

CPF *Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)*

September 24, 2009

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Wynne,

RE: Student Transportation in York Region District School Board

We are writing in support of CPF York Region parents to request that the Minister of Education intervene with YRDSB with respect to the provision of transportation to YRDSB students. Over the past number of months we have been contacted by many parents who have attempted to resolve the issue of YRDSB eliminating transportation to its secondary school students who live near public transit. While other school boards have also made use of public transit, they have in most cases, had better public transit, paid for the cost of the transit passes and made arrangements for students with multiple transfers and excessively long bus rides.

The CPF York Region chapter has met with the YRDSB Board representatives several times to no avail. They have asked that the board re-instate the bussing until a proper review of transportation can be done and discussed.

According to Ministry information, last year YRDSB was provided with student transportation grants of \$33,217,371. Over the past four years it received over \$126,169,651 million.

“This grant provides school boards with funding in order to transport students to and from home and school” *Education Funding, Technical Paper 2009-10.*

YRDSB has had a surplus in the transportation budget consistently. According to the E and E Report, YRDSB has posted a surplus in each of the past four operating years totaling over 3.9 million (\$3,938,707).

In addition, YRDSB has received over \$425,000 per year through RCETS (a pay for use service) (\$1.7 million over 4 years)

York Region District School Board

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Allocation	29,542,625	31,273,386	32,136,269	33,217,371
Expenditure	29,127,337	29,719,758	30,540,878	32,842,971
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	415,288	1,553,628	1,595,391	374,400

The E and E Report also noted that YRDSB/YCDSB runs their buses far below capacity (25-40%)

In addition, the YRDSB receives \$13 million in annual FSL funding for their French programs.

Most school boards in Ontario do provide transportation to their elementary FI students and most provide transportation for their secondary FI students.

YRDSB has taken the transportation grant and re-allocated some of these funds to other costs in lieu of providing transportation. It is completely inappropriate for a board to receive money for transportation and re-allocate it to other costs when there are students who cannot get to school. This policy requires some

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students to pay to access public education and not others. Implementation of this policy means that students on an estate in King City get picked up at no cost, but not the child of a single mother living over a store on Yonge Street, who must pay for municipal public transit.

The cost of transportation for one child in YRDSB through secondary school could be anywhere between \$3000 and \$5000 depending on how many zones they have to travel through. For some families this could be over \$20,000 in transportation costs to cover a service the board is already getting funding to provide. This amounts to a tuition charge to attend a public program and could very well be the difference in being able to attend a post secondary institution.

In addition, the multiple transfers on public transit and time on the bus (more than two hours per day plus walking time to a municipal bus stop for some students) required to get to school is becoming an insurmountable barrier to many students.

This program affects all students in YRDSB but it has a much greater impact on students in French Immersion (FI) and other magnet programs because those programs draw from a larger geographic area and are offered in a centralized location to maximize the use of staff and physical resources.

Every student in this province has the right to public education. YRDSB accepts the grants provided for transportation and French Second Language programs and in doing so, accepts the terms and conditions under which those grants are provided. They agree to provide the programs and the transportation grants are intended to provide access.

Fifteen years ago, YRDSB began a plan to move students off the buses. The cuts they were expecting never happened and in fact, YRDSB has received an ever increasing amount of transportation funding.

Throughout this process, the board has consistently taken the position that Trustees should not speak to parents. This has greatly aggravated the situation. Parents were also told that school councils could not discuss transportation. While this situation was eventually resolved it had an impact on the time available for school councils to meet and discuss submissions to the board on the implementation of their transportation policy (#680).

We are asking on behalf of the many parents who have contacted us, for your assistance in resolving this matter. A full and thorough review and evaluation, including parent input, should be done. The recommendations of the E and E report should be thoroughly considered with a view to improving access, equity, efficiency and effectiveness in a safe and timely manner. No one in this country should have to pay to get to a publicly funded program and no one should have to pay to access programs designed to make us literate in both our official languages.

Yours sincerely,



Heather Stauble
President

cc.

Director, Chair, Trustees YRDSB
Graham Fraser, Commissioner of Official Languages
CPF York Region