

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY MANITOBA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2019

Make Poverty History responds to 2019 City of Winnipeg Budget

We congratulate the City of Winnipeg for initiating a Low Income Bus Pass program in the 2019 Budget, beginning on April 1, 2020. Affordable public transit is foundational to building a socially equitable community and very important for many key aspects of life such as getting to medical appointments, training, work, doing errands and maintaining relationships with family and friends.

Last year, Make Poverty History Manitoba published *Winnipeg Without Poverty: Calling on the City to Lead*, the community's call to action for the city to develop and implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Our community vision is for the City of Winnipeg to take a strategic approach to reducing poverty through identifying city-wide poverty reduction goals and creating an action plan to achieve them. This included key recommendations around policing/safety, reconciliation, housing, health, recreation, and more. We look forward to continuing to work with the City of Winnipeg toward these goals and innovative ideas for poverty reduction in Winnipeg.

"Within our report, we examined the best practices of poverty reduction strategies in other communities across Canada. Among many recommendations, we identified a low-income bus pass as a key piece of an overall Winnipeg poverty reduction strategy," said Michael Barkman, Chairperson for Make Poverty History Manitoba, "Our members are pleased to see this important step forward from the City of Winnipeg to help low income Winnipeggers access transportation, while also seeing a freeze in transit fares for this year."

The Low-Income Bus Pass will be implemented over three years, starting with a 30 percent discount on April 1, 2020, a 40 percent discount in 2021, and a 50 percent discount in 2022. As of now, the program will include eligible adults, but we encourage the City to include a 50% off regular youth pass and a 50% off single ride rate (bus ticket), while also committing to freezing transit fares in future years.

"It takes leadership to adopt a program such as this, and we look forward to collaborating with the city over the next year in the implementation of this project," continued Barkman, "But, we know that even a 50% discount is not enough to best meet the needs of all low-income Winnipeggers."

The best practice identified in research such as the *2018 State of the Inner City Report: Green Light Go: Improving Transportation Equity* from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - MB, is a sliding scale bus pass, based on ability to pay. Calgary, as a result of support from the province, moved to a sliding scale subsidy as high as 95% for low income residents. We urge the Province of Manitoba to partner with the City of Winnipeg and invest the necessary financial resources to implement a sliding scale bus pass in Winnipeg so that no one is left behind due to lack of ability to afford transit.

Make Poverty History Manitoba is a coalition of groups and individuals working to end poverty in Manitoba.

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