

Council Member Motion

Notice given on: Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Meeting Date Wednesday, July 16, 2025
From Mayor Douglas
Subject Letter to the Province regarding the BC Transit strike

Background

Purpose: For Mayor Douglas to move the motion that was introduced at the June 18, 2025 regular Council meeting.

The Cowichan Valley Regional Transit System provides public transportation to North Cowichan residents and surrounding communities, with routes covering more than 45 kilometers. It operates in partnership with BC Transit and the Cowichan Valley Regional District, with service delivery contracted to the private operating company, Transdev. The system includes conventional fixed-route buses, commuter services to Victoria and Nanaimo, and handyDART services for individuals with mobility challenges.

Since February 8, 2025, local transit workers represented by Unifor (Locals 114 and 333) have been on strike, engaging in contract negotiations with Transdev. This ongoing five-month transit strike has become the longest in BC's history. On July 6, 2025, workers from both locals rejected a proposal put forward by a government-appointed mediator.

The labor dispute is significantly affecting community members across the Cowichan region, particularly the most vulnerable, including seniors and lower-income households. Many North Cowichan residents who rely on public transit report being unable to attend medical appointments, buy groceries, or get to work. This includes individuals who depend on routes 2, 3, 4, and 6, which connect Berkey's Corner, Maple Bay, Crofton, and Chemainus to the region's commercial core, spanning from the City of Duncan to the Cowichan Commons.

There have been growing calls for the Province to take a more active role in resolving the dispute, beyond the Ministry of Labour's appointment of a mediator. To date, the BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit, as well as BC Transit - the Crown corporation responsible for public transportation in the province - have not been directly involved in the contract negotiations between Unifor and Transdev.

This motion would authorize the Mayor to write a letter to the Minister of Transportation and Transit, urging the Province and BC Transit to engage directly with both the union and Transdev to resolve the strike and resume public transit services as soon as possible.

Recommendation

"THAT Council authorizes the Mayor to write a letter to the Honourable Mike Farnworth, Minister of Transportation and Transit, urging the Province and BC Transit to take a more active role in resolving the BC Transit strike"

Attachment: N/A