

Good Afternoon Councillors, Mr. Mayor, Deputy Mayor

I am Sandra Walker, President of CUPE Local 5167. CUPE 5167 represents the Inside Workers and Drivers of DARTS.

Just to refresh everyone's memory, Over the past two plus years, HSR recommended and City Council directed DARTS to make drastic cuts to their budget under the threat of DARTS very existence.

The directive was make the cuts or the provision of works goes out to an RFP.

As a reminder I am referring to;

- 1 million cut in 2016
- An additional 1.5 million cut in 2017
- As well as there **was the** very little talked about financial hit DARTS took when HSR transferred approximately 1.2 million in vehicle costs to DARTS who now had to work that burden into the annual (already reduced) operating costs.
- Today we have a total impact of 3.7 million in cuts.

It is the opinion of **the frontline workers at DARTS**, that the HSR has been overzealous in their cutting of budgets. Too much, too fast and **NO** long-term plan laid out.

The HSR operates under a comprehensive 10-year plan. It does not seem to be the case with Accessible Transit. Why is this not the case? This is not equitable treatment for Accessible Transit users.

A 10-year strategy would have been helpful when HSR was directing DARTS to major fleet changes. In 2016 Direction was issued several months into the year to make 1 million dollars worth of cuts and undertake immediate fleet changes after years of having the fleet makeup frozen. Accessible transit vehicles are a specialty market **and are a special order that is not sitting on dealership lot.**

Unfortunately, it was reported to council in 2016 that it would only take a couple of months to source and get delivery of new vehicles. And we know that's not **reality.**

Drivers and Schedulers are experiencing unprecedented stress because of the increased focus on picking up and delivering a targeted number of passengers per hour. To reduce costs, schedules are packed. However, DARTS is still expected to deliver passengers in reasonable time frames and stay on schedule.

Keep in mind this is not a fixed route service, it is door to door service and DARTS delivers people not packages.

- Every passenger is escorted to and from the vehicle to their destination or home – Passengers with accessibility issues move at different speeds than the rest of us.
- Sometimes passengers aren't ready – and often for good reason, when the driver arrives.
- **Unpredictable traffic, accidents** and Inclement weather that DARTS has no control over – adds to the pressure. This is especially a problem with door to door service as passengers don't necessarily live on Priority one roads.

- Geography – passengers live anywhere from Binbrook to rural Waterdown, and from Copetown to the North End. Some passenger may travel a small distance while others are going from one end of the city to another.

With schedules packed beyond capacity, in order to stay under the Reduced budget, I fear we will see increases to customer complaints on ride times, late or missed pick ups and increased complaints about staff due to their onerous workload. I worry that the health and safety our passengers and drivers is at risk due to the rushed atmosphere.

As presented by Mark Mindorff in his Presentation to the Accessible Transit Sub Committee.

DARTS Drivers have seen their hourly wages dramatically decrease from 2015! They are experiencing wage decreases ranging from \$4.60 per hour to \$6.85 per hour.

In addition to that, Drivers who are expecting to work an 8-hour day are having their trips taken off their schedule, transferred onto other already packed schedules and they are being sent home after only 4 to 6 hours of their 8-hour shift. They don't get paid when they get sent home.

A 40 hour per week driver may have lost between \$9,000 and \$14,000 per year in gross income based on the reduced hourly wage alone, more when factoring in shortened shifts.

We are not talking about people who are earning huge amounts of money. The wages for DARTS Front Line Workers (Drivers as well as Mechanics, Maintenance Department, Reservation and Dispatch) are NOT in line with other accessible transit services or with HSR.

For example; Hamilton's own HSR Regular Transit Operators earn 25-55% more than DARTS Drivers. Care-A-Van drivers at Oakville Transit earn 22% to 53% more than DARTS Drivers.

We are asking you to take a second look at the budget for DARTS for 2018 and give more than just consideration to reviewing the Budget Cuts that have taken place over the past 2 years. Front line DARTS Workers are telling you now...you need to restore 3.7 million back to DARTS to preserve service.

Accessible transit should garner the same amount of attention and consideration and the Passengers and Employees need to not be treated like second class citizens.

Praising DARTS for meeting budget cut expectations on the backs of their passengers and employees is not praise worthy.