



Community and Health Services Department
Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community Services and Housing Committee Members

FROM: Joann Simmons, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: August 25, 2008

RE: **York Region Transit Committee Report
Community-Based Social Services Discount Pilot Program**

On Thursday September 11, 2008, Transit Committee will receive a report entitled York Region Transit Community-Based Social Services Discount Program. This is a joint report between myself and the Commissioner of Transportation Services.

This report seeks Regional Council's approval to proceed with a program to supply discounted transit fares to community-based social services agencies. A discount of 15% on an adult transit fare is proposed as this is in keeping with the discount presently provided under the Ridesaver program. A one-year pilot project is proposed to distribute discounted transit tickets through local municipal offices to 12 pre-selected agencies that provide services to people who are homeless. A list of those agencies is included in the report.

The Community and Health Services Department was contacted by York Region Transit (YRT) staff to provide input regarding the feasibility of offering discounted transit fares to residents who access social services. It was agreed that this could be an important support to helping low-income residents. Agencies providing support to homeless residents were selected because these people are among our most vulnerable. The tickets are seen as a more economical approach to the agencies' existing practice of paying taxi fares for client travel. Discounted transit tickets will enable these agencies to stretch their budgets further and help more people. More affordable, accessible transit will help residents find and keep jobs, find housing and obtain other critical supports.

A pilot program is recommended to enable the Region to assess the response to the program and whether to recommend its implementation on a broader scope. It will also enable municipal ticket agents to become accustomed to the new program and gather their input prior to implementing a larger-scale initiative. An evaluation of the project will be taken at the end of one year. The evaluation will identify the number of participants and the satisfaction of both participants and agencies. Community-based social services agencies may also participate in the evaluation.

This pilot program will make it possible for residents who are homeless to more easily look for housing, employment and other supports that will assist them to become contributing members to the Region's communities and economy.

Transportation Services and Community and Health Services staff will continue to collaborate as needed.

MB/kn