Hello, My name is Lauren Marela and I am a member of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits and I am speaking not only for myself but the over 100,000 people that struggle on Social Assistance in this city every day. I am here to speak on Bus Passes and the affordability of them for people social assistance. I have been on social assistance for the last 4 years and have relied on the H.S.R. system to get around. I have always struggled to get enough money together for the end of the month to buy a bus pass at full price as I cannot work. The current affordable transit pass program excludes me as I am not working. Many people who are on assistance of any kind cannot afford the pass and are forced to walk everywhere and in all types of weather. Or, they scrape the money together for the tickets/pass and have to make the decision to live without something like food for the month. The current amount that someone gets on Ontario Works is only $572.00. The Average rent for a small bachelor apartment can be anywhere from $440-$500. This means that there is only $72.00 left for everything else (food utilities clothing etc.). This is a problem, as most people who are on Ontario works want to get a job and be a contributing member to society. I do see a problem as they often have to look in a very small geographical area for a job, as they can’t take the bus to get to the job interview, thus remaining jobless. The other issue that is seen as a problem is that most people who are on the Ontario Disability Support Program are unable to work for various reasons. That immediately disqualifies them from getting an Affordable transit pass. There are often side effects for people who stay home for most part. They often withdraw from society and become depressed and anti social. I do believe that every resident in this city should have the right to be able to take public transportation that is affordable for them.

I do commend the city for opening the Affordable Transit Pass to the citizens that are on social assistance and working. But, I would like to see changes made to the affordability of H.S.R.

The changes could include, but are not limited to:

- A yearly bus pass that would be like the seniors, so that some savings could be offered and people who take the bus year round would be rewarded for their choice to help the environment.
- A new program that would offer people on social assistance a bus pass at a special rate whether or not they were working.
- Getting the Provincial Government to add a Bus Pass Allowance to our cheque each month

Thank you

Lauren Marela