

Directed to: Mayor Joe Preston and Members of City Council

Date Authored:
October 22, 2020
Meeting Date:
Nov 16, 2020

Department: Environmental Services

Attachment

Prepared By: Tracey Tiersma, Administrative Assistant Environmental Services

Subject: **Proposed Elimination of the Taxi By-Law**

Recommendation:

THAT: Report No. ES56-20 relating to the Proposed Elimination of the Taxi By-Law 145-2013 be received for information; and further,

THAT: Council authorize staff to begin a public engagement process to review repealing the Taxi-By-Law 145-2013.

Background:

Taxi licensing by-laws originated in the early to mid-20th century as a means to control competition between ‘vehicles for hire’ through fixed pricing, limiting the number of vehicle registrations, and imposing annual inspections and restrictions on both brokers and operators.

The increasing popularity of ride-sharing concepts has challenged the need for current policies in favour of adopting a more open market philosophy. Instead of simply modifying the existing by-law incrementally to keep up with the rapidly changing behaviours and patterns within this transportation area, the proposal is to eliminate the Taxi-By-law entirely. Neither Federal or Provincial regulations stipulate the requirement of a municipal ‘vehicle for hire’ by-law, nor is this mandated within the *Municipal Act, 2001* framework.



Repealing By-Law 145-2013 will result in a variety of benefits. Existing taxi drivers will not be encumbered by annual licensing requirements. This will eliminate staffing requirements and costs associated with the current process. The City would no longer oversee for the regulation of vehicles for hire, which is already under the jurisdiction of the Province’s Ministry of Transportation under the *Highway Traffic Act*. Provincial legislation dictates public safety requirements such as licensing, emission controls, insurance, the safe operation as well as the fit condition of motor vehicles. Furthermore, the regulation of price and consumer protection isn’t a municipal function and therefore should no longer determined by the City.

Repealing By-Law 145-2013 will usher St. Thomas into a more modern framework that allows ridesharing programs, limousines, vehicles for hire and taxis to operate, without prejudice, in an arena that should be dictated by supply, demand and consumer choice, without municipal interference. Transportation Network Companies (“TNCs”) such as Uber and Lyft are not regulated by the current By-Law. They operate independently but follow stringent safety measures and driver screening processes. These companies also follow guidance from health experts for the health and safety of the all those using their platforms. By relaxing the municipal regulations, established Taxi brokers will follow suit to remain both compliant and competitive. The elimination of the City’s outdated regulations will allow for the forces of competition to shape how the ‘vehicle for hire’ industry will evolve.

Conclusions & Next Steps:

If City Council has interest in repealing By-Law 145-2013, staff suggest that a public engagement be undertaken after which the feedback and findings will be included in a follow-up report.

Respectfully Submitted,



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