



Richmond Centre for Disability

“Promoting a new perspective on disability”

March 21, 2016

Hon. Teresa Wat
Minister for International Trade &
Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific Strategy & Multiculturalism
MLA, Richmond Centre

Dear Hon. Minister Wat,

Thank you for your email on March 7, 2016, and we appreciate your taking time in responding and paying attention to this important matter to people with disabilities in BC.

We all agree that transportation is a basic need, as acknowledged by Finance Minister Mike de Jong in his speech to the legislature. In the tabled provincial budget, people with disabilities are facing a predicament of choosing between food and transportation. The reality is that people with disabilities who would otherwise use transit under the current system are likely to choose to spend that \$52 on shelter, food and clothing instead of getting out. Social isolation of people with disabilities serves no one, and it runs counter to the goals of Accessibility 2024, which sets out to make BC one of the most inclusive provinces in Canada. This will not reflect well on our provincial government.

In your email, you did not shed light on why low income seniors are still able to purchase the bus pass for a flat annual fee of \$45, thus not facing such hard choice. Moreover it is indeed a convoluted rationale to comprehend the claim that the existing Bus Pass Program is to be eliminated in order to be fairer to people with disabilities in rural communities where transit is less available. Bear in mind that a current non-transit user is not being disadvantaged by the existence of the Bus Pass Program, how would removing the program be fairer, as current transit users are the only ones harmed by this change? In fact, the new increase structure would provide triple the amount of additional income - \$77 as opposed to \$25 - to a non-transit user, in areas where the total cost of living is generally significantly lower than urban centres.

If the change is such a fairer and better one, why the BC Government would not make the same change to low income seniors? Is it because when the former Liberal Government under Gordon Campbell tried, there was such an outcry from the senior community that the decision was reversed? Why should people with disabilities be treated with any less respect? We appreciate your response. Thank you.

Vince Miele, RCD Board Chair

cc. MLA Richmond East Hon. Linda Reid, MLA Richmond-Steveston Mr. John Yap

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