

January 20, 2020

General Issues Committee
Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Dear General Issues Committee Members:

I am respectfully submitting this letter to the General Issues Committee as the President of Mohawk College and former chair of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce on Workforce Development. I am asking the city to expand transit services and consider alternatives to the current area rating system.

One of the enablers of economic growth and city-building is efficient and reliable public transit. From Mohawk's perspective, there are two main areas of concern with respect to transit in Hamilton. The first is access to public transit for our students, and the second is the need for a transit system that connects people with employers.

For many Mohawk students, public transit is critical to obtaining a postsecondary education. More than half of Mohawk students rely on the HSR, taking an average of 191,000 trips per month from September to April. Hamilton is a geographically diverse and increasingly expanding area. Many students live in areas of the city where transit options are limited. Getting to and from our campuses and learning hubs can be a significant challenge for our students. Our Stoney Creek students have voiced concerns for many years about the challenges of getting to our Barton Street campus by bus, due to sporadic service. Other locations face similar challenges. This September, Mohawk will open a new aviation training facility at the airport in partnership with KF Aerospace. The new facility will train up to 600 students per year. However, many of these students do not own vehicles and will find it difficult to get to and from this location if there is not adequate bus service available.

For many students, not being able to access transit can be a barrier to obtaining an education. For others, not being able to access transit can be a barrier to a better life. Through my involvement with the Blue Ribbon Taskforce on Workforce Development and more recently through the discussions we've had with business and community leaders as part of our Challenge 2025 initiative, the issue of public transit has been a recurring theme.



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Many Hamilton employers need workers to fill entry-level positions. A key challenge with filling these vacant jobs is getting people to where those jobs are located. Some of these businesses are in areas where transit service is infrequent or even unavailable, like the airport, the Ancaster Business Park, the Stoney Creek Business Centre, and the Red Hill Business Park, amongst others.

There are people in Hamilton who need these jobs. For them, the entry-level job could be an opportunity to move off Ontario Works and a chance at a fresh start. While transit is accessible to many of these people, they cannot access stable employment because transit is not available to where the jobs are located, in growing employment areas. This needs to change. This change can lead to a pathway out of poverty.

Mohawk College urges the City of the Hamilton to work toward a solution that is in the best interest of the entire community. Changes to the transit area rating and expansion of service will help to transform lives and help Hamilton prosper, something that is a shared value for both of us.

Regards,



Ron J. McKerlie
President