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**Executive Board**

April 29, 2020

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To all Toronto and GTA Liberal MPs

**Re: Transit workers ask Greater Toronto Liberal MPs: where are you?**

Dear Ministers,

Transit systems, even during pandemics, are the lifeblood of all cities. And yet weeks after requesting emergency assistance, and despite all Toronto Members of Parliament being part of the government caucus, the Federal Government has refused to help. On behalf of the 34,000 members of the Amalgamated Transit Union across Canada, including in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area, we write to say the silence of urban MPs about the financial crisis faced by public transit and its workers is unacceptable.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak began about six weeks ago, your government has saluted frontline workers in the pandemic and provided financial assistance for specific industries as varied as airlines and the arts. Yet, after weeks of putting their own health at risk on the front lines, transit workers are now being laid off and transit routes are being cut—making essential workers wait longer to return home after a stressful day at work. This raises serious questions.

Why, for example, are employees who operate non-essential airlines that carry no essential workers covered by federal programs, when public transit is not?

How, exactly, will transit systems continue to transport nurses, grocery store workers, janitors, and other essential workers as revenue plummets and routes are reduced?

And why should essential workers, who are disproportionately lower-income earners and more likely to live in outer suburbs, be forced to wait longer to return home?



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Pandemics look different in cities with higher population densities—and greater reliance on public transit. Yet, no Toronto or GTA Liberal MP has publicly urged the government to support a uniquely urban facet of this outbreak.

Already, more than 2,500 transit workers have been laid off in Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Winnipeg. Future layoffs are all but inevitable. These workers are your constituents. More routes will be reduced.

National governments in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere recognize public transit's essential function to cities. And we are forced to ask why a party whose electoral fortunes depend on cities can be so ambivalent to such a quintessentially urban need. Perhaps you could explain.

Sincerely,

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