

Changes to government parking policy will unfairly target workers with disabilities

OTTAWA—The Public Service Alliance of Canada is concerned that impending changes to the federal government's parking policy will adversely affect workers with disabilities, creating a barrier that will make it more difficult to access their workplaces. PSAC represents 172,000 workers, the majority of whom are in the federal public sector.

By July 1 of this year, most federal government employees will be required to pay market rates to park in any government-owned buildings and lots. While it's clear that this will cause financial hardship for many public sector workers, it will have a particularly harsh impact on people with certain disabilities.

People with mobility issues who are not able to access other forms of transportation have no choice but to drive and park their cars. As it currently stands, most people with disabilities do not have to pay for parking. Costs will skyrocket when the new market rate is introduced – in some cases, to more than \$300 per month.

Monty Montgomery works for the Communications Security Establishment in Ottawa. After suffering extreme frostbite on all four limbs, Montgomery is a multilateral amputee.

"I have balance issues standing on a moving bus and can't grip the handrails to support myself," he said. "Additionally, because my injuries were caused by frostbite, I cannot wait for even short periods outside for buses that may be delayed due to winter conditions."

Like many workers in similar situations, Montgomery does not have the option of taking public transit and must drive his car to work.

Charles Rozon faces a similar quandary. An employee at the Canada Revenue Agency, Rozon has a back injury that includes a fused spinal cord. An accident without a seatbelt could be devastating to him, so he is forced to drive a truck with specific safety features.

"It is a costly vehicle to maintain both in terms of insurance and gas, so I already pay a lot more than a monthly bus pass," he said.

"All government departments have an obligation to accommodate workers with disabilities. We believe that people with disabilities who require designated parking should not be charged a fee for their parking," said John Gordon, National President of PSAC.

The union is also concerned about the fact that Public Works and Government Services Canada is looking to privatize government lots, by transferring revenues to third party companies.

"Privatization of parking in government buildings will only drive up the costs for all workers and taxpayers," said Mark Brunell, President of the Government Services Union, a component of PSAC. "This will make it more difficult to ensure reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities."

PSAC is demanding that workers with disabilities in the federal public sector continue to be accommodated without any additional costs or unnecessary barriers.

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For more information or to book interviews:

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