



boyle street education centre

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October 29, 2013

Mayor Don Iveson
2nd Floor, City Hall
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB
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Dear Mayor Iveson,

I work at a charter school for at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 19 years of age, and would like the city of Edmonton to look at a subsidized transit service for Edmontonians living below the poverty line, or reassessment of the \$250 fine for "Failure To Provide Payment" on the ETS. Many of our students receive these fines, and do not have money for bus fare, but need to get somewhere like the rest of us. Unfortunately, many youth do not understand the legal system and do not have someone to help navigate it, so often they already have an outstanding fee and additional charges by the time they register at our school and come to speak with me about their ticket. Many of these impoverished youth have learning disabilities, some of which could prevent them from understanding the effects of their actions—peer-reviewed research has concluded that individuals who have had prenatal exposure to alcohol may not understand the behavior-punishment contingency that mainstream society considers to be common sense. If the individual is over 18 and able to receive extra-judicial sanctions, they still have to travel to their community hours placement and do not receive bus tickets to do so from their Probation Officer, which places them at risk to receive another ETS fine.

A \$250 fine is more than what any student can afford and is a considerably higher amount than fines for more dangerous offenses, such as texting while driving. I

recognize that the Donate-A-Ride program is helpful for individuals accessing a recipient organization, but it doesn't help the youth who needs to go to school or an appointment and doesn't have money for bus fare. And while we can usually give out bus tickets to students once they have arrived, they often need fare assistance before they arrive here. I propose that the Donate-A-Ride program be extended to the ETS officers as well as recipient organizations, so that they could give some of these youth bus tickets instead of a fine. It may not appear to be cost-effective, but consider how much these tickets cost the justice system. Last year, a 19 year old student had two outstanding \$250 tickets for riding the LRT without fare, and decided to "work them off" in the Remand Centre because he didn't have the money to pay for the fines, and didn't qualify for community service hours. As a result, hundreds of taxpayer dollars were spent because this young man didn't have the money for two bus tickets.

If subsidizing transit is not a possible option at present, I propose that the city consider lowering the ETS fine to an affordable amount on the actual ticket. The only way that youth can currently try to have their fine reduced is if they are under 18 and appear in court on the date that the ticket is due, so students over 18 will not qualify for a fine reduction. Moreover, the fine is so high that some youth are overwhelmed at the thought of how to deal with it. I currently know of a student who caught the LRT to come to school, but didn't have money for the fare. When he realized that he was going to get a fine from an ETS officer, he panicked and tried to flee. As a result, this youth now has to pay fines adding up to \$750. After seven years of helping at-risk youth with their legal issues, I can confidently say that the current ETS fine system is not cost or time effective for anyone, and ask that you consider another solution. Thank-you in advance for your time and consideration—I know that you are a champion of our city's transit system, and hope that you will advocate for more inclusive ridership. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Brandy Basisty, Youth Worker
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