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June 24, 2020

Re: 2020-21 Metrolinx Business Plan

Dear Mr. Vester,

I am writing to respond to the 2020-21 Metrolinx Business Plan, which is on the agenda at Metrolinx's June 25 board meeting.

As a public transit agency responsible for providing a critical public service, it is important the yearly business plan approval process is more transparent, accountable, and democratic. To ensure the best decisions are made, the public should be given ample time and opportunity to review and give feedback on a detailed budget in writing, in meetings, and via deputations. This is not happening. It should.

I have reviewed the 2020-21 business plan and I have the following questions, concerns, and requests that I would like Metrolinx to respond to. They include:

As noted in the business plan, October 2022 marks the expiry of PRESTO's primary supplier and technology agreement. Starting in 2020-21, Metrolinx is beginning the work to re-outsource PRESTO before the contract expires. PRESTO has many problems. Back in 2014, the Auditor General called PRESTO the most expensive fare collection system in the western world. I believe this assessment still holds true. Starting this year, PRESTO will take 9% of all fare revenue from 905-area municipal transit agencies – a commission rate that is many times higher than what other fare payment services charge. Despite the high cost, PRESTO remains plagued with service issues, and the technology is already outdated.

Can Metrolinx lower the PRESTO fare commission rate paid by 905-municipal transit agencies?

In light of the approaching contract expiry, it is time for a review of the value of PRESTO and the value of privatized fare collection versus public fare collection. Can Metrolinx commit to this review?

Metrolinx's Transit Oriented Communities strategy is expected to contribute $40 million a year in subsidy reduction from proceeds of sale of assets. Could Metrolinx please make public what specific public assets the agency is planning on selling, to whom, and when? In addition, could Metrolinx clarify how the sale of these assets will impact the ownership and control of GO stations?

Could Metrolinx clarify why they are spending $200 million on "bid fees"? What are these bid fees?

Who will receive this bid fee money, and why?

I welcome a meeting to discuss these matters, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Jessica Bell

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