

Item No. 5.3.2

Submitted by Mr. Dave Buffett, Halifax Taxi Drivers Owners Association, on January 27, 2014

Dear Standing Transportation Committee members.

This presentation was prepared as a result of hundreds of volunteer hours on the part of the board members of the Drivers association.

It is intended for the taxi/Limousine Committee on January 28th and HON. Kevin S. Murphy Speaker of the House and Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia on January 29th.

Transportation Committee on February 5th.

Our intention is to enlighten provincial officials of the need to provide direction to HRM staff with regards to section 305(4)(d) in an effort to provide PWD with service in all HRM taxi zones.

Permitting accessible taxis to operate in any zone means all but three choose the Halifax zone refusing to service the outer zones and when they do the wait times are longer then if all zones had zone restricted accessible cabs.

Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Presentation

The current legislation is flawed in that it simply states there shall be no limit on the number of accessible vans.

This does not put a requirement on putting these in service.

The result is that in the HRM drivers buy accessible taxis simply to get a Halifax rooflight and only four of the over thirty accessible taxis pick up persons with a wheelchair.

Municipal staff insists that they are not permitted to assign them to zones with the result being that Dartmouth and the county are greatly under serviced.

These drivers have simply taken advantage of provincial legislation.

Several have been bought by people who have no intention of driving these vans but only to rent them to other drivers.

The Drivers Association has studied policies in other Canadian cities and we recommend the following changes province wide.

* Taxi fleets in the province that have less than ten cabs should be required to have one accessible van and those with more the ten should have ten percent accessible vans.

*As the largest municipality in the province all new taxi licenses in the HRM should be accessible vans equipped to carry two chairs simultaneously. The Dodge Grand Caravan is an example of a van capable of this. As the population ages we will see more and more senior citizens with walkers and canes many of these people refuse to travel in a van taxi primarily because of the height so all current sedans should be replaced with sedans.

*Persons with disabilities are not second class citizens yet provincial laws and municipal bi laws do not recognize that with public transportation. There are currently no accessible limousines in the HRM with the result being the next ten limousines being replaced should be wheelchair accessible limousines with a capacity of two chairs and all additional limousines should meet that standard of accessibility.

*In all municipalities with taxi zones accessible vans should be divided equally among zones to ensure that all are not in one area leaving others under serviced.

* All new and replacement accessible vans must be capable of carrying two wheelchairs properly secured at all times. This can be done by folding the seats in vans so equipped.

*All accessible vans must display permanent signage stating that the vehicle is wheelchair accessible in block letters not less than three inches (seventy five millimeters) in size on all sides of the van.

* If a driver does not secure the chair with four restraints and seatbelt harness before moving the vehicle he or she is fined the equivalent of a no seat belt infraction.

*Accessible vans must be dispatched in the same manner as conventional cabs. The current system of giving a caller a list of phone numbers to call is totally non acceptable. There are far more accessible cabs then the number required by the PWD community. Person's dependant on a wheelchair we surveyed found it outrageous that they cannot request a cab in the typical manner.

In addition this will provide a method of tracking which drivers are refusing these calls. Dave Buffett is attending a Human Rights conference in February part of which will be to ensure that refusal to pickup persons confined to a wheelchair will be the equivalent of refusing service animals.