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November 29, 2011

Mr. Denis Kelly, Clerk
The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

**REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE**

FILE No. - *903*

Dear Mr. Kelly:

RE: Deputation – York Transit Strike

I have enclosed a copy of a deputation to the Town of Newmarket Council by a resident and York Region Transit worker at the November 28, 2011 Council meeting.

The following recommendation was adopted:

THAT the deputation by Ms. Lori Rose, resident, regarding the York Region transit strike be received and referred to the Region of York.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Moore
Director of Legislative Services

AM:lm

Enclosure (1)

Deputation to the Town of Newmarket Council
by Lori Rose
Resident and York Region Transit Worker
November 28, 2011

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Lori Rose. I have been a resident of Newmarket for just over 20 years and I have been paying my taxes to the town for all that time.

I have been a bus operator for First Student and am a proud member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1587.

Since October 24, First Student workers have been on legal strike, along with our fellow Local 1587 members who work at Miller Transit and ATU Local 113 members who work at Viva. It was a very difficult decision to make. Being on strike is very hard on us personally and also hard on our passengers who rely on transit. We know they are hurting and they deserve an explanation as to why we took this action. Let me explain as best I can, using myself as an example.

My day begins at 3:45 a.m., when my alarm goes off. I report for work at 5:15 a.m. I have to get to bed when most people are settling in for primetime TV. I have to be well-rested because as a bus operator I have to be alert every single second I am in that seat. A moment's inattention can have serious, even fatal consequences. Like all my fellow operators, I take my public responsibilities very seriously.

After 10 years on the job, I get paid \$22.53 an hour for these responsibilities. This is about two dollars an hour less than the average full-time worker in Ontario makes and is about six to seven dollars an hour *less* than I would be paid if I drove the same bus in Brampton, Mississauga, Durham Region or Toronto.¹

I have a basic benefits package and I pay part of the cost of that package, something that other transit workers in the GTA don't have to do. But at least I have *some* benefits.

What we need is paid sick days. If I am sick or not feeling well when I wake up, I have to make a decision. Am I well enough to go to work and take on the responsibility of operating that bus?

If I decide that there's just no way I can safely operate my bus, I take a 20 per cent pay cut that week. We are put in the position of having to choose our income over public safety. It's not right but it's just reality that on any given day there may be York Region Transit workers out there who should *not* be driving a bus. But they cannot afford to take the day off to go see a doctor or just to ride out the flu. Does this seem like sensible public policy to you? Would you want your child to be on a bus with a driver who is sick?

Let me ask you this, when *you are sick are you* financially penalized when you can't make a meeting? And what about your pay? How does it compare to others doing the same job?

¹ October 2011 average hourly wage for permanent employees in Ontario is \$24.37. Statistics Canada

It is my understanding that in 2007 the Town of Newmarket hired AON Consulting to conduct a review of your salaries and benefits and *compared* your salaries to those of 11 other municipalities. The consultant's report found that the salaries of the Mayor and Regional Councillors were *low* in comparison to the 11 other municipalities reviewed. So council voted *unanimously* to raise their own salaries. The Mayor got a raise of \$16,000 and the Councillors got a raise of \$12,000.

If pay equity is good enough for the Mayor and the Councillors, why isn't it good enough for those working for the Region? Please respect and treat us as fairly as you have treated yourself.

As John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council told York Region Council recently, our union has *not* asked for wage and benefit parity with transit workers in the rest of the GTA. But we have to make *some* progress towards that eventual goal. Unfortunately, it may not come until after I am retired. If I can *afford* to retire, that is. Did I mention that we have no pension plan? Every other transit system in the GTA has a pension plan except York Region, the richest area in Canada.

Here's the solution: We are all willing to go back to work *tomorrow* if the companies will agree to a neutral arbitration process. It's that simple.

The Regional Chairman, Mr. Fisch, is only one person. He alone does not decide the fate of the taxpayer's Transit system.

Mr. Mayor...Councillors...we have elected you to make a difference for our town; for the transit workers. Please help us get back to work by insisting that we move to arbitrate immediately.

We all know...it's the right thing to do.

Thank you.