

Dear

I am writing to you with great concern, seeking your guidance and vote.

The current state of accessible on-demand Vehicle for Hire and Taxi Services is dire. People are struggling to get rides in a timely fashion, often stranded with no options to return home, and much of the time, there are no vehicles available at all. For a city with the largest disability population in Canada, consisting of residents, visitors and tourists, this is not an acceptable standard.

It is our understanding that 75% of the existing accessible vehicles across all platforms are expected to reach their service lifespan in the next 12 months. As a result, we are on the brink of complete system collapse if city councilors do not intervene.

We have an opportunity to fix this problem as the city is currently reviewing its Vehicle for Hire and Taxi Services by-laws. The disability community has been very vocal in the consultation process and has shared concerns and solutions to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) as well as the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division (MLS). Our city is at risk of a broken accessible transportation service once again.

We are respectfully requesting your support and influence toward accessible on-demand transportation services in Toronto. Attached to this letter are specific recommendations we have shared with TAAC, MLS, and other councilors.

At your earliest convenience, I would appreciate meeting with you to discuss this matter and explore how we can work together to improve accessible Vehicle for Hire and Taxi Services in Toronto in a sustainable fashion.

I look forward to connecting with you and discussing these matters in greater detail.

Sincerely,

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A centralized dispatch system, proposed by MLS must provide an adequate supply of accessible vehicles to accommodate the industry standard ten-minute wait time 24/7. The current Accessibility Fund should not be used to pay for this system. The city should negotiate with existing companies while ensuring the Accessibility Fund is solely for conversion costs and strategies for more accessible vehicles on the road.
- MLS should develop regulations that provide greater incentives for drivers with accessible vehicles. Every effort should be made to attract drivers using sedans to choose accessible vehicles.
- A by-law should be developed, ensuring every transportation company must develop accessible service at 15% of their entire fleet in the first year and work toward 50% within five years.
- The centralized system should not exempt any transportation company or brokerage from developing accessible service fleets equitable to their total fleet sizes.
- Wheelchair users should be able pre-arrange the same service provider for return rides when traveling from another municipality back to Toronto.
- The City should explore the current state of Taxi insurance to address unaffordable policy premiums.
- All transportation platforms are required to outsource or develop accessible safety training modules to all drivers. All curriculums must be approved by MLS.

## **ACCESSIBILITY FUND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- A minimum of \$40,000 should be provided by the Accessibility Fund toward conversions of new accessible vehicles upfront for seven years with the conversion companies being on board in offering 0% financing for the remaining cost of the vehicle over seven years.
- The Accessibility Fund should provide a one-time grant to drivers operating accessible vehicles for 10 years at 100% over seven years with the ability to hire employees.
- The application for the Accessibility Fund should be available to new accessible transportation drivers, both within brokerage and private transportation companies, with equal incentives.