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June 27, 2008

Bill Stewart
Fire Chief & General Manager
Toronto Fire Services
4330 Dufferin Street
Toronto, ON M3H 5R9

Dear Chief Stewart,

Re: Public safety concern with Toronto Fire Services' ability to use St. Clair Ave. W. dedicated right-of-way (ROW).

I consider public safety to be sacrosanct. Poorly planned public transit projects or any other project should not be allowed to compromise public safety in any way. I also consider the maintenance of public safety to be the primary job of City Council and its Agencies, Boards and Commissions. Public safety must be maintained at any cost.

Further to City Council's debate on this issue on June 24th last, for which you were present to answer questions, I would like to confirm your answers to the questions my colleagues and I posed to you.

City Council's discussion focused on an April 9, 2008 letter written by District Chief Bob Leek, CET, Emergency Planning, Research & Development, to Councillor Cesar Palacio entitled "St. Clair Ave. West TTC Dedicated Right-of-Way". This 20-page letter (with several diagrams, specific measurements and photos of site tests) addressed concerns raised by Councillor Palacio regarding Toronto Fire Services' use of the dedicated ROW and did not only address Toronto Fire Services' exclusive use of the ROW but Toronto Fire Services general use of the dedicated ROW. In fact, there is no mention of "exclusive use" of the dedicated ROW in District Chief Leek's letter.

Overall, it appears that you have no concerns with the safety of the St. Clair Ave. W. dedicated ROW with regard to how Toronto Fire Services can use it when responding to an emergency. If this is true, then your assessment is at odds with almost all of the content of District Chief Bob Leek's letter.

Chief Leek responded to three specific questions posed by Councillor Palacio:

- 1) Is the dedicated TTC right-of-way on St. Clair Ave. W. safe for fire apparatus to drive on during an emergency response?
- 2) What effect does the “centre-pole” configuration have on fire apparatus using the dedicated TTC right-of-way?
- 3) Does Toronto Fire Services (TFS) have concerns “...for ease and safe operation of...” fire apparatus due to the curb of the dedicated TTC right-of-way as installed?

These three questions were answered by Chief Leek clearly: yes, Toronto Fire Services does have many serious concerns and, in fact, Chief Leek used the term “...without doubt unsafe...” several times to describe the ROW in terms of TFS’ use of the ROW during emergency response.

As you know, TFS needs to use the dedicated ROW on St. Clair Ave. W. during almost every emergency response due to the configuration of the traffic lanes on St. Clair Ave. W. Due to the fact that in off-peak traffic times there is only one lane for through traffic and one lane used for parking, TFS would be forced to use the ROW because there is nowhere for the traffic to move to get out of the way for a fire truck. So, unlike other dedicated ROW installations across the City, such as Queens Quay or Spadina Ave., the St. Clair Ave. W. ROW operates very differently with respect to how TFS can navigate it to get to an emergency.

Further, the emergency response times you cited at City Council on June 24th were from 2006 to 2008 between Yonge Street and Vaughan Road. You concluded that there was no cause for alarm because the response times had not increased significantly. Well, by 2006 most of the ROW had been installed between Yonge Street and Spadina Road. To present a more representative sample comparison of response times, you should have, in my opinion, cited response times from 2004 compared with 2008 response times, since in 2004 the ROW was not constructed yet and 2004 data would have provided a proper calibration for your review.

I request that you clarify in writing your comments made to City Council. Do you agree or disagree with District Chief Bob Leek’s assessment expressed in his 20-page letter? Please identify specifically how and where you agree or disagree with his assessment.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Michael Walker
Councillor – St. Paul’s

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