



AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNION LOCAL 113

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All correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer

February 2, 2021

“Via Email Only”

To: The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier
The Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
The Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills
Development
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health

Dear Premier, Ministers and Dr. Williams:

Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 113 represents 12,000 public transit workers in Toronto and York Region. Our members are on the front lines of keeping our society operating throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As frontline workers, we are exposed daily to the risk of infection, and 369 of us have contracted the virus. As workers deeply concerned about the health of our families and communities, we support [the January 4, 2021 letter concerning aerosol transmission](#) sent to you by more than 500 physicians, scientists, occupational health and safety experts, engineers and nursing professionals.

As documented in that letter, there is now overwhelming evidence for aerosol transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Transmission may occur in enclosed environments where infectious aerosols may accumulate, especially in the absence of good ventilation. We appreciate that transit systems like the TTC have recognized this by taking steps to improve ventilation in buses and trains, but more needs to be done. This must start with recognition of aerosol transmission by those responsible for worker and public health at the provincial and municipal levels. Based on this recognition, these agencies should issue new guidelines for workers and public health that address ventilation and personal protective equipment. With transmission of new variants of the virus in Ontario, such measures are more important than ever.

Ontario should follow the lead of the Public Health Agency of Canada, which on January 18 of this year, issued [modified guidance on ventilation](#) that takes aerosol transmission into account. This guidance states, “Aerosols laden with infectious virus increase the risk of spreading COVID-19, particularly if a person stays within an enclosed indoor space with little air circulation for a long time.” Buses and subway cars may be such enclosed indoor spaces, which is why prevention measures on our transit systems are so important. In fact, a [document issued by Public Health Ontario](#) has addressed the possibility of transmission on public transit vehicles, citing a number of studies where aerosol transmission apparently occurred on buses and trains. Referring to one such

study, the PHO document states, “Authors of this study speculate that due to the closed environment within the index case bus, and the use of air recirculation, transmission via infectious aerosols was possible.” Despite this and many other examples, PHO has still not clearly acknowledged the risk of aerosol transmission.

We therefore call on you to issue new guidance for Ontario to address the risk of aerosol transmission of COVID-19, and we support the specific recommendations in [the January 4, 2021 letter concerning aerosol transmission](#). The frontline workers of Ontario have risked their health and lives to sustain our province for the past year; they deserve no less.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss these matters.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carlos Santos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carlos Santos,
President/Business Agent

CS:mb

C.C. Rick Fox – Vice President ATU Local 113
Kevin Morton – Secretary/Treasurer ATU Local 113
Scott Gordon - ABA - Maintenance ATU Local 113
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