

Calgary council steps back from airport taxi dispute

BY JASON MARKUSOFF, CALGARY HERALD MAY 17, 2010



Taxis line up for passengers at Calgary International Airport

Photograph by: Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald

CALGARY - City council won't formally criticize Calgary International Airport for mulling changes to the number of taxi companies that can wait for pickups at the terminal.

A group of aldermen led by Diane Colley-Urquhart had taken up the protests of cab drivers who are wary that the airport authority will only let one taxi firm queue up for airport passengers.

However, with the airport insisting it's in the middle of considering its taxi-service options, council decided after a lengthy closed-door meeting today that it was inappropriate to send sharp-worded letters to airport authority brass while its request for proposal is still taking offers.

Council regulates taxis in Calgary, but has no control over who the airport lets wait for pickups on its own property, Mayor Dave Bronconnier told council.

"It's like getting into somebody else's labour-relations issue," Ald. Gord Lowe added.

The many cab companies that are now allowed to offer on-demand taxi service at the airport were told earlier this month that their privilege ends June 6. However, airport spokeswoman Jody Moseley said

the future path — one provider or more — won't be decided before the request process ends May 26.

"The only concern we have is that there is an adequate amount of taxis that pick up our passengers, and that we have that service level that we require," she said.

Asked if there are any concerns multi-company service, Moseley said: "I would say that we've had the best taxi service, and looking at the business ... is not unusual."

Taxi drivers will hold a rally about the airport service worry tonight. Many view it as a threat to their livelihood. If the airport grants a monopoly, it would likely go to one of the city's bigger players, potentially hurting the many smaller firms.

Len Bellingham, head of Mayfair Taxi and of the Calgary Livery Association, said his 75-car fleet would be too small to handle the airport contract itself. He expressed hope the airport keep their curb open to many companies.

"Multiple selection is probably the best — that way the customer gets choice," Bellingham said.

© Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald