

EDITORIAL: Hail, hail

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Uber's arrival in B.C. is inevitable, Transportation Minister Todd Stone says.

The ride-hailing app has sparked controversy in most cities it's set up in.

What separates them from a typical cab company is that they're just not that into the rat's nest of Passenger Safety Board licensing, regulations, insurance, safety inspections, taxes and background checks.

Instead, they prefer to cast themselves as a technology company that simply connects people wanting a ride with people willing to drive their personal vehicle (while keeping most of the money).

But consumers love it for its on-demand gratification and user friendliness. Pickup, drop off and payment are all carried out at the touch of a smartphone screen.

It's especially convenient when one is caught downtown in the rain with most of a bottle of wine sloshing around in one's tummy. When it comes to giving the public what they want, it's hard to deny the appeal.

But there is surely more to the story than the dazzle of its convenience. Even though they may be onerous, those regulations are there for our safety so we shouldn't be surprised when accidents happen. We've yet to see how the province is going to reconcile Uber's Wild West business model with bureaucracy the taxi industry faces. We also have concerns about Uber's reportedly low wages and spiking fares.

But what Uber and other on-demand services offer could be an important piece in the way we get around our cities.

If they can find a way to play by the rules, we'll be ready to hail them down any time.

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