



## Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

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General Governance and Licensing Committee  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON  
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Dear Chair and Members,

### **Re: Ensuring Accessibility and Equity for Toronto Taxi Drivers**

Since the introduction of private transportation companies, the Toronto Taxi industry has been steadily declining as the number of drivers on the road has increased exponentially. Toronto taxi drivers are subject to 2-3 times the fees of any other sector, some having paid upwards of \$300,000 for a license. This results in many drivers working over 12-hour shifts and still barely able to provide for themselves and their families.

The global pandemic has impacted every sector, and taxi drivers have been hit especially hard. Residents being asked to stay home has resulted in a slim consumer base and limited opportunity to drive. This industry is made up of primarily immigrant workers trying to earn a living. As such, English may not be their first language creating undue barriers when submitting forms, data, or navigating the digital portal for submission. These families have often relied on another family member to try and navigate the technological landscape, and sometimes still falling short. These challenges have resulted in important deadlines being missed, and consequently, drivers not receiving payments or approved licensing to drive.

It is critical that Toronto has a diverse number of ground transportation alternatives available. Traditional taxi services remain especially important to passengers facing digital barriers according to city-solicited studies. Further, a monopoly by platform-based ride-hailing companies would give rise to new concerns around affordability and choice.

All of these challenges have additionally eroded the relationship between drivers and City staff who are trying to support them. Over the last few years, this relationship has grown increasingly complicated as the division of Municipal Licensing and Standards is understaffed, as are many City divisions. To support Municipal and Licensing staff as well as foster a stronger relationship with drivers, it would be pertinent to engage a third-party mediator.

In 2015, the City of Toronto reduced the meter “drop” rate from \$4.25 to \$3.25 in order to “compete” with companies like Uber and Lyft entering the market under rules that would be introduced later on. The expectation of the industry was that the rules would be the same for all drivers and now, years later, we see that is not the case and Uber and Lyft are able to increase and decrease their rates at will, while taxi drivers are not allowed to do the same. This, combined with the increased cost of gas along with city-mandated requirements like cameras and 24-hr commercial insurance not required of ride-hail drivers, leaves taxi



drivers earning less and less. Meter rates are set by the City partly to ensure that drivers can make a living wage. The City reduced those wages six years ago and has not reviewed them since.

It is critical that the City of Toronto consider the barriers faced by this community, and work to ensure that these barriers are bridged or removed. To support this, staff and drivers alike must work together to repair their strained relationship in an effort to build solutions and continue to foster taxi drivers in Toronto.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. City Council directs the General Manager, Municipal Licensing and Standards, in partnership with Technical Services, to invite the Toronto Ombudsman to review the digital portal used by taxi drivers and brokerages to submit forms, data, as well as other critical materials to ensure accessibility and equity, considering possible language or technical barriers and their solutions and to provide a report to the General Government and Licensing Committee by the first quarter of 2023.
2. City Council direct the General Manager, Municipal Licensing and Standards to enlist a third-party mediator for all working groups or large consultation meetings with taxi stakeholders to facilitate productive discussions.
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Municipal Licensing and Standards, to restore the drop fare of taxi meters to \$4.25, as it was in 2015, in order to respond to the cost of inflation and the rising cost of gas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



**Kristyn Wong-Tam**  
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