

MEDIA RELEASE
March 29, 2018

National Transit Union Body to Province: Put the Brakes on Subway Upload

Toronto, ON - It's Hydro all over again. The Liberal government is seeking to upload and, ultimately, privatize the TTC subways in a process they call "optimizing" under a "different ownership model." The extreme policy shift is buried deep in a side note in a 300-page budget released Wednesday. The province is calling for the takeover of oversight, operations, and maintenance of Canada's second busiest subway system in a move that would allow the government to privatize the 64-year old transit service. ATU Canada is calling for the removal of this article from the provincial budget and, in conjunction with ATU Local 113, is mobilizing members across the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area to oppose the proposal.

"Many Ontarians will recall that this is exactly what precipitated the disastrous sell-off of Hydro One," said ATU Canada President Paul Thorp. "Make no mistake: turning public services into private profit centers is a plan straight out of the PC playbook. For some reason the Liberal government has embraced it and is racing to implement transit privatization across the province." Thorp pointed to policies released last year by the Progressive Conservatives that favoured handing public transit over to private companies.

Thorp also says that the privatization of transit would not be any better for transit users and workers in Ontario than the sell-off of Hydro was for rate-payers. "The uploading of the TTC subway would prove detrimental to the millions of Torontonians and Ontarians that use that service daily," he said. "The city of Toronto would lose local control and accountability over the daily operations and maintenance of one its more vital pieces of infrastructure, not to mention the catastrophic affect privatization can have on front line workers who see their hard-earned wages, pension, and benefits diminished by private contractors." Thorp also noted that the TTC is an integral part of the community, employing thousands of workers from diverse economic, racial, and cultural backgrounds and allowing for a decent living in a city known for its melting-pot multiculturalism.

For the past year, ATU Canada has been coordinating a campaign—dubbed "Keep Transit Public"—in favour of public ownership and operation of transit. The campaign began in Hamilton, ON, in June 2017 and has focused on ending the use of public-private partnerships (P3s) in transit and other public services.

"Across Canada, the U.S., and Europe, private transit has proven again and again to be more costly and less safe," Thorp said. "Private companies can and will raise fares and reduce service in pursuit of profit."

For more information on the Keep Transit Public campaign and to sign our petition please visit keeptransitpublic.ca. The Amalgamated Transit Union represents 34,000 members across Canada including the 11,000 frontline workers of the TTC.