Finding Home Sweet Home

MBA grads help international students de-stress

VICTORIA HOUSING SEARCH

by Stacey McLachlan

When Vinit Jain, MBA ‘16, first moved to Victoria from India in 2014 to pursue his degree at UVic, he looked himself a hotel room to stay in while he looked for a place to live. A month later, he was still there. It turned out that between skeptical landlords, a competitive market for budget rentals, and a general unfamiliarity with how BC accommodations worked, it was a lot harder to lock in lodging here than Vinit anticipated. He eventually found himself somewhere to stay, and soon found himself helping his brother, Siddharth Jain, MBA ‘17, and other new-in-town friends navigate the process, too. It was the personal experience that led Vinit and Siddharth to start Sanpra, a business dedicated to helping international students find rental housing. “Our intent is to eradicate the pain points,” says Vinit. “And it’s not just the student market, so they want us to get in and apply on their behalf. “And it’s not just the student market, who are free to choose their own business models and consumers are free to pick among the options. Wherever the company goes from here, it seems like there is no shortage of Victorians new and old, in search of a warm welcome…and a little human kindness in a housing market gone wild.”

by Dr. Saul Klein

Until this year, Vancouver was the largest city in North America without legally sanctioned ride-hailing services. In July, however, British Columbia announced that it would allow ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft to operate in the province starting in September. Drivers offering such transportation services in BC will be required to obtain Class 4 commercial licenses, the same license held by taxi drivers. Although some of the new restrictions are unquestionably worthwhile, such as mandatory insurance, the claimed safety logic behind requiring a commercial driver’s license is spurious. The solution should not be to make ride-hailing services more like taxis, but to make taxis more like ride-hailing services. Creating a level playing field for all providers is an admirable goal, but that playing field should be as open as possible. When service providers are free to choose their own business models and consumers are free to pick among the options, a lack of competition disrupts existing operations. Increased competition from ride-hailing will help the taxi industry evolve, and entitled airlines to use a “take-it-or-leave-it” approach to customer service. It is incumbent on regulators to help the taxi industry evolve, and ultimately benefit all travellers. It is incumbent on regulators to help the taxi industry evolve, and ultimately benefit all travellers. Dr. Saul Klein is dean of the Gustavson School of Business. To see full results of Gustavson’s 2019 Brand Trust Index, go to uvic.ca/gustavson/brandtrust.

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