

OC Transpo must accept other 'working' animals

The Ottawa Citizen

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Re: OC Transpo refuses to reinstate bus pass for woman's 'working' ferret, July 24.

OC Transpo's policy of recognizing only dogs as service animals is discriminatory and disrespectful.

The policy does not take account of the diverse nature of handicaps from which people suffer. OC Transpo seems to have a very stereotypical understanding of medical conditions: having a sight or hearing impairment is accepted for special bus passes. But the OC Transpo officials do not understand that diseases can be more differentiated. These public service providers need to react accordingly.

With more than 10 years of working with people who face anxiety conditions, the Anxiety Disorders Association of Ontario (ADAO) has experienced such hidden discrimination time and again. It is part of the everyday life of people who suffer from anxiety. Participants in our workshops report that they have to deal with two major barriers in their life: First the difficulties arising directly from their anxiety, secondly misunderstandings and discrimination. OC Transpo's actions are another sad example of this.

There is not one best solution for anxiety conditions -- people who are affected have to find out what works best for them. Sometimes it can be as easy as accepting a ferret as a working animal. In this light, the case is about a person who took responsibility for herself and started to face the challenge of living actively with anxiety. It is by no means surprising that the presence of an animal can help a person gain confidence. And if the animal does not endanger anyone, why should we not be accepting of this? We strongly encourage OC Transpo to review their policies.

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President,

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