

News about Policy Changes Related to Uber in Toronto and Waterloo, 2014-2016

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this media scan was to document how the Canadian media covered policy changes in the on-demand transport sector (also known as ridesharing). We conducted this scan as part of a three-year study funded by the Canadian Institute for Health Research on emerging conditions for occupational health risk and regulation for Uber drivers, passengers, and other key players. In this media scan we focus on media coverage of Waterloo, Ontario and Toronto, Ontario rideshare sectors.

CONTEXT

In 2014, Uber launched several platform-based services in southern Ontario, including UberX, a low-cost app-based transport option. By 2016, city councils and municipal authorities in various cities had developed and unveiled new licensing regulations to allow Uber drivers to operate legally alongside traditional taxi and limousine services. New bylaws also affected licensing frameworks in traditional taxi and limousine sectors.

METHODS

Using the Google News search engine, the media scan used a custom search query by date (January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2016) and the following keyword search terms: “Uber regulations Toronto” and “Uber regulations Waterloo”. We did not review duplicate news items (i.e., articles that mentioned identical events). In total, we identified 56 news article from 16 news sources

News Source	2014	2015	2016
CBC News		10	2
CP24	1		
Driving			1
Global News	6	1	1
Globe and Mail		1	
Inside Toronto			2
MacLean's	1		
Metro News Toronto	2		
National Post	4		
Now Magazine	1		
PRLeap.com			1
Rabble.ca			1
Torontoist			1
Toronto Life	1		
Toronto Star	9	1	5
Waterloo Region Record	1	3	5
Year total	26	15	19
	Total = 56		

OUTLINE

We tracked media coverage from 2014, when Uber launched UberX in Toronto, to 2016, when the city of Toronto unveiled new bylaws that legalized app-based ‘rideshare’ platforms. In what follows, we provide yearly summaries of key media coverage, followed by more detailed views of news coverage.

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2014 Uber launches in Toronto

Early 2014 Uber's "taxi" service enrolls licensed taxi and limousine drivers onto the Uber app. The taxi industry and city regard Uber drivers as unlicensed drivers. Uber faces numerous licensing violations. Uber sets fare rates that violate Toronto bylaws. Risks flagged by different parties include lack of driver training, questionable insurance coverage, and customer privacy.

Sept 2014

UberX—a low-cost rideshare option—is unveiled in Toronto and Mississauga, dispatching licensed, personal vehicles for passengers.

Nov 2014

Mayor John Tory, who is an Uber proponent, is at cross-hairs with City of Toronto licensing officials. The City gains a court injunction against Uber on basis of safety concerns and bylaw violations.

2014 Uber's base fare is \$2.75 plus 90 cents per km and 30 cents per min. There is a \$1 surcharge towards safety training. Drivers pay 20% fee to Uber for each ride.

Select taxi driver requirements (2014)

- Bi-annual vehicle inspections
- Licence program includes 17-day training course, refresher every four years
- Five year criminal, traffic, and DUI record checks

Uber 'driver partner' requirements (2014)

- Driver age: from 21 years of age
- Personal vehicle insurance
- Lifetime criminal, traffic, and DUI record checks
- Vehicle no older than 2005

2015 Year Snapshot

2015 City of Toronto changes stance on Uber. Uber launches in southern Ontario cities like Waterloo and Hamilton.

July 2015 City of Toronto loses case for injunction against Uber because ruling found current bylaws do not apply to Uber. Courts decided that Uber's services did not meet the definition of "taxi cab brokerage" or "limousine services" under current bylaws.

July 2015 UberX launches in the Waterloo region and across southern Ontario.

Waterloo Region proposes a bylaw to regulate ride sharing. Uber vehicles would be considered "auxiliary" taxi cab services. In interim, drivers are charged with bylaw violations.

May 2015 Uber applies for taxi brokerage license in Toronto.
Discourse about "leveling the playing field" is prominent.

Sept 2015 City of Toronto undertakes licensing review and Council approves new amendment to Municipal Code whereby Uber is defined as a "private transportation company" (PTC) and Uber drivers would be licensed by the city as private vehicles-for-hire. Requires overhaul to municipal licensing bylaws.

Oct 2015 Ontario MPP Tim Hudak proposes Private Member's Bill before provincial legislature that would legalize the sharing economy in Ontario.

[Jump to 2015 Detailed View](#)

2016 New Toronto bylaws are unveiled. UberEats and UberPool launch in Toronto.

July 2016 New Toronto bylaws come into effect. Rideshare drivers must acquire municipal licenses. Taxi base fares are lowered to \$3.25. New bylaws permit surge pricing, but taxi companies are unwilling to use it. Uber adopts new insurance policy in Ontario under Intact, but does not cover UberEats delivery.

Dec 2016 New bylaw comes into effect for Waterloo Region that allows rideshare services to operate legally.

Jan 2016 Ontario government approves specialized 'add-on' commercial auto **insurance** policies for rideshare providers. Companies offering this insurance include Aviva and Intact. Uber Canada promotes Intact's services for drivers. UberEats drivers are not covered. Drivers still must inform personal auto insurance providers of commercial use of the vehicle.

Nov 2016 UberEats angers delivery workers when their delivery rates are cut overnight by 35%.

Jump to [2016 Detailed View](#)

2014 Detailed View

<p>Feb</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber taxi offers discounted rates in contravention of Toronto’s bylaws to see if lower fares will increase demand. Toronto bylaws prohibit charging less than the meter rate. Uber has more than 30 licensing charges. Uber denies being a taxi or limo brokerage (Feb 24, Cross, Metro)</p>
<p>June</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber rep clarifies that Uber only works with municipally licensed taxi and limousine drivers in Toronto. Taxi companies pressured to develop apps to compete with Uber. Beck Taxi released a app before Uber and Hailo, but only generated 17% of their business. Critics say that Uber app targets people who have expensive smartphones and credit cards, so it is cutting access to those who don’t use that technology (June 13, Bogart, Global News)</p>
<p>July</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber reps in conversation with City of Toronto regarding long-term solutions for Uber operations. Uber reps also claim that the taxi industry is spreading misinformation about Uber; all Uber drivers are licensed cab drivers. (July 2, Gallant, Toronto Star)</p> <p>City of Toronto and Uber scheduled to meet. (July 10, Lu, Toronto Star)</p>
<p>Sept</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber launches UberX, a cheaper service, in Toronto and Mississauga. Base fare of \$2.75 plus 90 cents per km and 30 cents per min. \$1 surcharge towards safety training. UberX drivers pay 20% fee to company. Main issues from City: driver training; city issued license; city-mandated vehicle inspection; insurance. (Sept 8, 2014, Lu, Toronto Star)</p>
<p>Oct</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber pre-screens drivers. UberX requires passengers to pay a \$1.00 fee per ride that goes toward driver criminal background checks. Uber drivers are only required to carry personal insurance rather than commercial insurance. Uber ‘visually’ inspects vehicles. No driver testing or mechanical inspections. Vehicles must be no older than 2005 models. Uber claims to dismiss/bar drivers who violate these conditions. Uber added that it has a \$5 million insurance policy that will cover any liabilities that ordinary drivers’ insurance policies do not. (Sept 8, Lu, Toronto Star)</p>

	<p>Toronto. Taxi cabs undergo city inspections bi-annually. Why not Uber? Taxi industry welcomes competition but playing fields need to be level. (Oct 7, Judd, Global News)</p> <p>Uber users state they need to make Uber popular so regulations don't kill the business. Commonly found statement "Toronto City Hall, where innovative ideas traditionally go to die and decompose into dust." (Oct 14, Selley, National Post)</p>
<p>Nov</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber requires drivers to bring copy of driver abstract, personal vehicle insurance policy showing their name, and requires drivers to be 21 years or older (Nov 3, Holoiday, Metro News Edmonton)</p> <p>John Tory shows support for Uber. Puts out statement that undermines city licensing (Nov 19, Trafford, Global News)</p> <p>The city has said UberX poses a "serious risk to the public," citing its lack of driver training and vehicle inspections, inadequate driver insurance and its use of surge pricing, or hiking fares when demand is high. (Nov 20, Oworm, Financial Post)</p> <p>Privacy is an issue for Uber customers. Uber website features three privacy policies: one for the United States, one for South Korea, and a global catch-all for users in 48 other countries. That approach effectively lumps Canadians into a privacy policy shared by users everywhere from Beirut to Beijing to Bogota. The policy identifies certain privacy rights (and seeks to bring global users under a European Union privacy umbrella), but does nothing to ensure that it is fully compliant with Canadian privacy law standards. Interestingly, the company does have a Canada-specific user agreement, so the company's legal rights are designed to comply with Canadian law. (Nov 21, Geist, Toronto Star)</p> <p>Customers like the transparency available on the app including driver's name, licence plate and contact information, as well as a rating system. Parents feel more secure with kids using Uber due to the tracking and payment system. (Nov 21, Lu, Toronto Star)</p> <p>Uber launched UberTaxi that connects passengers with licensed taxi drivers. Taxi drivers see it as another way to make income outside of the brokerage. This is in contrast to UberX ride-sharing drivers, who are 'ordinary folk' in their own cars. (Nov 26, Wright-Howard, Now)</p> <p>On Nov 18, Toronto gets a court injunction to stop Uber from operating due to numerous bylaw infractions and safety concerns. City hires undercover investigation into Uber. Concerns about Uber's driver screening process was raised. The investigator report revealed that driver training consisted of a 15-minute video and a 10-question</p>

	<p>“true/false” quiz with no car inspection. The city’s taxi-licence program requires drivers to complete a 17-day training course, including a refresher every four years. (Nov 27, Shum, Global News)</p> <p>All Uber drivers undergo screening including a criminal background check, and every driver is rated. As for regulations, Uber is a technology company but hopes to work with policymakers to develop up to date regulations. Existing regulations never considered role of smart phones or apps she said. Canada’s Competition Bureau agrees that less restrictive policies creates healthier competition and provides consumers with greater choice. (Nov 28, Fikowski, Global News)</p>
<p>Dec</p>	<p>Toronto. Interview with Ian Black, Uber rep: “Uber does criminal background checks including sexual offenses, and has zero tolerance for any lifetime violation. For DUIs, we won’t hire anyone with an offence, ever. Some of the mainstream brokerages only go back five years, so we think ours is a safer platform. In fact, drivers from mainstream brokerages recently applied to be UberX drivers and they failed our checks. 90-95% male drivers. If a car accident injures a passenger then the driver’s personal insurance will cover the passenger and if that doesn’t cover it then the Uber policy kicks in. Uber claims they have tried to meet with regulators.” (Dec 15, Johnston, Toronto Life)</p> <p>Waterloo. Worries surrounding regulation of Uber because taxis are already hard to regulate. Local taxi driver charged with sexual assault in 2013, repeated speeding, and other driver infractions. Uber is a taxi service and ultimately should be regulated as such through taxi bylaw, which includes criminal record checks and other regulations of drivers and their vehicles. Key players feel Uber should go through the licensing committee so that taxis and Uber are on the same playing field. Number of taxi licenses is capped; licenses currently divided between five taxi brokerages. (Dec 2, Desmond, Waterloo Region Record)</p>

2015 Detailed View

May	Toronto. Uber applies for taxi brokerage license as an 'act of good faith' (May 5, CBC News Toronto)
July	<p>Toronto. "Uber wins court battle against Toronto": An Ontario Superior Court judge dismissed the City of Toronto's attempt to shut down ride-sharing company Uber on the basis that the city's bylaws do not capture the service UberX provides, and that Uber is not an illegal taxi service. Uber argued it is a communications company that connects passengers and drivers, and thus isn't subject to the city's bylaws. A judge agreed with Uber on this point. (Jul 3, Hui, Globe and Mail; Jul 4, CBC News Toronto; Competition Bureau of Canada White Paper, 2015, footnote 35)</p> <p>Waterloo. UberX launches in Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, London, Hamilton (Jul 24, CBC News KW)</p>
Aug	<p>Toronto. Poll shows Toronto residents support Uber, but think taxis are safer. (Aug 21, CBC News Toronto)</p> <p>Waterloo. Waterloo Region the first to propose a bylaw to regulate ride sharing in Ontario. The new bylaw would require all Uber drivers to have a GPS and closed circuit television system, as well as commercial auto insurance policies for a minimum of \$2 million to qualify for an auxiliary taxi driver licence. (Aug 13, 2015, Grant, CBC News KW)</p> <p>Eight taxi drivers fired by taxi companies for moonlighting for Uber in Waterloo; Mann from Waterloo Taxi Alliance claims that unlike other cities like Toronto, taxis are as cheap as Uber in Waterloo; Mann states what's at stake are "middle class jobs" (Aug 12 Mercer, Waterloo Record)</p> <p>City declares that those operating ride-sharing through Uber can be fined. But promises to have new bylaws by Jan 2016 to allow legal operation of ride-sharing services (Aug 15, Grant, CBC News KW)</p>
Sept	<p>Toronto. City releases a report (Ground Transportation Review: Taxis, Limos and Uber) on creating new regulations for taxis and ride-sharing to 'level the playing field'. City Council votes for new rules to accommodate Uber, including: a flat taxi fee of \$3.25; updating the definition of a taxicab broker to include Uber, which would then fall under city regulations as a Transportation Network Company, or TNC; a provision for a "private vehicle for-hire," essentially the UberX service; that for a TNC to acquire a licenses, it would need to provide proof of insurance, confirm that drivers have had a criminal background check and driving record screening. (Sept 30, CBC News, Toronto)</p> <p>Waterloo. Waterloo Taxi launches an app to compete with Uber (CBC News KW, 2 Sept)</p>

<p>Oct</p>	<p>Toronto. City Council approved amendments to Chapter 545, Article VIII, of the Municipal Code to ensure that Uber, and other similar companies, are covered by the bylaw and considered taxi-brokers. These provisions require taxi-brokers to use licensed taxis only. The City issued a notice to Uber informing the company that it must submit an application and become a licensed taxi-broker in order to bring their operations into compliance with the by-law. (Coun. Davis, Oct 21 Letter to Toronto MLS)</p> <p>Tim Hudak proposes a Private Members Bill (Bill 113) that would legalize the sharing economy in Ontario. The Bill is currently under committee review. (28 Oct, Toronto Star)</p> <p>Waterloo. Waterloo bylaw officers were using Uber to find and ticket drivers; bylaw officers subsequently booted from Uber app. (Oct 8, Desmond, Waterloo Record)</p> <p>Taxi bylaw overhaul continues to be stalled as Waterloo Region hears from public about new bylaw and implementation (Oct 30, Desmond, Waterloo Record)</p>
<p>Nov.</p>	<p>Toronto. Canada’s Competition Bureau releases a White Paper, “Modernizing Regulation in The Canadian Taxi Industry” argues for regulations that even the playing field while letting “forces of competition” shape ride services industries: “regulations on taxis need to be relaxed, and regulations on new providers may need to be increased to ensure that legitimate policy objectives like public safety are met”. (Nov 22, Competition Bureau) *note: this source contains key background information on taxi industries*</p> <p>Waterloo. City is overwhelmed by responses to a public poll about the new taxi and rideshare bylaw that it has had to postpone rolling out the bylaw. (3 Nov, CBC News KW)</p>

2016 Detailed View

<p>Jan</p>	<p>Toronto. Aviva Canada will be first insurance company in the country to sell supplementary insurance to Uber driver. Aviva's position now is that most UberX drivers are ride-sharing part-time, and their add-on coverage, which the company hopes to offer starting next month, isn't a commercial policy but covers driving done on a commercial basis. Coverage is capped at 20 hours a week – drivers will be asked if they plan to drive zero to 10, or 11 to 20 hours with Uber and could cost as little as \$500 per year. (Jan 6, Adler, Inside Toronto)</p>
<p>Feb</p>	<p>Toronto. Uber trying to eventually bring in driverless cars. (Feb 17, Booth, Driving)</p> <p>Waterloo. Erb and Erb now offers insurance coverage for Uber drivers; Aviva Canada developed the policy, but Erb and Erb is the first in Waterloo Region to offer it. (Feb 24, CBC News, KW) Preliminary recommendations suggest allowing ride sharing apps like Uber to operate in Waterloo using a hybrid licensing model similar to Edmonton's. (Feb 27, Desmond, The Record)</p> <p>Guidelines for the new bylaw:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation of all taxi and taxi-type services • That the bylaw include non-traditional taxis • That license limits on traditional taxis be phased out and new entrants to the market not be limited • That fares be set for taxis that provide a hail service but not for pre-booked services <p>(Feb 27, Desmond, The Record)</p>
<p>April</p>	<p>Toronto. Proposals for regulating UberX include annual inspections provincially certified garages, while cabs would still need twice-annual inspections at city-run facilities. City staff will propose a pilot project whereby cabs could be inspected at accredited private garages. Both kinds of drivers would be subject to criminal record checks but Uber, not the city, would collect the results for UberX drivers, to be presented upon request by a city inspector. The city says that it is asking to the way restaurants are responsible for ensuring servers are certified, and can be audited any time. Different kinds of UberX audits would happen daily. Cab drivers' licensing and training fees would be reduced in an effort to level the playing field. Taxi companies, which now charge regulated fares, would be allowed to discount prices on app- or phone-dispatched rides to remain competitive with Uber. Only cabs would be allowed to pick up people hailing a ride on the street. (April 7, Rider, Inside Toronto)</p> <p>Waterloo. Regional politicians voted to endorse regulations that would make Uber legal (Apr 21, Desmond, The Record)</p>

<p>May</p>	<p>Toronto. City of Toronto Council adopts major new bylaw that allows for licensing of vehicles-by-hire, which comes into effect July 2016. It would make Uber drivers operate through taxi licenses. (2016 Vehicles for Hire Bylaw; May 3, Rider & Pagliaro, Toronto Star)</p> <p>Taxi brokerages rejecting the idea of using surge pricing that has been allowed in the new regulations for them. The new rules would allow taxis to surge price only through their own smartphone apps. Rides hailed on the street or by phone are still required to have set city fares. Under the new rules, UberX can still surge price, but the base fare will be on par with taxis at \$3.25. (May 11, Pagliaro, Toronto Star)</p>
<p>June</p>	<p>Toronto. UberEats launches in Toronto, an app for food delivery by drivers and bicyclists between diners and restaurants. (29 Nov, Mudhar, Toronto Star)</p> <p>Waterloo. Staff have made some key changes to the proposed bylaw. One key recommendation is to keep a taxi licence ratio until 2018, without any limit on licences for auxiliary taxis such as Uber. Staff also recommend maintaining regional approval of fare rates for traditional taxis, but they would be allowed to offer discounts. Despite opposition expressed by some in the taxi industry during the public consultation process, all traditional taxis would be required to install surveillance cameras until they can provide an app similar to Uber, which would provide driver information and a photo to passengers in advance, among other requirements. After much debate about how to handle the issue of accessibility, staff are now recommending that vehicles for hire not offering accessible service pay \$50 per vehicle into a special fund. (Jun 7, Desmond, The Record)</p>
<p>July</p>	<p>Toronto. New municipal Licensing of Vehicles-by-hire bylaw comes into effect. (2016 Vehicles for Hire Bylaw)</p> <p>Uber has also put in place a secured policy with Intact to insure riders and drivers from the moment a ride is arranged until it is completed. However, drivers need to inform their personal insurance companies that they use the car for Uber purposes, but their driving time for Uber is covered by Intact. The insurance product only covers UberX drivers and passengers, not UberEats drivers. (July 25, Sommerfeld, Driving)</p>
<p>Aug</p>	<p>Toronto. Taxi industry resurrects mandatory driver training through Centennial College for every cabbie licensed since May 4. The courses are expected to begin in fall 2016. Experienced taxi drivers subject to repeated complaints will also be required to enroll in the course, which will include training on road knowledge, gender and cultural sensitivity, and customer service. In addition, there will be six hours of defensive driving instruction. Barry O'Brien, dean of Centennial's School of Business, said the program will feature 18 hours in total training and student drivers must pass an English language assessment to get in. They can take an English language course at Centennial if they don't pass the initial screening. The course will cost between \$600 and \$700, similar to what the city charged. (Aug 24, Powell, Toronto Star)</p>

Sept	Toronto. Toronto’s vehicle-for-hire bylaw, passed by council in May, says Uber and any other Private Transportation Company (PTC) must maintain a \$3.25 minimum fare but can allow for surge pricing when the service is busy. Taxis can also use surge pricing, but only for rides booked via an app. In May, taxi companies including Beck, City, Co-op, Brown, Diamond and Maple Leaf rejected surge pricing, saying it “has no place in superior customer service.” (Sept 13, Lu, Toronto Star)
Oct	Toronto. Uber as transit replacement being considered by some politicians in Toronto. (Oct 6, Puhakka, Torontoist)
Nov	Toronto. UberEats upsets delivery contractors when delivery rates are cut overnight by 35%. “Prior to the changes, cyclists would get \$6.50 when they picked up an order — a fee that added up if they picked multiple orders from the same restaurant — and were then paid an extra \$1.85 per kilometre of distance travelled. Uber would then take 35 per cent of the total delivery fee as its cut. As of Nov. 29, the delivery people will receive \$2.90 for a pickup — but it’s now a flat rate, regardless of how many meals are picked up. The delivery people then get \$2.50 for each drop-off. The distance rate is dropping to \$1.05 per kilometre. Uber’s 35-per-cent cut remains the same.” (29 Nov, Mudhar, Toronto Star)
Dec	Waterloo. Uber officially legal to operate in Waterloo Region Dec 1 2016. Originally, a new bylaw was to take effect Jan. 1, 2016. (11 Nov, Desmond, The Waterloo Record)

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