



Ministerial Statement to the House of Assembly

The Taxi Industry

By

**The Hon. Shawn G. Crockwell, JP, MP
Minister of Tourism Development and Transport**

Wednesday, 2nd October, 2013

Mr. Speaker,

During the first six months of the year I had the privilege to participate in a series of meetings with key stakeholders of the taxi industry. The main purpose of the meetings was to gain feedback on the state of the industry and to determine the way forward.

Stakeholders included dispatching company; the Bermuda Taxi Association, B.L.U. Taxi Co-op Transportation and Island Taxi Service and the Bermuda Taxi Operators Association which comprises of owners and operators. The meetings were extremely productive and resulted in the Ministry receiving invaluable information as well as feedback that will be used in policy development.

It is well known that for several years the taxi industry has been plagued with its own share of challenges ranging from GPS to increased competition with the introduction of limousines and increased minibuses. It was apparent that the general content of discussions was not new. In fact, most of the information had

already been submitted to the Ministry for consideration or at least discussed in various forums over the last few years. Therefore, at times, stakeholder representatives expressed frustration for what they considered the lack of attention to factors they deem critical for their survival during the economic downturn.

Some of the recommendations from the industry include changing the current Rate 1 to Rate 3 throughout which is equivalent to a twenty five (25) percent increase, increasing the allowable maximum number of passengers from 6 to 7, enforcing the dress code, advertising inside of taxis, and introducing a Taxi Commission or Statutory Authority. One of the key topics discussed was GPS and there are varying views amongst key stakeholder on GPS usage.

Mr. Speaker,

The Ministry is cognizant of the value of GPS technology and its impact on service delivery. There is no doubt that the dispatchers that use GPS are able to provide an effective dispatching system which is why we are not looking to do away with GPS but to simply make it optional.

All taxis are required to be registered with a taxi dispatching service. With a change from mandatory to optional, dispatching companies will have to sell the benefits of their systems to drivers in order to stimulate interest and encourage membership. The Ministry is also looking to work with stakeholders to determine an attractive incentive programme for drivers to use GPS.

Mr. Speaker,

An effective transportation system is one of the key necessities for economic growth and development. As we strengthen our Tourism and Business sectors we can no longer afford a fragmented transportation industry.

The Ministry of Tourism Development and Transport is committed to working with all segments of the transportation industry to develop an improved transportation network that better services both visitors and residents alike. This project will be a vast undertaking that will not happen overnight. It may also include drastic reform.

It definitely will force taxi owners, drivers, dispatchers and other industry stakeholders to rethink the way they do business and understand that in order to succeed, there must be cooperation and one plan! In the meanwhile, over the next few months the Ministry will be bringing forth amendments to the Motor Car Act 1951 to address recommendations raised during the recent stakeholder consultation.

Thank You, Mr. Speaker!