

March 1st, 2009

To: York Region School Board Trustees (via e-mail)

Re: Bussing for French Immersion High School Students

Dear York Region School Board Trustees,

Currently, my daughter is in Grade 8 and my son in Grade 6 – both in French Immersion at Franklin Street Public School. We recently attended the orientation evening at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School (P.E.T.), were very impressed with the educational offering, and learned of all the positive career and social opportunities of continuing with the French Immersion program.

We have also been informed about the School Board's decision to discontinue the school bus for all high school students, including those in French Immersion. We are fortunate that we live close to Franklin (1.2km) and as such are not eligible for the school bus to our home. My daughter and son have enjoyed the walk and the daily exercise is beneficial to them.

P.E.T. is located 7.8km from our residence, and now when we really need the service of the school bus transportation, it will no longer be available. The two other high schools within walking distance are Markham District High School (1.3km) and Brother André Catholic High School (1.6km); however, these schools do not offer the French Immersion program.

My letter to you is in the form of a request, not just for my family, but for all families in York Region who may be impacted by this decision. **Please reconsider providing the School Bus at no charge to French Immersion High School students.** Here are my main concerns:

Access to French Immersion

I strongly believe that transportation is an essential component of the French Immersion program. I have heard of some existing high school students and also some Grade 8 students who may not be continuing with French Immersion based solely on this transportation issue. It is unfortunate for these students who have invested eight years or longer in the program, and now will not be able to continue and earn their French Immersion Certificates.

Affect on Quality Programming

A decrease in student enrolment could potentially mean a reduction or change in the quality of courses being offered and lead to a lower standard of programming. French Immersion students have worked long and hard to master both official languages of Canada, and equitable access to this education should be provided so that they can continue to participate in this valuable program.

Safety Issues, Extra Travel Time, Cost

This may be a safety issue for young female students, especially during the dark early mornings and late afternoons of the winter months. Typically, there will be further walking distance for the public transit bus stops as opposed to the school bus stops. There are some families in York Region who live even further than we do from their designated French Immersion High School, and it will require multiple transfers and extra travel time. Some families do not have a vehicle as an alternative means. The current monthly student pass of \$75 translates to \$750 over the course of ten months, and is significant, especially in this economy.

I appreciate your time in this matter and look forward to hearing from you on your decision.

Kindest Regards,