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BrunsBits

- Number of Brunxies who are involved in writing BrunsBits: one
- Number of Brunxies who care about BrunsBits: zero
- Number of people who read BrunsBits: if you got this far, at least one.
- Reason why we do it: It's this or weekend weather.

Fare wars hurting taxi business

by Jonathan Stone

Low taxi fares may be good for students, but for some drivers it's a big headache, as they may bring home no more than \$50 in a 12-hour day.

There has been a 'fare war' going on for the last while, with prices for some cabs as low as \$2.25 for as many people as you can fit in the car.

"It's been going back and forth for the last month or so," said Don Webster, owner of Checker Cab, which runs about 45 vehicles.

"We advertise the fact that we will not be undercut, especially on campus. If the other guy can do it, we can do it cheaper," he said.

This is particularly a problem for independent drivers who own their own cars, they now earn less fares while maintenance and gas prices remain unchanged.

"They make a decent dollar at the end of the shift. With the low fares, it's just a lot more work," said Webster.

"The taxi service will continue in the city, so if a few of them are frustrated, then they should make their concerns known to somebody, and try to get resolution," said Tony Cameron, Chairman of the Police Committee which formed the present taxi bylaws.

Checker's company drivers operate on commission, taking 40% of all fares earned in one shift. This way, if a driver has a bad shift, they pay less for the car.

Other companies, like Trius, rent their vehicles to drivers for a fee. Although fares drop, the rental fee remains the same, so the drivers take the crunch.

"We've been through this for years and years, it's just structured, bureaucratic destruction of the industry, and it's being created by the people who are in the business," said Cameron.

This raises the question: Why are the taxis in Fredericton not metered as they are in most urban centres?

"People are afraid of the system in Fredericton, they don't like the click of the meter," said Cameron.

Webster agrees. "What we really need is for the city to enforce the meter system. That would solve a lot of problems."

"That's the system we should have. I think we're coming to it. We've been trying to implement the metered system in the city for a number of years," said Cameron.

"It's an antiquated system, it's blatantly unfair. It doesn't make any sense. The further away you are from Queen Street, the more it costs you," he added.

He cited a man from Marysville who complained that it cost him eight or nine dollars to travel approximately two kilometres.



Because of the current fare wars between companies, some of the city's taxi drivers are forced to work long hours just to make a decent day's earnings. Photo by Mark Bray

"Meters would be better for everybody. Maybe the drivers would make a little more. Maybe we'd have less taxis competing for a smaller market," said Cameron.

The City would also like to see meters because it would increase bus ridership, but the problem in the past is that not all cab companies want meters.

"The taxi companies haven't really got together to talk about things for at least a year, because of differences that we had earlier," said Webster.

Cameron said that the city's weakness in the whole issue is that it has not been doing very much enforcement of the taxi bylaw. Specifically, it does not enforce the single fare rule, as many companies will take multiple fares.

It is possible to call for a 'private' cab, but it will probably cost more.

Cameron said that if budget allows, the position of a bylaw enforcement officer will be created to "clean-up some of the frustrations that we've had in the system."

"One of the reasons is that city council has not had the courage to implement that system. It's been brought up as an option I would say at least once every year or so for the last five years and I'm sure it was addressed before that."

The City of Fredericton may yet implement a metered taxi system which would likely raise prices for students.

Last year, a referendum at St. Thomas University to find out if students wanted a 12-month bus pass on their student cards failed.

The UNB Student Union will not consider this option until some guarantees of improved bus service can be made by Fredericton Transit.

Aitken revisited: NB Coalition of Women's request of Police review denied

by Cheryl McLean

Attorney General Edmond Blanchard has rejected a request for a formal inquiry of police procedures from the NB Coalition of Women's Groups.

The coalition's request came after an incident at Aitken House where a young woman was charged with mischief after falsely reporting a sexual assault.

The coalition feels it is not right that the young woman in question is being charged as this may deter other women from making future reports of sexual assault.

According to Blanchard's letter of response, his review of police files reveals that the Fredericton City Police have a video-taped statement from the young woman claiming that the things she had told the police were false.

The letter states that in the video-tape the girl said, "The things I have told the police are not the truth. The reason for doing so was I was uncomfortable with the situation that I had been in."

Blanchard said he is satisfied that the police conducted a thorough investigation and that the criticism from the women's groups is not warranted in this case.

Furthermore, the Crown has recommended that the mischief charge be diverted.

"Anyone who makes a false complaint of sexual assault is not only committing a criminal offense but is also doing a great disservice to genuine complaints," Blanchard stated.

This individual case may be over, but the doubts and questions it generated will be with UNB students for a long time to come.

Another assault in residence reported

Brunswickian staff

The Fredericton City Police are investigating an allegation of sexual assault which was reported early Monday morning.

The assault apparently occurred on October 15, in one of UNB's residences.

Police confirm that they have identified a suspect in the case, and that the victim knew her attacker.

No charges have yet been laid, and Police say no further information will be available until next week.

The Bruns would like to remind you to go out and vote on October 25. Be a real Canadian. Support Democracy. Whatever that is.