

C-4

To the TTC Commission, 17 August 2014.
From Philip Webb.
Re Shelter Buses for the Police & Fire Depts.

Report 8g is a belated response to a Commission request in November 2012, which followed an incident in which the Mayor made use of a TTC bus after attending a youth football match, allegedly for security reasons.

The justification offered was that police regularly summon TTC buses when anyone needs emergency accommodation after an accident of some kind.

c 75 incidents occur in typical winter months & c 15 in other months ; additional cost to the TTC ranges from \$ 500 - 8500 / month , which is not re-imbursed by the other departments which use the vehicles.

Staff ask to be relieved of the burden of reporting incidents in future.

While it is true that the extra financial cost is very small in comparison to other TTC expenditures, the report misses the real point, which is that every one of these incidents has a definite impact on the quality of service experienced by TTC customers, who may in some cases be forced to exit a bus, perhaps in bad weather, & in all cases face reduced service on the route affected, in order to make the vehicle available to the Police or Fire Depts.

The report does not explain how this practice of lending out buses got started, how long ago it was or whether the Commission authorised it ; there is no evidence that City Council has ever considered the matter as the ultimate arbiter of the use of City resources & taxpayer funding.

It may well have begun with an occasional request in an emergency, which TTC staff felt obliged to honor out of humanitarian concern & in a context of plenty of spare vehicles, which could be supplied directly from a garage or quickly replaced if already in service.

Today, the context is quite different. Your CEO reports this month (sect 2.1 p 5) that "buses break down at far too high a rate ...

as we squeeze every ounce of availability from our <bus> fleet ...

We are seeking to expand off-peak service to lower crowding levels ...

Careful juggling of our fleet will enable us to meet both objectives".

It is bus service -- the mainstay of the suburban areas of the City -- which is under the most pressure these days, even more than the subway or the much-publicised problems with the King & Queen street cars.

The TTC does not have buses to spare to provide a free service to the Police & Fire Depts, which seem to assume first claim on vehicles belonging to another vital City utility, whose customers pay for service.

These demands, unauthorised by Council or probably by the Commission, amount to 2.5 incidents/day in winter, when weather conditions are worst, & 1 every 2 days otherwise, in every case inconveniencing TTC riders.

It is high time that this practice was ended & the Police & Fire Services procured their own emergency shelter vehicles out of their own budgets.

The cost would not be excessive & such dedicated vehicles could be equipped to provide a much better level of protection & support for their clients.

A more appropriate type of vehicle might be the kind of trailers used by film crews, which are often to be seen at locations in the City.

Softer seating, couches, medicine, food, books, toys for children could all be on hand, based on actual needs determined by the experience of Police & Fire personnel when managing their various emergencies.

This small specialised fleet would see use more than once a day on average.

You should inform the Police & Fire Depts that you are no longer willing to see your vehicles commandeered & your paying customers inconvenienced & that you expect them to start to provide their own emergency shelters.

You should also ask City Council to provide money for this purpose.

Council should have no problem authorising the necessary funds & the small dedicated fleet should be available without much delay.

It is to be assumed that you will receive prompt & full co-operation.

Meanwhile, you should tell staff to continue to report details as before.

Cities Centre, University of Toronto.

**PRESENTED TO THE BOARD
AUGUST 19, 2014**