
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Memorandum CLS-M03-2019 Update on Meeting with Taxi Operators For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 7, 2019



To: Mayor Hewitt and Members of Council
From: Evelyn Eichenbaum, Manager, Citizen & Legislative Services/Clerk

At the March 26, 2019 Council in Committee meeting, a housekeeping amendment to the Hired Vehicle Licensing By-law was presented that allows current licensed owners to transfer a licence plate to a new owner without having to transfer a licensed vehicle. This amendment provides an additional means in which licensed owners can divest themselves of their vehicles or of their licences where they are looking to sell or reduce the scope of their business. During the related discussion, members of Council raised a concern about residents finding it difficult to get a taxicab at certain times – especially on weekends. Related to that issue, it was suggested that a review of the limit on the number of licences issued may be warranted, and that by opening up the number of licences available, the needs of the community may be better served.

Staff were asked to meet with licensed owners to advise them of the concern and of the potential review of the quota system that is currently used for determining the number of licences issued in Haldimand County. Staff set a meeting for Friday, April 26, 2019 and advised all licensed owners of the meeting with a few weeks' notice and most owners indicated that they would be able to attend. On April 26th there were 3 owners in attendance representing 2 of the 7 companies that operate taxis in the County and representing 12 of 28 licensed vehicles. One other owner sent his regrets.

In addition to the Manager, Citizen & Legislative Services, the Manager, Building & Municipal Enforcement Services and the Licensing Officer were also in attendance at the meeting. A brief overview of Council's concern and potential review of the current licensing framework were provided to those in attendance. Owners spoke to concerns that they have regarding "no-shows" when responding to calls, and to the difficulty of servicing the entire County area. Some utilize a pre-pay system where a booking for a return trip is paid in advance to ensure that it doesn't result in a "no-show". One company that operates only 2 vehicles says that there is more business to be had, but by being limited to 2 vehicles, he is unable to commit to certain business due to lack of capacity. When discussing potential removal of the quota system, concern was expressed about the potential lowering of the value of taxi businesses. Further discussion focused on the value of a business being based on the quality of service provided rather than the number of vehicles in the fleet. Meeting notes were subsequently distributed to all licensed taxi owners for reference.

Additionally, there has been some discussion at Council about potentially hosting Uber in the County, and a ride-sharing by-law may be required to facilitate that model.

If Council wishes to consider a change to the operating framework for hired vehicles, i.e. expansion or elimination of the quota system for licences issued, as well as consider the establishment of a local ride-sharing model, staff will report back with information upon receiving such direction from Council.