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RE: COVID-19 and Public Transit

March 18, 2020

Executive Board

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Dear Ministers,

Thank you for your dedication during this public health emergency. I am the President of ATU Canada and on behalf of our 34,000 transit workers in this country I am writing to voice our priorities during the COVID-19 crisis. We want to maintain open dialogue with decision-makers and ensure frequent communication to best serve transit workers and the public.

Here is an update on what ATU Canada is doing during this crisis.

We have been working around the clock during this crisis to deliver public transit for essential services workers on the frontlines. As transit professionals, we are acutely aware of the critical role of public transit to guarantee unrestricted access to mobility for emergency service providers, healthcare professionals, and grocery and retail workers. Workers are maintaining service but there are urgent priorities to address at the frontlines.

Through national and international townhalls and conference calls, we have been in daily communication with frontline staff about the most promising practices when it comes to dealing with COVID-19 on public transit. We are debriefing you on those priorities and are requesting to see a response from our elected Ministers on these needs.

1. At the recommendation of public health units across Canada, social distancing is critical to reduce the spread of COVID-19 virus. Therefore, it is critical that transit agencies maintain service at a level which maximizes social distancing, by sustaining service frequency which enables physical distance between riders and operators and ensuring that overcrowding is not happening.
2. During this time of heightened risk, our priorities are that the government provides transit workers the protections that are needed to do their jobs safely and the security to stay home from work if required. Therefore, we need to see the provincial and



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federal governments support local agencies to enhance personal protective equipment (PPE) for transit professionals and maintain payroll during this time.

We look forward to a response to our request to communicate frequently and, as always, we are ready to participate in any necessary work to fight this crisis together.

Sincerely,

John Di Nino
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