

Official Submission Regarding Proposed Changes to London Bus Pass for Blind Passengers

December 11, 2016

I am writing to humbly but passionately request that London City Council **NOT** proceed with the proposed major increase to the bus pass pricing for blind passengers. I'm writing specifically for my youngest sister, Terri-Lyn Dietrich, who is an extremely caring 30-year old young lady who moved to the city of London in March of 2016 from her small and quiet home farming community near Listowel, Ontario. Terri-Lyn is blind. I'm also writing on behalf of the many other CNIB bus pass holders – those who I've been privileged to meet and those I haven't yet met.

After more than a decade of struggling to hold onto her independence as her eyesight declined, Terri-Lyn made the tough decision to move from her loved community with an abundance of family support to a city which could offer her improved accessibility and varied options for continued personal growth, interaction and greater independence. During 2015, she collected information about and considered various cities and finally chose London for its many positive factors, one of which was the affordably priced CNIB bus pass at a cost of \$10 per year.

Terri-Lyn, like many or most CNIB bus pass holders, lives on an extremely modest pension income which began when she could no longer continue working at the job she loved due to her diminished eyesight. She has always been a hard-working woman who saved her money. Now, after paying her apartment rent, she is left with \$100 per month to cover utilities, food, transportation, medical and dental costs, basic living needs and entertainment. She dips into her savings every month. Her savings are limited – to purchase a \$480 bus pass, she will be faced with possibly needing to move to a less desirable neighborhood to a less desirable apartment than the tiny basic apartment she now has in a safe neighborhood. She is blind! We feel that she is already at greater risk of harm than a seeing individual!

Terri-Lyn is invested in London and gives back to this community, who has graciously welcomed her to its folds, by giving her time as she isn't able to give financially. As she continues to look for paying employment, she spends her days volunteering at two soup kitchens, Good Will, and a YMCA daycare center and continues to search for additional opportunities. She is a member of CNIB and CCB and is actively involved with various groups and activities around the region. To do all of this which fulfills her life, as well as grocery shopping, banking, and other tasks, she requires a bus pass. This bus pass has opened her life to more opportunities than she or we could have thought possible. She now lives totally independently and has come to love the city of London and is very happy with the choice she made.

Terri-Lyn's family and friends also love London and visit every chance we get, enjoying the many shopping, dining, and entertainment and festival options that London offers. Terri-Lyn has us riding London City Transit with her (we paying full fare of course) and enjoying its convenient benefits.

As London City Council considers their options in regards to the CNIB bus pass, I again passionately and humbly ask that you truly consider the great personal effect this will have on the many CNIB bus pass holders. A 4800% cost increase for this bus pass is not affordable for most of these holders. If they are not able to purchase a \$480 yearly bus pass, their life options greatly diminish and the vibrant city of London will also feel the loss resulting from this. This will not only affect a person's option to travel throughout the city; this can cause major disruption to a person's emotional health and well-being if they are not able to fully engage in a fulfilling life with social and professional interaction. A modest price increase is understandable and attainable - can this increase be reconsidered for true affordability for your blind passengers?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Pamela Stewart
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Terri-Lyn with her niece last Christmas.

