification of vehicles for hire. Unfortunately, we have seen too many instances of injuries, assaults and even death. Standards may not fix everything but inconsistencies fix nothing.

Finally, with respect to customer choice. I agree that customers should get to choose which of the wide range of vehicle types and fare levels they want to choose. I also believe that as part of that choice in the marketplace we as the regulator should not be mandating that some players can charge one rate or lower, and that other industry players can charge as much as they want. To that end, I am proposing that for non-hailed fares, “discounted” or “surge” rates should not be available. .

As this report moves through the City Council deliberation process, I look forward to discussing these and other proposals with you, our colleagues, staff, and stakeholders.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Karygiannis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Karygiannis
City Councillor Ward 39
Scarborough-Agincourt

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