

## **Orangeville Fare Free** **Transit Program**

September 16, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I, Caitlin Ward, Manager of the Dufferin Services Team at Services and Housing in the Province (SHIP) am submitting this letter in support of continuing the Orangeville Fare Free Transit Program. As a non-profit health and housing support provider, SHIP has been operating for over 30 years and has been providing services within Dufferin for over 15 years.

Since the Orangeville Fare Free Transit program was introduced, we have seen positive impacts for individuals we support in this community. The most notable benefit is that more individuals are choosing to take transit who previously had difficulty finding the funds for this within their limited budget. This has the positive outcome of increasing independence to attend programs, work, educational activities, medical appointments, and access to necessities (i.e. food banks, groceries etc.). An individual supported by the SHIP in Orangeville, Cassie, provided the following quote: "The bus gets me to all my appointments and to go shopping when needed. I hope the bus remains free. It helps so many of us who are struggling like myself." Lastly, I would add that in my opinion that this program likely has benefits for mental health which are difficult to measure including increased sense of self-esteem and community inclusion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Caitlin Ward*

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