

# Innisfil rides into the history books with Uber

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1 / 1 Chris Schafer, Uber Canada; Uber driver Jeff Wilton; Innisfil Mayor Gord Wauchope and Deputy Mayor Lynne Dollin. Sue Sgambati/BarrieToday

The Town of Innisfil has penned several new historic chapters with its launch of Uber as a public transit substitute.

It's not only the first public transit service in the town's history, the ride sharing partnership is the first of its kind in Canada.

And Innisfil is also the first in Canada to offer Uber for children under the age of 18.

Officials gathered Monday morning outside the Innisfil Recreation Centre on Yonge St. for the official kick-off of the unprecedented pairing.

"It's exciting because it's a way this town has safe, accessible and reliable transportation now for people to move around. It's cheaper than running buses. To me it's a win win situation," said Innisfil Mayor Gord Wauchope.

It will be \$3 a ride to go to the Rec Centre from anywhere in Innisfil and \$5 to ride from town to Georgian Downs or the Barrie GO.

Through the partnership, the Town of Innisfil will subsidize a portion of the fare for all trips taken by residents within Innisfil, while offering additional subsidies for rides going to and from transit hubs.

"A lot of municipalities are watching Innisfil and what Uber is doing here. We've had a lot of interest from folks across the province and even the provincial government itself is very curious and interested," said Uber's Chris Schafer.

"It's about providing cost-effective transportation options to the residents of Innisfil. It's frankly about connecting them not only here at the Innisfil rec centre, city town hall area, also connecting them to their local transit hubs. It's about offering that first mile, last mile partnership with public transit and getting people around."

Innisfil has also partnered with Barrie Taxi as part of this new on-demand transit model to provide accessible rides.

With five years already behind the wheel for Uber, Jeff Wilton is among dozens of drivers ready to roll.

Wilton became an Uber driver after a friend was struck and killed by a drunk driver several years ago.

"They said he was at three time the legal limit and since then I devoted myself to making sure everyone else gets home safe."

He says it also supplements his income, noting he made \$40 this morning with just five calls for Innisfil transit.

The ground breaking partnership was the brain-child of city staff including Tim Cane, manager of planning and Paul Pentikainen, senior policy planner.

"It was a collective effort to solve the problem of public transit in the town. We knew from a budget perspective and from a sustainability perspective that to give people good transit service that the tradition model wasn't going to work," said Cane.

This is 'stage one' of the initiative with council approving \$100,000 this year and \$125,000 for stage two next year.

Innisfil Transit is customized with a pool option and includes the Uber Teen Feature young riders.

"It allows parents to track where their teen is going. An added security feature," said Pentikainen.

And because Uber drivers must be screened by the RCMP, town officials are confident in the safety of the service.

"A lot of other municipalities are grappling with the same issue so we're hopeful that this will be model for everybody," said Cane,

"Big day for Innisfil," added Pentikainen. "It's the first time in the community's history that they have a public transit system."