BY THE NUMBERS:

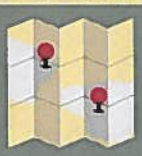
PROPOSED BUS FARE HIKE

10%

Percentage of monthly budget before tax, allotted to transit for one parent and one child on one minimum wage income.

65 vs. 222

Winnipeg's Council is proposing to spend only $65 million on transit while Edmonton spends $220 million



623 buses are operated by Winnipeg Transit

2125

number of pass ups in October 2017

30%

...increase in ridership in Winnipeg between 2003 and 2013

$195

... is how much a person on EIA receives monthly for food, clothing, and basic needs. Meanwhile, an adult bus card for the month will cost $100.

8

cities across Canada that offer reduced fares for low income. Winnipeg is not one of them

JOIN THE MOVEMENT

For more information or to sign on, contact
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kmuirhead@spcw.mb.ca

Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
Aboriginal Youth Opportunities
Canadian Community for Economic Development Network (MB)
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (MB)
Canadian Federation of Students/Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants – Manitoba Component
Canadian Mental Health Association
Circle of Life Thunderbird House
Council of Canadians Winnipeg
Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba
Functional Transit Winnipeg
Gang Action Interagency Network
Green Action Centre
Human Rights Hub
Immigration Partnership Winnipeg
Independent Living Resource Centre
Initiatives for Just Communities
Make Poverty History Manitoba
Manitoba Association of Community Health
Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties
Mosaic
North End Women's Centre
North Point Douglas Women's Centre
Onashowewin
Point Douglas Residents Committee
Resource Assistance for Youth
Restorative Justice Association of Manitoba
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg
Supporting Employment and Economic Development (SEED)
Spence Neighbourhood Association
Université de Saint-Boniface
West Broadway Community Organization
West Central Women's Resource Centre
Winnipeg Labour Council

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December 5th, 2017

Executive Policy Committee

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg has almost 100 year history of working to improve the lives of Winnipeggers through community led development. We operate on the basis that the people most effected by an issue have the better understanding of the harm done and what supports are needed to equip them to address it. Our vision is for a community that is sustainable, just, equitable and caring. We tend to focus on matters related to poverty as poverty is the largest barrier to full social inclusion.

Over the years, we have often played a supporting role in creating and maintaining coalitions. The last time such a stark transit fare increase was proposed at City Hall under the last Mayor and Council, SPCW played a leading role in bringing community together to oppose it through reasoned and evidenced based arguments. Along with some good old fashioned community activism.

Understanding fully the difficult position this city Council and Mayor have been put in by the provincial government, never the less, we are here to oppose both the proposed transit fare increase and decrease in services as both will exponentially harm those living in poverty. Since these were made public a coalition has formed in the hopes of convincing Council to find the matching funds elsewhere. We currently have 38 signatories, however, as some act as representative organizations themselves, we are here on behalf of over 100 organizations concerned as to how this will affect their participants and the city as a whole.

I realize that even with this increase, Winnipeg's transit fare will still be one of the lowest across the country. However, comparing our system of buses to others with buses, streetcars, subways, Go Trains etc... is not a fair comparison. A better comparison or perhaps lense, would be to examine a city's intent in providing a public transportation system. How does it best benefit all citizens?

Ottawa is one of the eight cities currently offering a low-income bus pass. Granted it has a larger population base than Winnipeg but neither does it receive any provincial funding. While the uptake in ridership as a result of this move did not meet expectations, instead of scrapping the pass, Ottawa is 'doubling-down'. They are bringing in a reduced fare on single tickets as well realizing that for some, even the reduced monthly pass still represents a significant amount of their income and unless they need to take the bus twice a day every day, it is not worth taking away from food and other necessities.

It is also imperative when comparing Winnipeg with other cities to note that we are the capital city of the province with the highest child poverty rates, a full 10% above the

national average, in Canada. Two of the three federal ridings with the highest child poverty rates are Churchill, Manitoba as the highest, with one in northern Saskatchewan being the second and Winnipeg Centre being the third. Winnipeg also remains a transient city for many as they cycle in and out unable to sustain themselves in their home communities or simply looking for more opportunities but continue to struggle here as their ability to access support programs, education and employment opportunities, is hampered by the lack of a fully resourced and robust transit system.

We are part of the Make Poverty History Manitoba coalition currently working on the community led poverty plan for the City of Winnipeg referenced by my colleague Josh Brandon. Our main role as been to ensure broader community engagement beyond 'the usual suspects'. To that end, we added community meetings in Charleswood and St-James knowing that while the inner city neighbourhoods still have the highest rates of poverty, there are pockets of poverty throughout as evidenced by the increasing expansion of food banks. In these sessions, transit was noted as key because the vast majority of programing and other supports still remain downtown. Even at the mid-point report back session this summer, attended by over 60 on a beautiful summer evening, the report's recommendations on transit garnered by far the most interest even above public safety and the Winnipeg Police Service.

We understand that infrastructure, namely road repair, has been identified as the top priority of the majority the city has surveyed. However, transit was second. We also have to note that those living in poverty are notoriously under-represented in such surveys. Again, we understand the position that the province has put the city in, however, public transit does have wide support. In fact, more and better transit is the goal of the even broader coalition that has come together around this issue.

We also understand that election promises were made around property taxes and Council feels an obligation to abide as best you can by those commitments. However, we want to let you know that we understand that property taxes were kept artificially low, as in unsustainable as evidenced in our decaying roads and other infrastructure, under the last Mayor and Council. The infrastructure deficit, like all deficits, was created much more quickly than it will take to reverse it. We are here to urge you all to look at the cost of increasing the social deficit that poverty represents as an unacceptable trade off. Not addressing poverty does come with its' own costs.

Finally, SPCW is a community partner in developing Our Winnipeg's priorities for the next five years. At the community meeting we co-hosted last night, we were asked to focus on five areas: quality of life, how we grow, how we get around, health and safety and civic engagement and governance. How public transit affects the first four is easy enough to see. I could also make the argument that public transit is also essential for civic engagement. However, the subject of governance sparked a conversation around the relationship between the city and provincial governments.

Given that the majority of Manitobans live in Winnipeg and that is only set to increase in the coming years, and 31 of the 57 provincial ridings are also in Winnipeg, I would like to assure you and the rest of Council of our support in rallying those numbers to engage with the province to reinstate the 50/50 funding agreement. However, first we hope to see Council re-commit to this essential public service for the good of all.

Sincerely,



Kate Kehler,
Executive Director