

Improving Access to Transportation Options in Rural and Northern Ontario Through Provincial Framework for Ride Sharing Services

Issue

In Ontario, ridesharing is regulated at a municipal level, and these by-laws differ from one city to the next. The lack of a provincial standardized regulation or framework makes it difficult for companies to expand into rural and northern communities. Rural and northern communities have long been advocating for increased access to local transportation options to help with labour shortages, talent attraction and business expansion, boost tourism and increase competition.

Background

Several other provinces have introduced legislative changes to allow ride-sharing services to more easily operate. The framework establishes a simple set of rules to enable ride sharing services to operate safely across the province. The goal is to establish consistency in regulation and enforcement.

Although the main goal of this policy resolution advocacy initiative is related to the needs of businesses, it should be noted that ride sharing services in rural and remote areas offers safe and reliable transportation to prevent incidents of drunk driving.

Northern areas often span multiple cities and towns, making it difficult for ride-sharing and other transportation options to navigate differing by-laws. This creates challenges with regional connectivity, as these residents often work, do business, and visit neighbouring town or cities, some of which are unorganized townships where by-laws do not exist. The differing requirements in these by-laws, such as age of vehicle, decals, background checks, licensing processes and other, present operational barriers to the expansion of transportation options in northern and rural areas, where population density is not as high as southern Ontario.



Some examples of provincial models include:

Province	Legislation	Website / More Information
Newfoundland and Labrador	<u>Transportation Network Company Regulations</u>	<u>Transportation Network Companies (Ride-sharing Service) - Digital Government and Service NL</u>
Québec	<u>Bill 17, An Act respecting remunerated passenger transportation by automobile - National Assembly of Québec</u>	<u>Authorized drivers or drivers of a vehicle comparable to a taxi - SAAQ</u>
Alberta	<u>Transportation Network Companies Regulation</u>	<u>Ride-for-hire services Alberta.ca</u>
Saskatchewan	<u>Vehicles for Hire Act</u> <u>Vehicles for Hire Regulations</u>	<u>Ridesharing services - SGI</u>

It should be noted that other provincial regulations include protections to ensure healthy competition with established transportation companies and the safety and security of drivers and passengers.

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Establish a provincial ride-sharing framework to standardize services across Ontario that enables increased access to safe, reliable transportation, including in northern and rural communities.
2. Include protections to ensure existing transportation companies can continue to provide valuable local transportation options.

Alignment with the Province’s Priorities

A provincial framework for ride-sharing aligns with Ontario’s plan to build and support economic and community development in Northern Ontario through investments, loans and partnerships and reducing red tape.

