



For Immediate Release
December 8, 2015

B.C. Seniors Advocate States Transit Commission Decision Not to Increase Seniors' Pass a Good First Step

Victoria – Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie applauded the decision of the Victoria Transit Commission not to increase the cost of a monthly seniors pass, but is still concerned about the overall cost of transit for low-income seniors.

“Given the timing and the information in front of them, I think the commission made the best decision that they could to support seniors,” stated Mackenzie who presented her concerns to the Commission at their public meeting in Victoria Monday.

Options being considered were increases of monthly seniors' passes from the existing \$540 a year to either \$624 or \$780 a year in respective fare review options.

Mackenzie is advocating a graduated fare that would align with ability to pay. Currently seniors with an income of \$17,280 or less and in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), are eligible for the BC Bus Pass, which costs \$45 annually.

“My concern is that if your income is just one dollar over the threshold, a senior immediately must pay the cost of the existing monthly bus pass, which at current prices, translates to \$540 yearly, and that is quite a gap.”

A more progressive approach, says the Advocate, would see the amount a senior pays slowly increase from the \$45 amount, as their income increases. There is a current sliding scale formula in place for low-income seniors who access MSP Premium Assistance. The ceiling is \$30,000 for all seniors in B.C.

“Transit could develop a parallel program for purposes of establishing an annual pass for seniors that would allow seniors in receipt of premium assistance to qualify. There would be no need for BC Transit to verify income, that is done when the senior qualifies for premium assistance. The administrative burden would be very low and it would ensure that the greatest subsidy goes to those seniors in greatest need, which is a progressive approach to providing subsidies.”

Attached is a copy of Mackenzie's presentation to the Victoria Transit Commission.

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