

OC TRANSPRO/LOCAL 279 NEWS

November 1, 2006

Incumbent Mayoral Candidate Bob Chiarelli Woos the Senior Vote at OC Transpo's Expense

Chiarelli is proposing a "courtesy protocol" for all OC Transpo drivers because he wants to make sure every trip is enjoyable for riders. Senior citizens have told him some drivers aren't as helpful or as patient as they would like, and that others accelerate and brake too sharply, Mr. Chiarelli said.

Andre Cornellier, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279, says if bus drivers would have more time to complete their routes, they wouldn't be so crusty. On top of that, "there's no respect for the bus driver any more," Cornellier said. Cornellier said OC Transpo already uses a three-complaint system for drivers.

Mr. Chiarelli should be ashamed of casting dispersion on the reputations of well trained professional drivers, who are, as in most transit systems in Canada, trying to maintain absurdly tight schedules, in order to get some votes. Given that an ATU-Canada survey in 2005 reported that 215 out of 558 drivers in Ottawa said they had been physically assaulted and just over half reported being verbally threatened perhaps a code of conduct for passengers should be considered as well.

Mr. Chiarelli, who is reported to be behind two other candidates in the polls, has also promised that if elected, he will cut the price of a seniors' bus pass in half, to \$15, over the next four years.

Challenger Alex Munter labelled Mr. Chiarelli's move a "last-minute attempt to win (seniors') votes on transit fares."

In a press release, Chiarelli claims when fully implemented, the transit initiative will cost Ottawa 1.28 million dollars a year and make Ottawa senior transit passes the cheapest in the country.

Please click the following link for more information:

[Chiarelli Articles](#)

Paratransit Cuts on the Way Warns Union

Local 279 says the city wants to cut service to 11,000 disabled people and award a tender for millions in service without public input. City staff say they're simply running a fair tender process and that riders will actually get improved service.

Andre Cornellier, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279, said base hours that Para Transpo vans will operate have been reduced from 203,000 to 160,000. The balance will go to contracts with taxi firms while a public bid to improve service is being hamstrung to fail, he said.

Ottawa would be wise to take a lesson from Access Transit, Saskatoon's paratransit service, which won an award for productivity improvement at CUTA's conference in May after being brought in-house.

On September 22, 2003, Saskatoon city council voted 8-3 in favour of an agreement between the city and the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 615 that saw Saskatoon's paratransit service taken away from First Bus (who currently runs Ottawa's paratransit) and brought in-house to the city's transit system.

This brought to a close a contentious issue that had continued since November 30, 1998 when the city council voted in favour of contracting out paratransit to the private sector. At the time city council was told that a five-year cost would be about \$5.9-million. When the contracts expired in June 2004 the final tab topped \$10-million.

First Bus' operation was plagued by inefficiency and low-productivity as demonstrated by the fact that it required more than 30,000 hours of service in 2001 to deliver 60,000 trips while the city transit drivers had achieved that amount with only 24,000 hours of service in 1996.

How has Access Transit fared since then? Well, in 2005, the first full year that the service was city operated by ATU members, the buses increased productivity by 19% from 2003. In 2005 the service transported 96, 215 people. That was 10,000 more than 2004. In addition to this increase in productivity, there was also a reduction in the cost per trip from \$25.50 in 2003 to \$18.26 in 2005. The service also reduced the number of denied trips by 29% from 2004.

Please click the following link for more information:

[Paratransit Article](#)