

Welcome School Council Representatives!

Canadian Parents for French, York Region Chapter

www.cpfyorkregion.ca

Save our Yellow Bus Coalition

www.soyb.com

Summary of Bussing Changes

Around 1998 a Board decision:

- Changed the delivery of high school bussing services from Board provided (i.e. Board paid either by way of a yellow bus or a transit pass) to user pay (i.e. YRT/public transit with family paying).
- The distance criterion for bussing eligibility remained at 3.2 km. for high school students who reside in areas not deemed by the board to be “transit-served.” There was also a 4.8 km distance criterion for those residing in transit-served areas. If a student lived beyond 4.8 km from his school of attendance, even in a transit area, he/she received a yellow bus at no charge.
- In 2006, that 4.8 criterion was removed so that no matter how far a student resided from the school, if there was transit service in that area, the student was ineligible for bussing .

What's Wrong With These Decisions?

Inequity, inefficiency and a flawed process

Inequity

An inequity in public education was created whereby an additional cost (see tax handout) to attend high school was unilaterally placed on some families creating an accessibility barrier for some students to attend school and in particular to attend programs in centralized locations. This barrier is based on where the student happens to live.

Inefficiency

Some students have been dealing with long rides, multiple transfers (with accompanying safety issues) fatigue, frustration and lateness on arrival at school. These are additional examples of inequity.

A Flawed Board Process

The Board's Process Was Flawed:

- According to the Board's minutes¹, the policy change in 2006 was considered through a process from 2003 to 2005 which included consultation with stakeholders. CPF's position was that no further cuts should be made, and a return to Board paid passes should occur. The minutes of the 2005 report of the Board's committee state the following:

"Mr. Neale summarized that the Ad Hoc Committee concurred that the existing transportation policy meets the needs of students and reflects the program priorities of the Board. **No major changes to the existing transportation policy were recommended...**" ¹. [emphasis added].

..."**He noted that minor changes to update** the transportation policy were made. The most significant change is to secondary school transportation and the removal of reference to the 4.8 kilometers for students residing in areas that are served by public transit". ¹ [emphasis added].

Board didn't listen to Student Trustees

- While the Board consulted with student trustees H. Panju and A.Lakha who explained that,

“the two main issues were York Region Transit scheduling and the additional cost factor for students.”¹, “...students are recommending that a subsidized plan be created...”¹,

the Board has failed to address their concerns. Chair B. Crothers explained at that meeting,

....“Board policy has not changed existing practices. The revised wording reflects the intent and the original content of the current policy”.¹

Of note, virtually the same statement is provided to address those student trustees' concerns at a subsequent meeting,

“....Board policy has not changed existing practices. The revised wording reflects the intent and the original content of the current policy. Staff will provide notice well in advance to those students affected.”².

1. Policy and By-Law Committee Minutes, January 12, 2006.
2. Policy and By-Law Committee Minutes, April 6, 2006.

When concerns were raised, the Board failed to address the problem

- In 2009, the Board asked CPF to provide alternate wording to a policy which is fundamentally flawed. The change from Board provided to user paid transportation is a significant change to the delivery model for transportation.
- The question of how best to deliver board provided transportation, either through STS or through YRT/Viva, requires a level of analysis that ought to be undertaken by the Board. Such analysis would be a proper use of Board resources and provide guidance for improvements in the delivery of transportation services.
- A simple change in wording to the policy is not what is needed. What is required is a determination of how best to deliver transportation services to all high school students in York Region.

Impacts of the decision have not been properly considered by the Board

The Decision Denies Equity of Access

- A financial barrier to attend high school has been created. Those families who must pay \$75 per student per month for the current cost of a YRT student bus pass face economic discrimination in terms of access to their local high school, English or French Immersion, or specialty program of choice: gifted, arts, sports.
- This financial barrier means attrition rates across all programs are expected to rise as program student population demographics change. Geography, not student program need/interest will dictate program enrollment.
- The decision means those children who live close enough to a school to walk can attend with no additional cost to the family whereas a child who resides farther from the school must pay to get to school.
- The reality of this decision is that a single parent family living in an apartment above a store on Yonge Street will have to pay for a bus pass, whereas a family who resides on a rural estate without “access to public transportation” will receive board provided transportation in the form of a yellow bus at no cost to the family
- People from visible minorities, new immigrants, single parents and low wage earners will be differentially impacted as they are among the economically disadvantaged in York Region.

Funding for Transportation from the Ministry is not the Problem

The Board Is Fully Funded for Transportation Expenditures by the Ministry

- According to the 2008¹ Ministry E & E Report, the Board has received funding to cover its entire transportation expenditures each year from 2004 to 2008, inclusive. During that time, the Board received yearly allocations of some 29.5 million dollars in 2004, which rose steadily to 33.2 million in 2008. The Board experienced surpluses during those years as outlined below:

School year	Transportation Surplus
2004/05	\$ 415,288
2005/06	\$ 1,553,628
2006/07	\$ 1,595,391
2007/08	\$ 374,000

1. Ministry of Education Effectiveness & Efficiency Review, May 2008 released in December 2008.

The Board received fuel monies when gas prices increased

- In 2008, the Board received two fuel enhancement allocations in the amounts of:
 - \$439,067¹
 - \$292,711²
- The Board also received allocations in anticipation of increased contract settlements for transportation (eg. bus driver wage settlements).
- The Ministry of Education has demonstrated its commitment to fund student transportation. The Board's projected allocation for 2009-10 is \$34,257,076.³ This represents stable funding since in 2008/09 the allocation was \$34,180,282.³

1. Ministry of Education Memorandum, Fuel Costs, March 13, 2008.

2. Ministry of Education Memorandum, June 26, 2008, Student Transportation: (1) Fuel Enhancement for 2007-2008 (2) Fuel Cost Study, 2008-09.

3. Ministry of Education Memorandum, Student Transportation Grant – Projected Allocations, 2009-10.

Busses are not full; not because students don't need the buses...

The Busses Need to be Filled, Not Cut

- According to the Ministry's E & E report
*"the average simple capacity utilization across the fleet of 777 busses is 38% (or nearly 6 of every 10 seats are empty)."*¹

"Route Statistics

Bus Type

<i>Capacity</i>	<i>20 seats</i>	<i>25% average capacity utilization</i>
	<i>36 seats</i>	<i>22% average capacity utilization</i>
	<i>72 seats</i>	<i>42% average capacity utilization"</i> ¹

**noted that average capacity utilization rates would improve to 42% if zero loads are considered, however, "capacity utilization is still lower than expected"*¹.

**noted that pay per use seats are not included which would improve the result further.*

- The Board needs to direct its energies with STS to improve routing and technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the system and improve bussing accessibility.

1. Ministry of Education Effectiveness & Efficiency Review, May 2008 released in December 2008.

We need the Board to find a solution
that is equitable and fair

We are asking the Board to:

- Provide all those students deemed to have “access to public transportation” with a bus pass to fully cover its cost
- Review the criteria for determining “transit-served” to ensure that transit is efficient and safe for all students taking it
- Restore the 4.8 km distance criterion for those deemed to be living in transit-served areas

What's Happened Since Concerns were Raised

CPF, parents and SPCYR have presented before the board and several actions have resulted in:

- 1. The Board re-instated bussing to current grade 12 Aurora High School students when CPFYR produced the Board's own document evidencing that those students had been guaranteed bussing until they graduated.
- 2. The Board agreed to subsidize the \$120 bus pass for a 2 zone ride to make it the same cost as a one zone, i.e. \$75.
- 3. Parents at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School were successful in getting a change to YRT routing as some students have had long commutes, three transfers and an inability to get to school on time.
- 4. Apparently some students have been allowed to use space on an existing yellow bus, and some low income students were helped with cost.

Save Our Yellow Bus Coalition was Formed

- Coalition of parents from schools affected; English Stream, Arts, French Immersion, Sports and parents who care about education
- Website created, Save Our Yellow Bus. Com
- www.SaveOurYellowBus.com
- Ongoing monitoring and dialogue with the Board through Canadian Parents for French York Region Chapter

Role for School Councils

- The Ministry encourages parent input through school councils. The Board is required to respond to any question or issue raised by a school council. The Ministry encourages networking with other school councils in your area or even the region. This is one goal for tonight: establishing a school council and parent network for ongoing identification and discussion of issues of common concern for the parents and students of YRDSB schools. See page 9.2 of the ministry guide for school council members:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elementary/sec/council/council02.pdf>
- Understand that school councils are advisory but are powerful in expressing parent ideas, concerns and priorities. The ministry wants to hear from parents and wants the Board to respond.

School Council

- Know some of the norms, know your school's constitution: agenda are set by the chair/co-chairs and the Principal, in consultation with the school council members and community
- The principal does not have a vote and does not determine what can and can not be discussed at council meetings; all topics that are of interest and/or concern to the parents and students of the school are appropriate topics for discussion.
- Voting members ought to be defined in the constitution. While consensus is a valid goal, this is not done at the expense of allowing for differing opinion. Sometimes a vote must occur to decide and then move on.

School Council

- There should always be a majority of parents present to vote. It should never be that staff reps (teaching, non teaching, administrative) are in the majority and vote, in that situation, no vote can occur. This reflects the need to ensure this is a forum for parents, not solely, but in the majority.
- Please refer to the Ministry Guide (see link provided) and YRDSB Handbook (on the Board's website)--both are for school council members--for details on the roles of council chairs, members and principals. Share this yearly with all members, consider an orientation manual for members.
- The Ministry of Education is very clear on its expectation that school councils will advise and make recommendations to their school boards and to the Ministry itself.

Issues and concerns for your School Council

- Please take a moment and share any issues of concern your school council or parent body has
- Are you interested in getting together to share, discuss and problem solve in the future on issues regarding Board decisions that are of common interest to parents?

Next Steps

- With respect to bussing:

Take the concerns about bussing cuts to your school. The principles of bussing are; no cost, safe and efficient. Consider writing to your municipal, regional councillor and MPP, put your concerns in writing to the Board

- Join in a forum to discuss issues related to education in York Region
- What are your ideas on how school councils can work together to resolve issues?
- Provide your feedback about tonight to carrie.hoffelner@sympatico.ca. Thank you for coming out!