



November 24, 2017

Dear Mayor Nenshi and Members of City Council

RE: Sliding Scale Low Income Transit Pass

Vibrant Communities Calgary (VCC) would like to recognize the City of Calgary's leadership as it strives to ensure that all Calgarians can access the right supports, services and resources in our city. VCC supports administration's request for a budget adjustment to the Low Income Transit Pass program and we urge city council to approve it.

Poverty is all too often hidden from our daily view; however, the higher than predicted demand for the sliding scale makes visible the reach of poverty into the lives of many Calgarians. The number of people qualifying for the lowest band of the sliding scale demonstrates the extreme poverty experienced by many of Calgary's most vulnerable citizens. We believe that the sliding scale is making a dramatic impact on the individuals and families who are able to access affordable transit and aligns with Enough for All, our community's poverty reduction strategy.

Poverty has a number of root causes that interact with and reinforce each other, creating a complex web of barriers that work against people's efforts to lift themselves out of poverty. Conversely, programs such as the sliding scale assists in reducing the effects of poverty far beyond the ability to simply access public transit. The Enough for All strategy acknowledges that one of the most common impacts of poverty is social isolation, which has been shown to have detrimental effects on physical, emotional, and mental health. Access to public transit increases the ability of all Calgarians to create and maintain strong networks of personal support and friendship which aligns with the stated goal that all Calgary communities are strong, supportive, and inclusive.

Research cited in the Enough for All report, indicated that in 2009 only 11 per cent of households with the lowest incomes accessed a community service in the previous year. A significant barrier to accessing the myriad services offered within the city was the cost of transportation. Research tells us that by overcoming barriers such as cost, these programs can have significant positive impacts in the wellbeing of individuals and families. The sliding scale helps to ensure that our fellow citizens can easily access the right supports, services, and resources when they are needed the most.

The City of Calgary's willingness to be a leader in implementing poverty reduction strategies such as the sliding scale transit pass is a testament to the values and ideals held by Calgarians. As we move forward together, Vibrant Communities Calgary is committed to working with all orders of government to ensure that the sliding scale remains a viable tool in crafting a city of engaged, healthy, and compassionate citizens where the idea of "my neighbour's strength is my strength" is realized and animated in our daily lives.

Sincerely,

Franco Savera

Executive Director