September 23, 2026

Members of Council,

I am urging you to reject the proposed motion to remove the employee-status requirement for Winnipeg Transit Plus drivers. This motion is **regressive**, **anti-worker**, and **anti-disability**, undoing protections Council put in place three years ago for very clear reasons.

Council acted in 2023 because Transit Plus had a documented history of **serious driver and passenger safety complaints**—issues directly tied to the former subcontractor model. Drivers lacked breaks, faced unsafe scheduling, and passengers reported inconsistent and at times dangerous service conditions. The employee requirement was introduced to stabilize the workforce, ensure accountability, and prevent the exploitation that had become routine.
Transit Plus is not a secondary or lesser service. It is a legislated parallel to fixed-route transit. Hours of operation, fare structures, and service expectations must be equal. We would never accept a system where fixed-route bus drivers are treated as "subcontractors," responsible for their own fuel, repairs, and vehicle costs. We would immediately recognize that as absurd and unsafe. Yet this motion attempts to re-introduce precisely that model for the service used by people with disabilities.

Under Canada Revenue Agency rules, a genuine independent contractor must control their tools, choose or refuse work, set their schedule, and operate independently. None of this has ever been true for Transit Plus drivers. They do not own their vehicles—they lease them from the contract owners. They cannot drive for other companies. They must complete work assigned by the City, in vehicles bearing the City's logo. This is not subcontracting.

The motion also proposes to **remove public disclosure of bidding information**, eliminating transparency and increasing the risk of collusion or price-fixing. Public accountability is essential in accessible transportation procurement, not an administrative burden.

Further, the motion removes the rule requiring inflationary increases in contracts to be passed directly to drivers. The rationale offered—that the protection is already in the contracts—is illogical**. If the rule is being followed, that is evidence it is working**. Removing it virtually guarantees it will be excluded from future contracts. It is naïve to pretend otherwise.

If the stated problem is difficulty recruiting drivers, the solution is straightforward: pay drivers more and strengthen working conditions to improve retention. Instead, this motion gives companies more power to withhold money from workers. We know why: some firms have relied on temporary foreign workers in the passenger transportation sector, promising high earnings but delivering sub-minimum wages, no overtime, no CPP or EI, and no labour protections. This is exploitation, and it places public safety at risk.

Finally, it is deeply concerning that this motion is being advanced at the final Council meeting, by an outgoing Public Works Committee, who will not bear the consequences of this unjust decision. The disability community will. Workers will. Passengers will.

This motion is **anti-labour**, **anti-transparency**, and **anti-disability**. Council must reject it.

Respectfully submitted,

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