

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

While I have been very vocal on the recent changes to HSR policy, the issue of accessible fare payment seems to get confused with the issue of free fare and so I must make this one last attempt to warn you about what is about to happen.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the HSR will be in a position to discriminate and deny service on the basis of disability. Drivers would be doing so in full accordance with City policy. If a person can't handle a card or wallet, or cannot reach the scanner placement for whatever reason, they can be denied service. If they cannot board at the front and require back door access, they can be denied service, because they can't pay fare at the front. HSR will say our drivers always have discretion to require payment or not, but it shouldn't be an issue at all. Many drivers will show empathy, but many will follow the rules to the letter.

I will make no argument here regarding free fare for any group, however, I will remind you that voluntary pay was not put in place to be altruistic and give people with disabilities financial assistance, it was put in place because HSR couldn't figure out accessible fare payment. The HSR has a number of ways to solve the problem now and are choosing not to. How can the TTC provide an accessible transit environment, but our own bus service cannot?

This is not an abstract problem for me; I know I will be one of those passengers to be denied service. There are many days when I cannot hold a card, or a wallet, or a phone, or a mouse or use a keyboard, etc. I know for a fact that I cannot reach and stretch to the scanner as it is designed and have told the HSR that on multiple occasions. I am certain that I am not the only one with these issues. I cannot use DARTS as it is designed; my condition requires me to live day by day, not a week in advance, so the HSR has always been my only option. I will be denied service not because I don't want to pay, but because I cannot as it is set up.

Drivers refuse to drop the back ramp, because that is what they have been told to do. To say that people always have the option to use the back door when they need to use it is misrepresenting the reality of the situation. In the past year, I have only had the driver drop the back ramp for me three times, but my requests number in the dozens. Every time I board and find my way blocked I ask, and am told no. Drivers have been given clear

instructions on this, because there are no fare payment options except at the front.

I have tried to raise alarms about this plan for more than a year and this is my final plea before it goes into effect. HSR knows all this through the many consultations they like to list for you, but none of those consultations has resulted in any accommodations from them. Their idea of accommodation is to be trained by the HSR to overcome our disabilities. This is simply not possible. If we could conform, we wouldn't be disabled.

Declaring that the HSR has no choice but to use Presto for all fare payment ignores the fact that they still produce bus tickets for organizations. If they can do that, why can't they set up a small non-digital option for less than a thousand people?

We cannot discriminate on the basis of a disability. It is against the OHRC and doesn't adhere to the four pillars of IDEA that have been adopted by the City of Hamilton. On that basis alone I ask that this process be paused until the HSR has provided some accommodation to those unable to use the current configuration. It is not about should we pay, rather it is about can we physically pay.

Please stop this before it is too late.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Kemp