



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
POLICE SERVICES BOARD

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October 13, 2015

The Honourable Steven Del Duca
Minister of Transportation
77 Wellesley Street West
3rd Floor
Ferguson Block
Toronto, ON
M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister Del Duca:

On behalf of the Regional Municipality of Niagara Police Services Board and as Chair of the Board's Licensing Committee, I am writing to urge you to support legislation which will enable our Board and Police Service to deal more effectively with the illegal taxi industry in Niagara.

The Board licenses among others, taxicab owners, brokers, and drivers. The licensing provisions are in place solely for reasons of public safety to ensure that vehicles are safe and appropriately insured, and to ensure that drivers do not pose a risk to the public.

The illegal taxi industry operates entirely outside of the Board Licensing By-law, and therefore is not subject to any of the public safety controls in the By-law.

The Board through the Licensing Unit of the Niagara Regional Police Service, and through its lawyers, have charged, prosecuted and convicted hundreds of illegal taxi drivers. The penalties available in accordance with existing legislation are fines, and these fines have not proven to be an effective deterrent against illegal taxi drivers.

The Board has also pursued injunctions and contempt proceedings against brokers operating these illegal businesses. We have been successful in obtaining jail terms against some. However, jail has not proven an effective deterrent.

It seems that one of the reasons that fines and jail sentences are not an effective deterrent is related to the amount of money at stake in the illegal taxi industry. An investigation over 5 years ago by the Niagara Regional Police Service concluded that income in excess of \$1.5 million dollars in the Niagara Region alone was being syphoned off by the illegal taxi industry. No taxes are paid on this money, and the money is taken directly from the legal taxi industry which complies with the public safety requirements in the Board By-law.

The key difficulty facing the Board and the Police Service is the lack of enforcement tools in existing legislation. The result is that public safety is put at risk on a daily basis in Niagara and elsewhere through the operation of the illegal taxi businesses.

We need strong legislation which will allow police officers in the Licensing Unit to suspend the driver's license of illegal taxi drivers, and to impound their vehicles.

The Board shares the Ministry's commitment to transportation safety of all citizens within Ontario. Your consideration of legislative amendments to allow for suspension of licenses and impounding of vehicles will assist all licensing agencies in dealing with the illegal taxi industry, and will significantly enhance public safety.

The Board appreciates your review of this matter and looks forward to your response.

Yours very truly,



Andy Petrowski
Vice Chair and Licensing Committee Chair
Regional Municipality of Niagara Police Services Board

AP:dm

- c. The Honourable Yasir Naqvi, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services
Mr. Jim Bradley, MPP, St. Catharines
Mr. Wayne Gates, MPP, Niagara Falls
Mr. Tim Hudak, MPP, Niagara West-Glanbrook
Ms. Cindy Forster, MPP, Welland
Mr. Russ Bain, President, Ontario Association of Police Services Boards
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Mayor April Jeffs, Town of Wainfleet
Mayor Frank Campion, City of Welland
Mayor Douglas Joyner, Town of West Lincoln
Chair and Members, Niagara Police Services Board
Chief of Police J. McGuire, Niagara Regional Police Service
Detective Constable Micheal Webb, Issuer of Licenses, Niagara Regional Police Service