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|  | AMALGAMATED TRANSIT UNIONLOCAL 1505 |

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**Manitoba’s Immunization Campaign Should Consider Public Transit Workers’ Risks**

WINNIPEG – Romeo Ignacio, the President of ATU Local 1505, the Union representing over

1,500 workers across Manitoba, is calling on The Honourable Minister Heather Stefanson and the Provincial Government to consider the risks transit workers face daily while providing the service to transit users, most of whom are essential workers or people from marginalized communities.

“ATU Local 1505 has been advocating for priority vaccination for its members, as well as all other employees, at Winnipeg Transit since even before the third wave of the pandemic began. The City of Winnipeg, through its Emergency Operations Centre and Transit Management, has expressed its desire to have an on-property vaccination pop-up site to ensure employees get vaccinated without having to miss work or apply for a leave of absence.”

“We are disappointed to hear the absence of the recommendation in yesterday’s announcement from the Minister of Health supporting the protection of Transit workers and its riders. The Province considers transit as an essential service but does not seem to consider the risks and the uncertainties stemming from the daily exposures to marginalized communities who have been identified as a group that often are vulnerable to virus infections. Furthermore, the Public Health order exempting transit from physical distancing on buses and the lack of enforcement of the mandatory mask increases the likelihood of transmission.”

“Our members, naturally, feel abandoned by the government having been left out from the Stage 2 Immunization Campaign. There is always the fear of contracting the virus, especially, with the highly infectious variants, and the recent announcement doesn’t seem to take that into consideration.”

“We continue to ask the Province to work with the City’s Emergency Operations Centre in coordinating the vaccination for all Winnipeg Transit and Winnipeg Transit Plus workers to prevent an outbreak at our garages which could result in major service disruptions leaving thousands of transit users without a ride.”

Possible Public exposures to COVID-19 and variants of concern have been identified and reported on the Province’s Restart MB website and it lists mainly a number of major transit routes that are affected.

Needless to say, the risks have already been identified, we just need to “ensure our immunization campaign responds to the risks” to quote Minister Stefanson.

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