

Backgrounder – HSR working conditions

We want to make sure the media and public have access to accurate information related to collective bargaining, HSR working conditions, City policies and services.

More information and regular updates can be found at Hamilton.ca/transitstrike.

Access to washroom facilities for HSR workers

The City takes washroom access for Operators seriously and recognizes it's a unique challenge for certain mobile jobs at the City. In the 2019 negotiations, the ATU raised washroom access. The City agreed to language not typically found in other transit agreements; a commitment to installing private washrooms at specific locations on bus routes.

After the 2019 agreement was finalized, HSR has put a tremendous amount of work into increasing access to washrooms, although there were some delays due to the pandemic and utility services.

16 private washrooms have been installed and are now operational and 5 more are in progress. 9 portable units have been installed until permanent units can be added.

Routing changes were implemented so that more Operators could access the private units.

13 terminals have washrooms available for Operators at places like the Hunter GO Station, Frank A. Cooke Terminal, Mountain Transit Centre. The City also has financial agreements with an additional 29 vendors throughout the City to allow washroom access for Operators.

Despite these efforts, the Union filed grievances in 2022 claiming the City was violating the language in the collective agreement. After 3 days of mediation, a consent award was issued on November 6, 2023, resulting in an extension on the timeline to install the remaining private washrooms and an increased cleaning schedule.

During the current round of collective bargaining, neither the City or ATU submitted proposals about article 33 (comfort station language) in the collective agreement.

The City's bargaining team remains available to discuss issues related to washrooms with the ATU Local 107 at any time.

Breaks and Shifts

Although the Employment Standards Act (ESA) sets out [special rules and exemptions](#) for transit operators related to mandatory breaks and lunches for employers, the City of Hamilton and HSR care deeply about the comfort and performance of their transit operators.

HSR operator shifts vary widely, generally scheduled from 7.5 hours to 9 hours in length. All shifts are paid a guarantee of 8 hours. Overtime is automatic after 8 hours at time and a half or greater, depending on the length of the shift. There are also split shifts in the morning and afternoon.

A standard Operator shift is approximately 8 – 8.5 hours in length, but this time does not reflect scheduled recovery time.

Each loop on a route has scheduled recovery time. The purpose of this time is so that the bus can maintain its schedule if it's running late. Recovery time also provides the Operator a chance to eat, drink, stretch or use the washroom.

No Operator is driving a full 8 hours without breaks and lunches. For example, in an 8-hour driving shift, 82% of the shift will be spent driving and 18% of it is scheduled as recovery time. (480 paid minutes of work, 86 minutes of paid recovery time).

This exceeds the ESA requirements for paid breaks and lunches that an office worker would receive.

Key Statistics

- 73% of work assignments are straight shifts
- 23% of work assignments are split shifts