

Transport Legislation (Taxi Services) Amendment Bill 2015

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Position: Taxi Driver (Full-time)

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IBNRC

I have been driving taxis for 16 years, on and off. I am also a painter, and drive taxis to supplement my work as a painter. Over the past three months, I have been driving four (4) nights a week (occasionally five), Monday through Thursday, and prior to that Friday and Saturday nights also. There is now not enough work to make Friday and Saturday nights worthwhile, and these should be our busiest nights.

I strongly urge the Committee to adopt the recommendations of this amendment and introduce demerit points, at very least, for drivers of illegal taxi services. These illegals are ruining our industry, and ruining family incomes for many who depend on it. There will soon be no taxi industry left if something is not done.

It is my personal experience that the income I earn has decreased by 50% compared to a year ago – but most of that has occurred in the last six to eight months. That is when things started to get really bad. The clients that we really rely on as night drivers – young and social – have moved to uber. Even office workers are turning to uber. Some office-workers even work for uber part-time – working eight hours in the city for a day job, then jumping in their cars to work at night.

**Fatigue Management**

The practices of uber drivers do not meet the standards required of drivers of regulated taxis. For example, we have to abide by very strict guidelines for **fatigue management**, where we can only drive for a maximum of 16 hours in any 24 hour period. These are guidelines monitored closely by the Department of Transport. And yet there is nothing to prevent uber drivers for driving for however long they want. This has no regard for passenger safety – something which regular cabs have to spend a lot of money complying with. How can this occur? How can one group be so closely regulated, and another, not at all?

**Costs to taxis, but none to uber**

Although they pay nothing in fees or taxes, they coat-tail on legal taxi infrastructure. For example, they are always picking up clients from the top end-end of cab ranks (sometimes even from the rank itself!). The taxi industry has to pay a security levy to monitor cab ranks late at night – but uber drivers come, use the facility, and pay nothing. Moreover, they create all sorts of traffic issues when they do this, they create congestion and bad visibility for real cab drivers, and they are not punished for any of it.

How could it be possible to even begin to compete with the illegals with them having no costs?

**Unsafe driving practices by Uber Drivers**

We see uber drivers constantly using their uber-provided smart devices as they are driving – which is a traffic offence. Some of them drop the device into their laps so they cannot be detected by Department of Transport inspectors and use it from their laps while they are driving.

Not being trained drivers, they are also always breaking road rules; doing u-turns in the middle of a street, turning without indicating, turning from the wrong lane.

The inner city, on Friday and Saturday night, is so congested because of uber drivers – it has become a very unsafe place to drive.

**Surge-charging**

The uber practice of surge-charging in busy periods is very confusing, as the charge varies, and is completely contrary to the fixed prices legal taxis are able to charge. Our fares are monitored closely, like everything else we do.

As drivers in the taxis industry, we are in immediate danger of losing our livelihoods and the means to support our families. It has already happened in a big way, our incomes have been slashed by up to half and we do not know where it will stop. We are so confused as to why the Government, who makes a lot of money from the taxi industry, has done nothing to stop this.