

## MUNICIPAL POLITICS

# Edmonton may be template for legalizing Uber in other cities

CHRIS PURDY

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EDMONTON — Cab drivers in Edmonton protested for months at city hall, some of them pulling off their shirts, as councillors debated whether to pass a new bylaw legalizing ride-sharing companies such as Uber.

As similar revolts played out across Canada, the Alberta capital sped ahead late last month and became the first jurisdiction to pass regulations for the new industry.

Experts say other cities are bound to follow.

“Congratulations Edmonton. Well done. You’re first off the mark,” says John-Kurt Plinius-sen, an associate professor of business at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont.

By being first to take the leap, Edmonton is showing other cities that it can be done, Plinius-sen says. He expects most



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Edmonton cab drivers protested against a proposed bylaw to regulate Uber last September. The protesters said they were losing their shirts, but the bylaw was passed and will take effect next month.

jurisdictions will have regulations in place by the end of the year.

“They’re going to say, ‘Well, if Edmonton can do it, we can do it. And so let’s get going.’”

California-based Uber allows people to request rides over their phones and sets them up with drivers who use their personal vehicles. An Uber ride is typically cheaper than a taxi. Cab-bies are concerned that Uber drivers have an unfair advantage because they’re not subject to licensing and insurance rules.

Edmonton’s regular taxi drivers argued at testy city council meetings last fall that the service would flood the streets with drivers and make it impossible for them to make a living — taking their shirts right off their backs.

Under the Edmonton bylaw, which takes effect March 1, private transportation providers such as Uber must carry provincially approved insurance, have an annual vehicle inspection and agree to a criminal record check. They must charge a minimum of \$3.25 per ride, but there is no price cap. Only taxis are permitted to pick up street hails or use taxi stands.

Uber Canada said the regulations are workable and applauded Edmonton for modernizing its transportation laws.

Plinius-sen says Canada is behind the United States, where dozens of jurisdictions have passed regulations.