

February 7, 2017

His Worship and City Council
City of London
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, Ontario
N6A 4L9

Dear Mayor Brown and Members of London City Council:

As a Western student attending school here in London, I would like to voice my concerns to Council over the proposed Vehicle for Hire bylaw.

I would like to begin by stating that while I may be acting and speaking as an individual resident of this City, I believe that my thoughts on this topic are widely held by the silent majority of students who everyday rely on Uber to provide safe, convenient and affordable transportation across this City.

As a firm believer that government should be a force for good in peoples lives, I certainly expect the City to ensure that basic regulations of the ride sharing industry are in place to protect both the safety of passengers and drivers. As a consumer I would hope that drivers have gone through sufficient background checks, carry the necessary insurance and keep their vehicle well maintained. However anyone who has used a ride sharing service will be able to tell you just how unnecessary and unrealistic mandating the installation of interior cameras is. That is precisely why not one of the 70 jurisdictions from around the world that have passed ride sharing regulations requiring the installation of cameras inside of the vehicle. Unfortunately, the lobbyists representing the taxi industry have decided to capitalize upon the terrible incident that took place late last year by playing on our fears, in a desperate attempt to shut down their competition. We are better then this.

The taxi industry frequently uses the talking points that they “want everyone to play by the same rules”. They make it seam like they welcome the competition as long as Uber has to comply with the same regulations that they do. We all however know that the taxi industry has been seeking to have Uber kicked out of their turf since they first began their operations in

the City. What the industry fails to recognize is that Uber's service varies so differently from the service that taxi's provide that it would be impossible to hold them to the same standards. The difference between the service provided by cabbies versus the one that is provided by Uber, have about the same similarities as night and day. On one hand you have an expensive, out dated, and archaic service and on the other hand you have an affordable, innovative and modern service.

The current taxi licensing system is broken. It really has not worked well for anyone. The current model has allowed cabbies to enjoy a monopoly on the market, leaving little choice for the consumer, who is left paying a high price for a sub-par service. At the same time, taxi drivers are forced to pay outrageous amounts of money in leasing fees to what I consider an oligarchical cartel because they are made up of only a handful of individuals and families who control the majority of outstanding licences. In Toronto we have seen taxi drivers engage in deplorable acts of violence such as blocking emergency vehicles, assaulting Uber drivers and even comparing Uber to "ISIS". Cabbies need to understand that their anger is misguided, and if they want to remain competitive in the digital economy they need to change their business model. There is no way around it. If the industry continues to operate the way that it does, it will cease to exist in under 10 years. Acting violent or immature does not help their cause at all, in fact it weakens it.

As both a frequent user of Uber and as someone who follows this debate closely, I have had many conversations with drivers. I recall one conversation with a driver who had just arrived in Canada a few years ago. He told me that his wife's income is not sufficient to support his family, but he can not take on a part-time job because someone much remain at home with his two young children. Because his wife's schedule is always changing it would be impossible for them to both commit to working outside the house. Because of Uber he is able to choose when to work, which allows him to earn some extra money to support his family. I have many friends who thanks to Uber are able to work around their school schedule so they can bring in a little extra money at the end of the week to help pay the bills. I hear stories like this all of the time. I think it should be noted that any member of Council who votes for the proposed by-law as is, will be directly negatively affecting the livelihoods of hundreds of people.

As mentioned earlier Londoners do want to see basic safety regulations implemented. But above all it is clear that they are no longer willing to fork over \$15 or \$20 for a 10 minute ride. Consumers no longer want to have to dial up a phone number when they can request a ride with a press of a button. They no longer want to pay an extra fee for making payment with a debit or credit card. Across this City students rely on Uber to get them around, for an affordable price. Having the convenience of having a car without having to pay the high cost of insurance, fuel and maintenance has changed so much for so many people. By voting to essentially take these benefits away, it would be a tremendous deserve to the residences of this City.

Thanks to all of you for your continued commitment to innovation,

Chris Poulos