

## **Delegation to Committee of the Whole, Budget Submissions February 7 2019**

Your Worship Mayor Meed Ward, Councillors, Staff and Fellow Citizens.

Today I delegate on behalf of Burlington Senior's Advisory Committee on two items concerning the safety and wellbeing of seniors in our city and to ask that budget consideration be given to both.

### Sidewalks on roadways leading to Brant Hills Community Centre:

Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee feel the need to bring to council's attention: the fact that at present there are no sidewalks on the roadways into Brant Hills Community Centre from either Brant Street or Duncaster Drive and to ask that council consider providing sidewalks on these approach roads.

Such an undertaking aligns with a city wide policy of providing sidewalks in older neighbourhoods to improve safe walking and mobility; particularly for the elderly and the young and on approaches to schools and surrounding streets. It only makes sense that similar policies should apply to city facilities used by children, youth, adults and seniors.

Our request is also supportive of a Parks and Recreation Programs Initiative which encourages seniors activities in facilities throughout the city, boosting local participation in support of The City's Active Aging Plan and improving the utilisation of all city amenities and taking pressure off the already over loaded Seniors Centre.

As Burlington Seniors work with the city to increase transit usage by seniors, who often have no other means of transport, it seems counterproductive to encourage the use of Brant Hills, encourage transit ridership to get there, then expose seniors to potential risk as they walk in on a roadway with no sidewalks. It goes without saying that seniors with other mobility issues are at even greater risk when using the facility. The same risk also exists for seniors using the library at Brant Hills independently of city programs as it does for children, teens, moms with strollers, and other adults using the facility.

We respectfully request that council consider a direction to staff to analyse the issue, determine the cost to install such sidewalks at Brant Hills and make provision in the 2019 budget to carry out the work.

This may be a less onerous request than you think. As some of you will recall, delegations from other local citizens have argued against the imposition of this sidewalk policy and persuaded council not to proceed with those sidewalks in their neighbourhoods. Tonight Burlington Seniors respectfully suggest that the unused funds allocated for these sidewalk projects be re-allocated to Brant Hills Community Centre.

### Free transit for Seniors during Off-Peak Hours:

The second thing that Burlington Seniors would ask council to consider in the 2019 budget is something we have discussed before. Two years ago Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee asked Council to consider an innovative and compassionate way to fill the empty buses we see on our streets in the off-peak periods of the day.

The Advisory Committee requested that the Transit Department provide free transit for seniors during off-peak hours, specifically 10.00 am until 2.30 pm on weekdays, Monday to Friday.

The detailed case for this is spelled out in the Burlington Seniors' Advisory position paper *"Improving Transit for Seniors Improves Transit for Everybody"*, a copy of which is provided in the delegation package but may be summarised as.:

A plea, not only to fill Burlington's mostly empty, off-peak buses but to provide details on the impact of increased ridership on: Reducing Traffic Congestion, Improving Road Safety, Reducing CO2 Emissions, Providing a Dignified Alternative for seniors who lose their Driver's Licence due to age related health issues. It also

outlines many economic benefits for the city and local businesses as well as health benefits to seniors who suffer from social isolation.

Essentially it is about getting people, particularly seniors, out of cars, addressing the paradox that those most in need of public transit are those least able to afford it and most importantly, helping Burlington be the City that Moves as projected in The Strategic Plan.

The buses already run, too often, almost empty, during those off-peak hours; so the only cost is an amount of lost revenue and that is not overwhelming. Based on seniors ridership figures from 2016 it might cost between \$48,500 per year and \$72,750 depending on the rate of uptake. A former Director of Burlington Transit agreed the cost would be less than \$100,000. The cost is less than one half of one percent of the city transit budget.

It is entirely possible that provincial funding for transit, a complex formula based on increasing transit ridership (not revenue) might increase enough to offset much of any loss of revenue.

I know councillors do not need reminding that increasing transit ridership, reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety, reducing emissions, providing economic benefit for local businesses and improving the health and wellbeing of our seniors were somewhere on most of your election platforms. The Advisory Committee's proposal helps our city and our seniors achieve all of these.

Over the years Burlington has sought the advice of experts such as Jarrett Walker, Brent Toderian and others through transit and road use studies; all of which conclude that the best way to get people out of cars onto transit is to make the transit option the popular option. And believe me this idea of filling off peak buses is popular. Talk to seniors, talk to their families; talk to your neighbours your constituents. Talk to those who have lost their ability to drive due to age or infirmity or the 7,000 Burlington seniors who live at or below the poverty line and for whom transit is a necessity not an option. That same previous Transit Director's biggest concern was that Free Transit for Seniors would prove so popular, that once implemented, it would be impossible to rescind.

Surely the whole point of a transit system should be to make public transit popular.

Burlington Seniors' Advisory Committee urges council to direct Burlington Transit; "To implement Free Transit for Seniors during off-peak hours. From 10.00 am to 2.30 pm, Monday to Friday, and to present staff with an operating budget proposal to do so"

On behalf of Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee, Thank you for your attention to these matters. We look forward to your consideration of them and the budget allocations to implement them.

Jim Young, for Burlington Seniors Advisory Committee.