

March 19, 2020

RE: Temporary Directive - Notice of Service Reduction Under the *Public Vehicles Act*

Dear Intercommunity Bus Service Provider,

The Ministry of Transportation is taking important steps to provide flexibility to intercommunity bus service providers to expedite adjustments to their services in response to a shift in customer demand as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.

While providing additional flexibility to service providers, Ontario is committed to ensuring that critical services like access to intercommunity transportation remains available across the province and that these measures do not support discontinuation of any service routes which people rely on.

MTO has adopted a temporary directive providing that Ministry personnel will not undertake enforcement action with respect to notification requirements for temporary changes to scheduled services as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. Therefore, despite the provisions of section 5 of the *Public Vehicles Act* and sections 6 (1) and 6.1 of Regulation 982 under the Act:

- Carriers will not be obliged to provide 30-days advance notice of temporary service reductions set out by regulation.
- Carriers will not be obliged to follow filed timetables when adherence is not possible, so long as the Ministry and the public is properly notified in a manner as described in the following paragraph.

To ensure that the Ministry can continue to monitor levels of service, **we request that you provide notice to the Ministry of temporary service reductions as soon as feasible.** The notice can be brief and comprise only the specific route number as well as the origin, interim stops, and final destination.

In addition, to ensure that Ontarians remain aware of any changes that may impact their travel plans, it will be imperative that carriers take all reasonable steps to notify customers of service changes by any and all means possible. This may include, but is not limited to, posting immediate notice on websites and ticketing platforms on which you post information about your services, posting on social media, as well as posting physical notices on sign posts, at stations, and in newspapers. You should also make all

reasonable efforts to notify existing ticket holders of any changes to service that may impact their travel.

This temporary enforcement policy will remain in effect until direct notice is provided by the Ministry, the Ontario Motor Coach Association, and/or the Ontario Public Transit Association that this directive has been rescinded. The Ministry anticipates that the directive will remain in place for the foreseeable future until the current situation has abated.

Please note that this temporary enforcement policy does not extend to discontinuance or permanent reduction of service. Should you elect to permanently reduce or discontinue an existing service, you must provide notice to the Minister of Transportation and the public as required under the sections listed above.

MTO will continue to monitor the situation closely as it develops over the coming weeks and months. Further communication regarding this matter or other changes to your responsibilities under the *Public Vehicles Act* will be issued at the appropriate time.

Should you have any questions, please contact Cheryl Clarke, Manager, Passenger Transportation Office at Cheryl.Clarke@ontario.ca.

Kind regards,



Tasneem Essaji
Director
Transportation Policy Branch
Ministry of Transportation

cc: Doug Switzer, Ontario Motor Coach Association
Karen Cameron, Ontario Public Transit Association