

## **2/24/21 Regina City Council**

### **Speaking Notes Re: TNC Review Report**

Good afternoon Mayor Masters and Members of Council. My name is Yanique Williams and I am the Public Policy Manager for Western Canada at Uber.

I am here today to speak to you about Uber's experience in Regina since our launch and what we are doing to keep our platform a safe and viable option for the people of Regina.

I want to start by acknowledging the hard work and dedication of the Administration for the extensive engagement with stakeholders including drivers on the Uber platform. The Administration and Uber worked together to survey drivers active on the platform in Regina. We also appreciate that the Administration dutifully engaged in additional consultation with both the taxi and TNC industries to ensure stakeholders were afforded the opportunity to speak to these regulations and their impact on their services.

We support the Administration's recommendation focused on approving initiatives and distributing funds towards accessible services for persons experiencing a disability.

We also agree with the Administration's position to not require a mandatory camera policy for TNCs. As mentioned in their report, Taxis operate via street hails and accept cash, which has led to a requirement for cameras. Uber maintains detailed records of every single trip. Additionally, to work effectively, cameras installed must be tamper proof, always on and only accessible to police. Even then it raises significant privacy concerns as the same ridesharing vehicles used commercially are also used privately to take family to and from personal activities and appointments. It would be a significant privacy violation to record a family's private activities and legally questionable.

In 2019, the Administration and Council worked together to introduce a streamlined regulatory system with strict safety criteria for TNCs in Regina.

Council did this because Reginans wanted a safe and reliable ride to and from the grocery store or a doctor's appointment and an additional flexible earning opportunity at the click of a button.

You trusted that Uber would bring a safe and compliant system to Regina and we took this responsibility seriously.

Today, I'm happy to say that our operations, approaching two years in May, have been a success.

In the TNC Review Report, Administration writes that “City staff has received zero complaints against TNC Drivers” and “RPS has not received any complaints about TNC driver behaviour from the public.”

Drivers come to Uber to earn on their terms. Some hope to just earn a little extra to cover the bills, others are using ridesharing as a launchpad to realize greater aspirations for themselves and their families.

Over the last ten months, as we continue to navigate the effects of COVID-19, these workers have also been a lifeline to their communities. They have transported healthcare workers to hospitals, delivered food to people socially distancing at home, and helped local restaurants stay in business.

I’m also pleased to mention that on February 12th we expanded the service area Regina-based drivers can now pick up and drop off riders. The RM of Edenwold and its neighbouring municipalities worked closely together on a harmonized regional ridesharing bylaw framework and were awarded the Regional Cooperation award at the Saskatchewan Municipal Awards. This award-winning framework was made possible as the provincial government put in place rules, including a provincial standard for criminal record checks, that allow a great level of collaboration between municipalities in Saskatchewan.

We recognize that every time people open the Uber app, they’re putting their trust in our technology—to not only connect them with a driver, but to also give them resources in case of emergency.

That is why, Uber committed to a multi-year, multi-million dollar campaign to partner with leading sexual assault and domestic violence partners around the world. In Canada, Uber works with organizations such as YWCA Canada (YWCA Regina received support through this partnership), and the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking to help keep people safe and end gender-based crimes in our country.

The question of safety on the platform is one that is always top-of-mind for decision makers so I want to spend some time today discussing what we do to keep our platform safe.

- **COVID:** With the guidance of health experts, policies and features were implemented to help keep everyone safe during COVID-19 including the introduction of our ‘No Mask. No Ride.’ policy, the wide distribution of health and safety supplies for drivers, and providing Public Health Officials with contact tracing support.
- **In-App Safety Toolkit:** Riders have immediate access to the Uber app’s safety features all in one place, including the ability to share their trip status with friends and family in real time, 24/7 incident support, and an emergency assistance

button to call to get help if they need it. The app displays their location and trip details, so they can quickly share this information with the emergency dispatcher. Drivers have access to similar emergency tools in-app.

- **Engagement with Law Enforcement:** Uber works very closely with law enforcement. We have an online portal just for law enforcement inquiries where law enforcement can put in data and information requests from Uber. Uber also has a Law Enforcement Operations team that works on the ground with local law enforcement including Regina Police Service.
- **RideCheck:** By using sensors and GPS data, RideCheck can help detect if a trip goes unusually off-course or if a possible crash has occurred. If the app alerts Uber to anything out of the ordinary, they'll reach out to provide riders with the tools to get help.

On Criminal Record Checks, we agree with the Administration's decision to not recommend changes to the current process in their report and encourage Council to do the same. We implore Council to not reject the provincial standard and not require that the RPS conduct the criminal record checks.

Following the provincial standard our technology partner initiates criminal checks that are completed by Canadian police stations and getting driving history directly from Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI). All the appropriate RCMP and local databases are searched.

With almost two years of operations in Regina there have been zero major concerns raised in how we conduct our background checks. Namely, SGI sends us a weekly list of drivers in Regina who either need a new criminal check or have to be removed from the platform for a variety of reasons. We have not received any notifications about driver removal for the purpose of an updated failed criminal check. Additionally, RPS has not contacted us about any drivers on the platform since we've started sharing the driver information with them. While they may be conducting their own checks, they have not raised anything of concern to us.

The province has established standards through the Vehicles for Hire Act and The Vehicles for Hire Regulations that establishes one of the strictest standards in Canada and does not require a vulnerable sector check. Moreover, in discussion with the RPS they made it clear that unless an individual has 'Regina, Saskatchewan' in their address, RPS will not process their criminal check. Hence, the communities covered in the Edenwold regional expansion are covered by the RCMP and drivers that live outside of the city can only get a criminal check through the RCMP.

Any material change to criminal record checks could impact our ability to maintain the regional integration with Edenwold and regional municipalities because they currently fall under the same compliance practices as Regina but drivers who do not live in

Regina would not be able to obtain a vulnerable sector check from the RPS and would not be eligible to onboard.

The province established a provincial criminal record check standard for this reason, to set a harmonized standard that is not fragmented between communities. I'd ask that if they are interested in exploring this matter that the Administration study the matter with regional communities, companies and police to avoid making a change without understanding the full implications.

As I close, it's important to acknowledge that taxi and ridesharing are different industries. It's important that as the Committee and Council continues this review process that the default will not be to impose taxi rules on ridesharing. Instead it is important to look at the needs of today's riders by creating rules tailored to the realities of the modern ridesharing industry.

I want to thank Council and the Administration for your cooperation over the past year and through this review process as we brought ridesharing to Regina. We look forward to many more years of cooperation.

Thank you and I welcome any questions.

Yanique Williams