

Monday, August 8, 2016

**“Mayor Tory, have you even read the OMA report?” on premature deaths due to vehicle smog asks Toronto transit workers’ president about TTC cuts. “I will gladly lend you my copy.”**

The Toronto transit workers’ union has sharply criticized Mayor John Tory’s demand that the Toronto Transit Commission reduce its budget by 2.6% next year, calling it an environmental, economic and public health mistake. The TTC faces a \$231 million budget deficit next year, including the 2.6% cut ratified by City Council at Tory’s behest.

The 10,500-member union, ATU Local 113, says the TTC has been in crisis for years and that public anger and frustration with continually deteriorating service levels is reaching the boiling point at the same time as traffic congestion, smog, transit travel times and fares keep going up.

Local President Bob Kinnear says that those Councillors voting for cuts in public transit can only do so “if they don’t care about the TTC’s 1.8 million riders a day, don’t care about the loss of productivity due to traffic congestion and, most worrisome, don’t care about the thousands of premature deaths due to smog-related air pollution caused by motor vehicles every year, according to the Ontario Medical Association.

“Mayor Tory, have you even read the OMA report? If not, I will gladly lend you my copy,” said Kinnear.

“Better yet, spend more time on the TTC, in different parts of the city, especially during rush hour. Explain to your sweltering and crushed fellow passengers why service will have to be cut and fares have to be raised for the second time in less than two years. Good luck with that.”

Coverage of the OMA report is [available online here](#).

Kinnear added that only climate change deniers could possibly be comfortable with cutbacks in public transit.

“How many programs does the City of Toronto fund to reduce our environmental footprint? Cutting back on transit and driving people back into cars undermines all these efforts. It is a waste of tax dollars that is also a tragedy in slow motion.”

The union mocked the mayor’s threat to bring in outside consultants to find the full \$231 million in efficiencies if TTC management cannot do so without further service cuts.

“Who are these experts Mayor Tory has in mind?” asked Kinnear. “The TTC is already the most economically efficient urban transit system in North America, with the highest farebox cost recovery ratio, by far, of any other system. Are there some business magicians out there who can take \$231 million out of such a system without affecting service levels? Donald Trump will likely be available in November so maybe the mayor can ask him for advice.”

“If Mayor Tory truly believes TTC management is needlessly spending over \$200 million a year, he should take a page from the Trump manual and say ‘You’re fired!’ to top management.”

Kinnear did acknowledge that there may be some efficiencies to be found in the TTC’s management and administration ranks.

“It’s true that middle management and so-called ‘security forces’ have swollen under Andy Byford,” says Kinnear. “There seems to be a new department created at the TTC almost monthly. We’ll let Byford defend those hirings. But even if you gave pink slips to all these new managers and cop wannabes, you wouldn’t even come close to what the mayor is demanding. Service will inevitably decline further and fares will inevitably rise.”

Kinnear says that if the mayor goes ahead with an outside study, he must separately investigate management from the frontline and maintenance workers.

“Our members are among the most productive in the world in terms of passenger miles, trips per worker and vehicle service life. We welcome any objective study where the conclusions have not been written in advance. We disclaim any responsibility for management decisions in which we had no input, which is practically all of them since Andy Byford came to town. He’s not a big fan of consulting the people who actually operate and maintain the system.”