March 18, 2020. This was what I wrote to present to EPC earlier today. However, after waiting for three hours, at #73 I could not afford -- financially -- to return after the lunch break, especially without any indication of how much longer I would have to wait. The process is not designed for regular citizens like me who want to present ideas and concern. It assumes I have a full day to spend at City Hall, and does nothing to make it easy to speak to EPC (or Council, I presume).

Good morning. My name is Dorothy Wigmore. A resident of the Wolseley area, I am one of the many people in this city who are very concerned about this proposed budget.

I am disappointed that the process was not participatory as I know the practice, despite stated intentions. City residents were not properly consulted about their priorities before staff were asked how to implement the results. Then the time allowed to review the proposals was short, and no allowance was made for the pandemic's effects, other than speeding up the timing.

Like many others, I also am very upset with the proposals themselves. The cuts -- to so many services that regular people need and rely on -- will harm so many in so many ways. They are all the more upsetting given the lack of courage to increase revenue and to be creative for the greater good.

Today, I will focus on the proposed choices for public transit.

I count on Transit to get around. That's how I got here today, using my Peggo card. I'm not alone.

I use it to get to work, medical and social appointments, events or gatherings. I do this because of the climate emergency, to get exercise, and to support public services. As a public health professional, I know Winnipeg Transit is a key part of the infrastructure we need for the public good.

So it occurred to me to ask EPC members: When was the last time you took a bus? Why don't you use it? Is it a class thing? A sign of white and/or economic privilege? Or is it because it's often unreliable and can't get you where you want to go in a reasonable time? If so, what does that mean for the rest of us? About the improvements needed to increase ridership?

As someone with white privilege and a small income, and a public health view of the world, I'm concerned with the haste and lack of public discussion about the cuts to this much-needed service. The current pandemic emphasises the need

for social solidarity, especially with people like many I see on buses. It's not something that we need only in crises; we need it to be part of our regular governance principles.

Whether it's the loss of the U-Pass, getting rid of the Downtown Spirit, cutting service to 14 routes (including the number 10 in my neighbourhood), reducing feeder routes or ignoring the Transit Master Plan, the proposed 2020 multi-million dollar operating funding cuts to Transit are short-sighted, ill-informed and the wrong choices to make if you want an efficient and effective transit service.

Yes, there is a cut (from $70.561 million in 2019 to $67.363 in 2020), despite promised increases in subsequent years. I fear more of those broken promises, given the history of City budgets. After all, the 2015 one said that Winnipeg Transit would get $97 million this year, more than $29.5 million less than in this budget. And there is less money projected for 2021 now than was promised last year. These are real cuts, despite the narrative about promised increases that are less than past ones.

As a citizen and taxpayer, I do not want any cuts to Transit or other City services. I want my representatives and the staff behind these proposals, to step back, to re-think the goals, priorities, options and choices.

Consider the appeals you have heard and the suggestions about better choices. Consider the public good, the needs of people with less resources than you have, the climate emergency and the consequences of the pandemic. Consider the missing voices and experiences of those who aren't able to make presentations before EPC or Council, or who are reluctant to do so for fear of being ignored or patronised. Consider the need for increased revenue and creative ways to find it.

When the pandemic is over, we will need frequent service throughout the city, a good network to make it easy to get around, and inexpensive or free fares to encourage ridership. We need the Transit Master Plan to be implemented as quickly as possible, in an effective way that doesn't take access away from some while providing it to others. Studies and experiences elsewhere tell us that's what in a good public transit system.

As an occupational health specialist, I also know that Transit staff need effective support-- for their health and safety, respect for their skills and the hard job they do, and paying attention to their concerns and suggestions about making Winnipeg Transit a better place to work and a better system for all of us.

Do the right thing. Given the serious effects of the cuts, and the pandemic -- from how it affects participation in the budget process to the horrific anticipated economic consequences -- don't speed things up on this budget that will be in place for four years.

Delay your decisions beyond the what's needed to fund essentials for the next fiscal year. Consult more effectively with citizens, NGOs and others about their priorities and preferred choices.

Later, make decisions that show social solidarity isn't just for pandemics. It's for four-year budgets too.

Thanks for your attention.