

People with Disabilities told: “File Human Rights Complaint and lose Para Transit”

As predicted, on the 20th anniversary of the United Nations day for People with Disabilities, the County of Brant Community Services Committee approved yet another unaffordable variant of the initial transportation scheme.

Gone are the trip restrictions. As it turns out, this did violate our basic and protected human rights. Go figure.

However there are significant problems with the approved scheme:

First, the annual budget is set at \$100,000 and funding of the program as will the service will stop once that amount is reached pending approval from Council.

Second, this has been the budget for a number of years and is the budget for the foreseeable future despite an increase of participants in the program at the rate of about 25% per year.

Third, people who are eligible will have to pay out the full taxi fare, collect their receipt's and go to the County office at the end of the month, submit their receipts and wait for reimbursement.

Before you ask, yes, the County was given statistics indicating that people with disabilities live at or below the poverty line, earn well below the average income and that, as a part of public transportation para transit has to be affordable.

Fourth, the County will only fund 50% up to a maximum of \$20 per trip. This still makes the approved scheme unaffordable for most of us who use the current affordable service for trips over \$20.

Throughout this entire process there was no goal of implementing accessible affordable and sustainable specialized transportation service/para transit. Oh, and it is still called a “subsidized” transportation program to avoid implementing the provincial Integrated Accessibility Standards for transportation which is law.

Perhaps the most distressful part of this new scheme isn't directly related to the scheme at all. During the Community services meeting the committee decided through discussion that “if someone files an Ontario Human Rights complaint about this, we can stop the service.”

Previously the “statements” to questions and challenges of the proposed schemes have been “we don't have to do this (provide Para transit). We are doing this out of the goodness of our hearts, as a gift and we can take it away any time we want.”

Now the warning to people with disabilities is quite clear: stand up for your rights and lose Para transit.