

**Subject: RE: North Shore Taxi**

**Date:** Tue, 23 Dec 2003 22:41:16 +0000 (GMT)

**From:** Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

**To:** Mayor Bell <mayorbell@dnv.org>, Mayor and Council - DNV <Council@dnv.org>

**CC:** fonvca@fonvca.org, James Ridge <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>

23 December 2003

Mayor and Council,  
DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER  
355 West Queens  
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.

RE: SUNSHINE CABS: UNSAFE TAXICABS

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Dear Mayor Bell, Members of Council:

Following your response to my email of November 20 with respect to unsafe North Shore taxicabs, I regret the need to write you this letter so close to Christmas Day - a time for goodwill toward all.

My new concerns, of course, relate to news reports of equally "poor safety and maintenance levels" of Sunshine Cabs vehicles. This is all the more disturbing because Sunshine appears to have been completely undaunted by all of November's negative media coverage of the North Shore Cabs situation.

As you are aware, this is the third recent vehicle investigation and safety 'crackdown' by the West Vancouver Police Force; the first was of defective trucks at the north end of the Ironworkers' Memorial Bridge. In all three cases, a disturbing number of vehicles were in such poor shape that, for safety reasons, they had to be towed and/or taken off the road. In the latest inspection, all but three vehicles are said to have been removed.

The Mayor's email reviewed and expanded upon my own comments and provided a review of the variety of provincial/council mandates and responsibilities, council by-law discussions and other activities since 1999. However, I am still unsure why it is that it is the West Vancouver Vancouver police who make these discoveries, rather than the DNV-based R.C.M.P.

Once again, we see representatives of both companies appearing before council and/or media cameras trying every which way but Sunday to persuade us that they are running a safe operation. The problem is West Vancouver's police inspectors appear not to agree.

This matter is of particular and urgent concern for two reasons:

- Firstly, when one takes into account the fact that both taxicab companies appear to have DNV licences to carry on their businesses, it seems that it is DNV which holds the power to suspend the licences until every single cab passes safety inspection to the satisfaction of the West Vancouver police, DNV and the Province.
- Secondly, cab safety is paramount all year round, but at this time of year when we try to persuade people who have been drinking to "Be safe, call a cab" it would be both ironic and tragic if they were to be injured or killed due to a cab accident.

As your email indicates, this matter has been dragging on, in one form or another, for four years or more. I am concerned that if no immediate and proactive measures are taken, sooner or later, Council will be faced with some distraught family member asking, "Why didn't you do something; you knew these vehicles were not safe?"

As with 'the BIG one,' I believe it's only a matter of when, not if.

Once again, I apologise for needing to send this along on what should be a happy day; but if I had not and a serious accident should occur, I would never forgive myself for the omission.

Otherwise, I wish Council a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2004.

Yours truly,

Liz James  
[604] 988-2066

[604] 987-3313 [B]

**Mayor Bell** <mayorbell@dnv.org> wrote:

Dear Ms. James,  
Mayor and Council,  
DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER  
355 West Queens  
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C.

RE: NORTH SHORE TAXI: UNSAFE TAXICABS

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the recent publicity about the poor safety and maintenance levels relating to some of the North Shore Taxi fleet of cabs. For your information and for that of Council I would like to advise you that I have met yesterday and today with the CAO and DNV staff to determine what prompt and appropriate steps can be taken to respond to this serious matter.

We have been in touch with the West Van Police, who work with the Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement Inspectors on a regular basis inspecting truck safety on the Upper Levels Hwy and steep routes into West Vancouver, and with the North Van R.C.M.P. The issue of the safety of taxis came up during recent discussions of truck safety. North Shore Taxi was given notice to have their cabs inspected. Twenty nine were inspected resulting in 8 Notices to Repair; one was immobilized, 17 were towed and 3 were considered OK. Deficiencies noted included brakes, propane tank safety, and steering column problems. My office was in touch with North Shore Taxi today and we were advised they have now replaced 10 taxis and had 16 repaired.

DNV Council began discussions in 1999 about drafting a "bylaw to regulate the issuance of chauffeur permits for all carriers, including provisions for minimum driver standards in conjunction with other North Shore municipalities." Bylaws were considered in March 2000, and further amendments were considered in July 2000, including reference to a maximum allowable vehicle age of 10 years for taxis. A Public Meeting was held in December 2000 with input from persons in the taxi industry and from the public. The focus of the discussions and the proposed bylaws related more to the qualifications of drivers, cleanliness of taxis, and availability of wheelchair accessible taxis, than major safety issues, other than the proposed age limit restrictions on taxis, as we understood that regular safety inspections were required. No further action was taken by Council since that time.

I have asked staff to further contact the other government and regulatory agencies that should be involved in responding to the most recent serious issues raised about taxi safety on the North Shore, and to prepare a report for Council indicating steps Council can take within our authority, and demands we can make on the Provincial Government and other Agencies for immediate action. As we are moving into the Christmas season with less daylight and the possibility of poorer driving conditions, and a time when more people should be taking a taxi rather than driving home from parties, I have asked that this report be a priority in the interests of public safety. I will also be speaking directly with the R.C.M.P. and the Provincial Government about the seriousness and urgency of this matter.

Mayor Don Bell

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Elizabeth James [mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** November 20, 2003 6:16 PM  
**To:** Mayor and Council - DNV  
**Cc:** fonvca@fonvca.org  
**Subject:** North Shore Taxi

20 November 2003

Members of Council will have seen recent TV and press coverage regarding the serious defects found in 8 or more taxicabs owned and operated by North Shore Taxi. This is a company operating as a District business out of 250 Pemberton Avenue, North Vancouver, BC.

The defects were discovered during inspections conducted by West Vancouver Police and ranged from exposed and unprotected propane gas tanks, broken steering wheels held together with duct tape, malfunctioning brakes, and a range of other defects.

It is felt that taxpayers should have **very** serious concerns arising out of the information provided in the newscasts:

1. Even though the company draws its business from across the North Shore, since operations are based in the District of North Vancouver, could Council and Staff assure taxpayers that the North Vancouver RCMP also conduct regular safety checks on these high-use vehicles.

Council will recall that it was also the West Vancouver police who discovered major defects in dump trucks traveling at the north end of the Second Narrows bridge earlier this year. Right or wrong, this gives the impression that West Van officers are a good deal more active in this type of enforcement than their RCMP counterparts.

2. The next major concern involves vehicle maintenance schedules. Company personnel assured TV reporters that their vehicles go in for regular mechanical checks and that the cabs pulled off the road this week had been passed by the mechanics - some as recently as last week and two weeks ago. In fact, one TV camera shot took a picture of the "passed" stamp on one of the vehicles. This happened to be a vehicle with a badly-corroded undercarriage exposing the propane gas tank.

This raises several issues: Firstly, the company doing the mechanical work and "regular safety checks" was displaying a sign which showed it to have Provincial Certification from Victoria. Minister Rich Coleman stated on camera that he would be

looking into this.

The second issue relates to conflict of interest, since some of the personnel from North Shore Taxi are said to own the mechanical shop which does the maintenance and "passes" the taxis to go back on the road.

3. The last major item - there may well be others - relates to provincial regulations and standards, as they are applied to high-mileage vehicles operating in an area of extremely steep terrain such as the North Shore. It is suggested it might be appropriate for mileage and vehicle-age limits to be different for the North Shore than they might be for vehicles which operate in, say, on the flats in Vancouver, Richmond and/or Delta.

It seems obvious that this company has been putting the lives of its passengers at **serious** risk for some time. In fact, when I mentioned this email to Dr. Kost, he reminded me that issues of District taxi operations - safety, training and language - have appeared on Council's horizon for three years or more. Most recently, one recalls the matter being discussed when Bonnie's Taxi was protesting that it was not to be allowed a licence to operate mini-buses in the Region.

In view of the foregoing information, it would be appreciated if Council would ask Staff to immediately liaise with the RCMP, Minister Rich Coleman and with T-PAC on these and **all** related issues and report back to Council.

Once the Staff Report is to hand, it is suggested that Council consider calling the owner(s) of North Shore Taxi to appear before Council to show why it should be allowed to continue to hold a Business Licence in the District. In fact, this is such an urgent matter as to suggest that, as an interim safety measure for the upcoming holiday season, that step should be taken at the first available opportunity on Council's Agenda.

Your early response would be appreciated.

Yours truly,

Liz James,  
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