

February 26, 2024

VIA EMAIL

RE: Durham Region Transit Funding

On behalf of Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union representing 315,000 members in every sector of the economy, including members at Durham Region Transit and more than 23,000 members in the Road Transportation sector, I'm writing to you today to underline the importance of public transit funding in the Durham region.

It is no coincidence that the world's most dynamic cities feature the best transit systems. It is also no coincidence that a quality public transit system creates equitable, vibrant communities while enabling them to meet climate demands.

Durham Region is one of the fastest-growing areas in Canada, with short-term forecasts indicating its population is projected to increase from 713,680 in 2021 to 805,200 in 2026. By 2051, the population is on track to grow to around 1.3 million.

With the population boom, job, housing, and investment in educational institution growth has followed.

However, due to the history of Durham Region Transit being underfunded, our transit system can no longer keep up with the rapid growth Durham is experiencing. This is preventing record numbers of people from fully accessing our major routing system, namely the 900 series routes.

The region's workforce and production centres rely on public transportation. The region has the responsibility of ensuring adequate funding, so no worker is marginalized by their inability to get to work and back.

Tourism in Durham Region, including sports and leisure activities, is expected to continue to grow in importance for local economic growth. Public transit is an essential part of supporting that expansion.

Durham Region has made service excellence a key priority of their core business plan, but to provide service excellence, you need to invest in a transit system that can support that goal.

Last April, Durham Region identified the transit challenge before us. You announced a commitment to [more than double bus service](#) provided by the transit authority over the next decade, which would see service hours increase by 127% by 2032.

Of course, that would translate to a series of budget increases leading to the public seeing an additional 650,000 hours of service, coupled with an added 275 buses operating in the region.

The approved reasonable 10-year plan also includes capital investments towards making the fleet electric, and the construction of new terminals. The 2023 budget included \$87.9 million of capital investment, including \$35.4 million for 22 growth battery electric buses and ancillary equipment for delivery by 2025.

We urge the funding to continue to flow as Durham councillors meet in March 2024, to discuss the annual budget.

Without clear continued commitment to the Transit Service Finance Strategy, Durham Region Transit will fall further behind the demands that the region will need to keep it vibrant and productive.

In 2022, Unifor created its own [National Transit Policy](#), emphasizing a robust framework on developing and supporting a strong, sustainable and accessible public transit system. Unifor is also a strong supporter of the International Transport Workers' Federation's [Global Manifesto on Public Transport Financing](#), which is built on four key principles, including sustainable investment in public transport system expansion. Sustainable funding models to fit to the specific circumstances of different public transport systems are urgently needed.

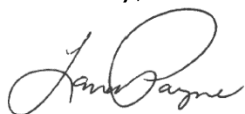
The manifesto calls for fare structures that must support marginalised passengers and facilitate a rapid increase in public transport ridership and sustainable investment.

Finally, funding and fare policy must support publicly owned and democratically controlled integrated systems that meet universal goals.

We ask that Council continue to support the Transit Service and Finance Strategy because the next 10 years of investment is critical to the success of the region and quality of life and affordability for its residents.

I look forward to your action on these issues and to continuing important conversations on funding public transit in Durham.

Sincerely,



Lana Payne
National President

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