



Ministerial Statement to the Senate

Update on the Minibus Industry

By

Senator Mr. Vic Ball

Junior Minister of Tourism Development and Transport

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Madam President, in response to a Parliamentary Question to Minister Crockwell, in June of this year, about the number of minibus Permits issued by the Transport Control Department, the Minister informed the Honourable House of Assembly that there were 66 active Permits for minibuses traversing Bermuda's roads.

At that time, the Minister also advised that the Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board was in the process of a comprehensive review of the minibus industry with a view to making recommendations for a new legislative framework for the operation and regulation of minibuses.

Madam President, existing provisions under the Motor Car Act 1951 are limited to the application and approval processes, as well as statutory permit and licensing fees, and vehicle sizes. This sector of the transportation industry is regulated through policy whereas the taxi industry is regulated through a legislative framework. This has caused some angst and rivalry between the taxi and minibus operators. Taxi owners believe that they should get priority for business over minibus operators because of the value of their permits as well as the fact that they are heavily regulated through provisions of law. The current statutory fee for a taxi permit is \$103,000 while a minibus permit is \$5,150.

Madam President, it is important to note that both modes of transportation cater to different client needs. An example is that for general plying for hire, a taxi provides its passengers the convenience of direct point to point uninterrupted service, while a minibus offers a point to point shared ride which generally takes a lot longer to get to the desired destination. Minibus passengers are subjected to stops along the route to collect

additional passengers and or drop off passengers already on the minibus. The fee structure is considerably different as well. Per passenger, the minibus fare is \$5.00 for the first parish, an additional \$2.00 for the second parish and \$1.00 for each parish thereafter. The statutory fare rate for a taxi ride is an initial charge of \$5.15 and \$0.55 for each subsequent one-fifth of a mile or part thereof as the meter advances. There are also fare structures for luggage fees, waiting fees, mid-night to 6am fees, and Sunday and public holiday fees. This does not apply to minibuses.

Recently, it was brought to the ministry's attention that some minibus operators are plying for hire in taxi stands which is not permissible under their permit and unacceptable. This has further aggravated the situation between the two groups.

Madam President, I am pleased to report that the Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board will complete their review next month. Therefore, in the near future the ministry intend to bring forth much needed legislation for the introduction of regulations for the minibus industry. This will not only create balance and fairness within the transportation sector, but it would provide statutory fares, terms and conditions for operating a minibus.

In the interim, all statutory provisions and policies will be enforced. Those who choose to flout the law, if caught, can expect to be ticketed and repeat offenders could risk suspension or revocation of their Permit.

Thank You, **Madam President!**

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