

Good evening everyone.

I am here today on behalf of the 35,000 undergraduate and professional students at Western University to support a number of existing services and new business cases that support transit, sustainability, and safety in the City of London.

Western students are important members of the London community, often overlooked by politicians and local residents as stakeholders in decisions that affect the City beyond Western's property. The vast majority of our students live off-campus around the City and work, volunteer, shop, and play at local businesses, nonprofits, and public spaces. Our students contribute over 350 million dollars to the London economy in direct spending every single year, so their voices are critical in key decisions around the municipal budget. As the official elected representatives of Western students, our involvement in this budgeting process is critical.

First and foremost, the USC supports the London Transit Commission's inclusion in the base levy. Our students contribute over 7M every year to fund the LTC budget with our mandatory bus pass fee levied on every undergraduate student. I would wager that the vast majority of people in the room today do not regularly rely on public transit to travel within the city. Some of you may have never even taken the bus. However, tens of thousands of post-secondary students solely rely on the LTC every day to travel between where they live, study, work, and play, connecting students to the places they spend tens of millions of dollars every year. Already, hundreds of students are left at the side of the road every single day as full busses pass by. The transit system cannot take any more cuts to existing services. As such, we urge City Council to prioritize all funding requests from the LTC and ensure improved service for the entire London community. If LTC were to receive anything less than the proposed 5.9% increase, we would experience a spiral effect of cuts to service and fare increases that could reverse any progress we've made on transit in the past few years. Make no mistake, transit is the USC's number one priority and as Mayor Holder said on Wednesday morning, the cost of inaction will outweigh the cost of the investment being proposed.

Over the past year, the USC has engaged in numerous conversations with students across campus about the issue of climate change. As young people, we are concerned about our future: over the past two decades, we have seen greenhouse gas emissions rise by more than 50% and as

each day passes, we are met with increasingly concerning news about the deterioration of our planet.

To protect our community, the USC is supporting **Business Case 1**, the 60% Waste Diversion Action Plan and **Business Cases 5A and 5B**, the development and implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Next, I want to urge Council to adopt **Business Case 23**, the Street Light Local Improvement program. We need dedicated funding to implement your commitment to create a safe London for women and girls, and investing in street lights is one way to do so. Our female students consistently tell us that they feel unsafe around the city when walking at night, largely due to a lack of sufficient lighting. This investment would be a step in the right direction to keep women and girls safe throughout London.

Finally, we support **Business Case 25**, the Winter Maintenance Program Support, which will significantly improve safety for students travelling to and from campus. We specifically support the prioritization of bike lanes, sidewalks, and bus stops in near-campus neighbourhoods in recognition of the fact that tens of thousands of young people travel by bike, foot, and bus every single day.

At our monthly council meeting last night, 48 student leaders representing every undergraduate and professional faculty at Western unanimously endorsed each of the requests included in my speech today. These are the priorities of 35,000 Londoners that the USC represents.

As always, we encourage you to reach out to your student constituents and the University Students' Council when discussing any major decision at your council table.

Thank you,

Catherine Dunne
USC Vice President