

HST, gas prices behind taxi fare hike

A one-way trip to the airport is now going to cost Whitchurch-Stouffville residents about \$100.

Council approved a rate hike of five cents per 200 metres, as well as a 35 cent increase to a cab's starting rate Tuesday night. The new rates took effect immediately.

"The taxi industry has requested a reasonable rate increase to offset additional costs due to the recent rise in gasoline prices and to reflect their added operating costs since the introduction of the HST in 2010," wrote Colleen Clarke, licensing and public services co-ordinator for the town in her June 7 report to council.

This is the first increase to local taxi tariffs since 2007.

A typical five-kilometre ride, such as a round-trip to the grocery store or bank, will now cost \$12.70, while a 50-km trip, such as one-way to Pearson Airport, is now \$102.70. It was \$89.90.

"(The) longer trip (rate) reflects the fact that the fare is going outside of the municipi-

pality. Whitchurch-Stouffville taxi cab drivers are forced to return empty, which significantly affects their net income," Ms Clarke wrote.

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Local taxi drivers will also no longer be charging an hourly rate.

According to Ms Clarke, through a survey, drivers indicated they did not use the hourly rate and most neighbouring municipalities do not provide one.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's new taxi rates are now the same as Aurora's and less than Newmarket, which has a pick-up rate of \$3.50 and a fee of 40 cents per 200 m. Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan all have a starting rate of \$4.25 and charge 25 cents per 143 m.

— Sandra Bolan



PHOTO:STEPHANIE WEST

The full-service Beaver gas station at Main Street and West Lawn Crescent is expected to close this summer and re-open as a self-serve Shell station in October.

BUSINESS: Mayor wants province to act

Loss of full-serve gas stations hurts seniors, disabled: town

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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When Main Street's Beaver gas station re-opens in October under the Shell name, disabled drivers will have to call ahead for assistance at the pumps.

Shell Canada has received site plan approval from the town to overhaul the site and develop a 1,984-square-foot convenience store with four gas pumps, all of which will be self serve.

No date was given for the closure, which is expected to take place this summer.

This move leaves Stouffville residents with one full-serve station, the Petro-Canada at Main Street and Tenth Line and a couple of councillors concerned.

"The push has to be from our accessibility committees to say something to the province of Ontario to consider the disability of anybody," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

Councillor Phil Bannon said calling ahead is a disconnect, especially since the municipality is trying to create a barrier-free town.


Under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, all municipalities must work towards the prevention, identification and removal of barriers on municipal properties that restrict opportunities for people with disabilities.

Shell Canada's policy on assisting the disabled at self-serve stations is this: "staff will make every effort to help customers displaying disabled parking permits with refuelling. Please identify yourself to one of our gas station attendants. We also encourage you to contact your local station to discuss your individual needs as some stations have limited staff and payment access."

Mr. Bannon noted people can't always plan ahead when it comes to running out of gas.

Mr. Emmerson also said it is not just drivers with mobility issues who are affected, who cannot easily enter or exit a vehicle, but it's also seniors who can't squeeze the pump.

A report is expected to come to council in September regarding the overall issue of barrier-free accessibility for gas stations.



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