

# Taxi drivers to get raise

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The three from McKab Taxi, EZ Taxi and G'Town Taxi originally asked for \$1.86/kilometre rate, and change to the seniors discount to 10%, which they say would have brought fares more in line with Burlington. Rates in Milton and Oakville, which are not changing due to the HST, are \$3.25 drop rate and \$1.50/km in the former community and \$3 drop rate and \$1.73/km in the latter.

The taxi companies say that on a typical day, a driver in Oakville and Burlington earns \$23 and \$44 more for the same numbers of calls and kilometers driven and that for a typical day a Halton Hills taxi driver makes \$10.30/hr, and with now the HST added in, that would have dropped to \$9.30/hr.

One company owner told committee members, "We can't keep just tightening our belts constantly year after year. It's getting tougher and tougher to maintain the cars and it gets tougher and tougher to entice the drivers to come work for us when they can go to McDonalds and flip burgers for more money."

All Halton Region towns offer a 10 per cent seniors discount but with restrictions. Halton Hills is the only municipality of the surrounding towns that imposes a 20 per cent seniors discount— and without re-

strictions.

Mayor Rick Bonnette did not support lowering the seniors discount, noting that besides Activan there is no transit in Halton Hills. But he did motion that the discount should be applied to in-town trips only, noting some seniors were using the 20 per cent discount for trips to the Mohawk casino. Council approved that motion.

It will cost the Halton Hills taxi companies, \$35/meter to change its meters— a cost they will have to absorb.

Meanwhile Halton Hills council continued its moratorium on issuing more taxi licence plates until staff studies the issue in more depth.

Originally committee had lifted the moratorium, but reconsidered after an outcry by the town's taxi company owners and drivers. They say an unlimited licensing system would lead to a dramatic reduction in the current Town-controlled taxi industry, lower incomes for the drivers and company owners, frequent driver turnover, inexperienced drivers, and possible reduced maintenance and quality of the taxi service.

Town staff will return to committee at a future meeting with a recommendation on this issue.

*'...it gets tougher and tougher to entice the drivers to come work for us when they can go to McDonalds and flip burgers for more money.'*

—Taxi company owner

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