



CPF *Canadian Parents for French (Ontario)*

(York Region Chapter)

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York Region District School Board
60 Wellington Street West, Box 40
Aurora, Ontario, L4G 3H2

via email ~ hard copy to follow

Attn: Lori Barnes
Manager, Trustee Services

Dear Ms. Barnes

Re: Transportation Policy #680 ~ 2009 Review

Canadian Parents for French (CPF) is submitting herewith its comments and proposals pertaining to the current review of the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) Transportation Policy #680. We have written our submission as an overview of the entire Policy #680, including references to all programs, as we believe that is what a comprehensive review should entail. **However, we maintain our long standing opinion that French Immersion is NOT a “special” program and should not be treated as such. French Immersion is based on the same curriculum as the regular English stream program. Only the language of instruction varies for some subjects.**

Our document is provided under three headings as follows:

- (a) ~ Policy & By-Law Committee - Guideline for Policy Review;
- (b) ~ Policy for Comment; and
- (c) ~ Proposed Amendments

(a) ~ Policy & By-Law Committee - Guideline for Policy Review

This YRDSB document poses seven questions to persons commenting on the review of school board documents. The questions (*in italics*) and our responses to those questions are as listed below:

1. What is the purpose of the proposed policy?

We believe the purpose of Transportation Policy #680 should be to provide a document that sets out a method of providing safe, efficient, and equitable transportation for all YRDSB students, in all programs, who live beyond a “reasonable” walking distance. Furthermore, we believe the document should respect and reflect the basic tenets of





public education for all students, including equity of access and financial equity. We believe public education is the responsibility of all citizens, that it should be financed publicly, and that **a policy such as #680 should not disadvantage, penalize or marginalize select groups of students and parents on the basis of geography and/or family income.**

2. How does this policy enhance student achievement?

The existing document does NOT enhance student achievement for select groups of students and parents. Instead, the existing policy raises barriers to student participation in some YRDSB programs, such as French Immersion, Gifted, Arts and Sports, from the point of view of both geographic location of the family home and the level of family income. The existing policy favours those with more affluent family incomes and disadvantages, penalizes and marginalizes those with more modest family incomes; **i.e., it does a disservice to those students whom it should be helping most.**

3. Who will be affected directly or indirectly and who should be consulted?

Every student and parent who lives beyond a “reasonable” walking distance from the “designated” school where their desired program is offered will be affected by Transportation Policy #680 and, therefore, all such students and parents in all YRDSB programs should be notified of the terms of the existing policy and offered the opportunity to be consulted about proposed revisions.

4. Has sufficient data been gathered to support retention of or revisions to an existing policy or introduction of a new policy?

We believe the answer to this question is no. We note that the May 2008 *Ministry of Education Effectiveness and Efficiency Review (E&E Report)* suggested that certain analyses be carried out. We are not aware of the extent that those suggestions have been acted upon. Additionally, to our knowledge, any data already gathered by the YRDSB has not been made available to school councils, to other stakeholder groups, nor to individual students or parents seeking information. To our knowledge, stakeholder groups and parent representatives will not be at the table when proposed amendments are discussed and formalized by YRDSB staff and trustees. Consequently, there will be little opportunity for persons outside the YRDSB per se to review any collected data.

5. What are the financial implications? Do the policy provisions fall within the school and board budget parameters?

The financial implications of the existing policy #680 are very significant for students and parents who live beyond a “reasonable” walking distance, and are particularly problematic for families of modest incomes.



We do not have access to the YRDSB budget parameters and cannot comment on the second part of this question.

6. *Can implementation be accomplished within a reasonable time frame?*

We believe the answer to this question is yes. We hope that resolution of the problems spawned by the existing Policy #680, can be dealt with in an expedient manner and that implementation could follow immediately thereafter.

7. *How do the proposed changes modify, complement or replace existing policies, procedures and other supporting documentation?*

Proposed changes should result in equity of access for all students in all YRDSB programs with regard to both geographic location of the family home and the level of family income. Proposed changes to Policy #680 should endeavor to bring the policy back within the basic concepts of public education.

(b) ~ Policy for Comment

The YRDSB *Policy for Comment* document indicates that respondents should “submit specific wording changes with related rationale.” In addition to this submission, our rationale for proposed changes to Policy #680 was submitted in detail in our letter to the Chair of the YRDSB dated 29 February 2009, a copy of which is attached.

We believe the specific wording, incorporating proposed amendments to Policy #680, should be formulated by YRDSB staff after all submissions have been received and then made available for penultimate review by stakeholders. The majority of respondents will be parent volunteers, either individually or as members of school councils, and having multiple persons writing multiple variations would not represent efficient use of volunteer time. **We believe the accumulated comments can best be sorted and put into appropriate language by YRDSB staff.**

(c) ~ Proposed Amendments

CPF proposes that YRDSB Transportation Policy #680 be amended, so that it reflects reasonable walking distances, travel times, safety issues and an efficient amalgamation of yellow busses and public transit that will provide access equity and financial equity to all YRDSB students regardless of program. We propose that the following concepts be incorporated in a revised policy:

- That all students residing more than 3.2 kilometers from their “designated” school, be provided with either yellow bus transportation or public transportation bus passes at no cost to the student. **The term “designated” means the school which provides the program in which the student is enrolled;**



- That the maximum travel time by either yellow bus or public transit be **limited to one hour**, including walk to designated bus stop, travel time, and transfer time;
- That routings by either yellow bus or public transit have a **maximum of one transfer**;
- That **safety should continue to be of paramount importance** and consider such aspects as:
 - Type of roadway; is it rural or multi lane urban;
 - What are the risks related to location;
 - Are there sidewalks and/or bus shelters; and
 - What are anticipated winter conditions?

We also believe that revisions to Policy #680 should show:

- That the YRDSB commits to **upholding the basic concepts of public education**, wherein no student is denied equity of access to any program, because of the geographic location of their home, or because of a more modest family income;
- That the YRDSB commits to **“leveling the playing field”** for all students from any background, especially those who have the greatest need, **rather than tipping it in favour of students from more affluent families** who can afford the cost of transportation which in effect disadvantages, penalizes and marginalizes those students who cannot participate in desired programs such as language, enriched, arts or sports, because the parent can’t afford the substantial cost of public transit to the designated program school.

Yours truly

Carrie Hoffelner, President
CPF (York Region)

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