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April 27, 2020

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

I'm writing to you because Toronto's public transit system is facing disruptive service cuts and layoffs unless your government steps up to provide immediate emergency financial support.

As announced on April 23, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) is being pushed past its financial breaking point and facing a steep \$90 million drop in monthly revenue because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now planning to temporarily lay off 1,200 of its essential workers, including 1,000 Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113 members.

A lack of urgency to shore up municipal finances and provide emergency financial support has brought us to the brink. As the President of ATU Local 113 representing 12,000 TTC workers, I can assure you that this is a serious problem for Toronto's public transit system.

Make no mistake – the announced layoffs mean service cuts for Torontonians. These cuts have consequences for essential, low-income workers who depend on the TTC to get to work at hospitals, nursing homes, grocery stores and pharmacies. Service cuts will go against physical distancing and lead to overcrowding on many routes, which increases risk for spreading the coronavirus to those who are most vulnerable in our city. These cuts could also mean a transit system unprepared to handle the surge of regular riders once it's safe for everyone to go back to work.

The livelihood of our dedicated public transit workers is hanging in the balance.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, public transit workers have been working tirelessly and putting themselves in harm's way to keep Toronto moving. As of today, 25 of our members have tested positive for COVID-19 and hundreds more are protecting others by self-isolating because of it.

For weeks during the pandemic, TTC workers, including operators, maintenance, clerical, cleaning and other support staff asked for – but were denied – the right to wear basic protective masks to protect themselves and others against COVID-19. In the face of the risks, they kept working. It took our union's persistent demands for the TTC to finally allow the choice for workers to wear PPE on the job. It took even longer for the TTC to finally supply basic PPE to workers during this pandemic.

The Ontario government announced a temporary pandemic pay of \$4/hour on top of regular wages for frontline workers. Public transit workers, who are providing a frontline service during the coronavirus crisis, are excluded from the program. Healthcare and other essential workers deserve pandemic pay; however, we cannot forget about public transit workers. Instead of receiving pandemic pay for their dedicated service during the crisis, over a 1,000 TTC workers will soon receive pink slips. Some of these workers might have gotten sick on the job and are now being laid off on top of that. I know you'll agree this is unfair.

If this all sounds like bad news, it's because it is. Without your immediate financial support, these service cuts and layoffs will put the transit system of Canada's largest city at risk.

You can stop this today by providing emergency funding to prevent these layoffs and keep the TTC's buses, streetcars, Wheel-trans vehicles and subways running for essential workers who need it most.

I further call on you to fix the loophole in the Federal Wage Subsidy program that prevents transit workers from accessing wage supports when threatened with layoffs.

If your government is willing to subsidize Air Canada and other Canadian corporations to prevent layoffs, there is no reason not to provide the same support to prevent over a 1,000 layoffs at the TTC.

Please act now before it's too late.

I look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Yours sincerely,



Carlos Santos
President, ATU Local 113

CS:rc

cc: Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Hon. Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance
Hon. Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure
Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
Hon. Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Hon. Marco Mendicino, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Opposition
Mr. Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Ms. Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich – Gulf Islands

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, MP for Beaches – East York
Ms. Julie Dzerowicz, MP for Davenport

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, MP for Don Valley East
Mr. Han Dong, MP for Don Valley North
Mr. Rob Oliphant, MP for Don Valley West
Mr. Yvan Baker, MP for Etobicoke Centre
Mr. James Maloney, MP for Etobicoke Lakeshore
Ms. Kirsty Duncan, MP for Etobicoke North
Ms. Judy Sgro, MP for Humber River – Black Creek
Mr. Arif Virani, MP for Parkdale – High Park
Ms. Jean Yip, MP for Scarborough - Agincourt
Mr. John McKay, MP for Scarborough - Guildwood
Mr. Gary Anandasangaree, MP for Scarborough – Rouge Park
Ms. Salma Zahid, MP for Scarborough Centre
Mr. Shaun Chen, MP for Scarborough North
Mr. Adam Vaughan, MP for Spadina – Fort York
Ms. Julie Dabrusin, MP for Toronto - Danforth
Mr. Ali Ehsassi, MP for Willowdale
Mr. Michael Levitt, MP for York Centre