

**Written Submission to the Board of Education
Lesley Pierce**

Subject: Re: A concerned parent.

Kindly add this comment to the input...

I understand the need for cuts, While my son does not have a special needs designation, he does have several learning disabilities and we are grateful for any classroom supports that he receives. I do understand not wanting to cut away any more classroom services. However, in order to deal with the cutting of the bus, I will either have to a) move, b) quit my job or c) hire a live in caregiver solely to drive to and from school. None of those options are particularly palatable as I'm sure you can imagine. Paying an annual fee of \$1,000.00 for busing would be better. Have you contacted the families of the kids that use the bus? I'd bet they would be willing to pay more than you think. I feel very let down by the School Board.
Lesley Pierce

Subject: A concerned parent.

I write regarding the Board's decision to cancel the School District 42 school buses and the change to Policy 5400.

I am a resident of Maple Ridge, a taxpayer, a voter, and a parent.

I have an 11 year old, grade 6 student of Yennadon Elementary. He will be going to high school in 2017. We live in Silver Ridge, our catchment high school is Garibaldi Secondary School. A distance of 7.9 km which will take approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes to walk. We have no public transit, no sidewalks, no streetlights and of course, lots of wild animals. There are bears, cougars, coyotes, and occasionally a human beings under the influence of drugs and alcohol. There are also lots of cars speeding off to work. The winter months are very dark. Would you send your children or grandchildren on a 2 hour walk in those conditions?

When we made the decision to purchase a home in Maple Ridge, I did my research and found that there was an elementary school not too far away, a daycare in the area that provided service to and from the elementary school, a plan to build a school in the area, and a bus to the local high school. All of these things were very important to me as I take the West Coast Express to work in Vancouver and knew that I would not be able to drive my son to and from school. These factors greatly impacted my decision to move to Maple Ridge. We are well settled in our home, active members of the community, volunteers with ice hockey, ball hockey and lacrosse, and our son has made many friends in the neighbourhood.

Policy 5400 once read:

" The Board of Education believes that it is their responsibility to ensure that appropriate student transportation is provided for eligible students to their catchment area school".

Policy 5400 now reads:

"The Board of Education ("Board") believes that it is their responsibility to ensure that appropriate student transportation is provided for eligible students with special needs to their catchment area school".

How exactly, was it decided that only students with special needs were worthy of safe transportation to and from school?

Why did you decide that your responsibility to other students was at an end?

Do you agree that the community has geographical challenges related to getting to and from school?

What other options were looked at before making the decision to cancel the buses?

Did you consider a more balanced pay per use scheme?

Did you consider the environmental impact that cancelling the buses would have?

Was the option of consolidating some buses to travel to several schools discussed?

What are your suggestions as to how students should get to and from school without buses?

Is there now a surplus in the 2016/17 budget?

Where will that money be allocated?

I understand that there was a notice of a meeting and a survey sent out through the Parent Portal. As a parent who receives many, many Parent Portal notices, I don't read them all. In fact, I generally only read the ones that I need to sign for my son. Had a paper notice made its way home, I would have read that. But, it did not. I had no idea that there was even the most remote possibility that the School Board would cancel our only source of transportation to and from high school.

The British Columbia School Trustees Association ("BCSTA") describes the position of Trustee as:

British Columbia is a large province with many communities, each having different priorities, needs and unique educational requirements. British Columbians elect their Boards of Education to improve student achievement according to the diverse needs of these communities. As locally elected representatives, the trustees on these boards best understand their respective communities' particular strengths, challenges and demands.

Trustees engage their communities in building and maintaining a school system that reflects local priorities, values and expectations. School trustees listen to their communities; guide the work of their school district; and set plans, policies and the annual budget. Reflecting the strength of local representation, boards report back to their communities on how students are doing: boards are directly accountable to the people they serve.

As elected officials you are accountable to the people you serve. You are meant to be our representatives. You are meant to understand the communities' challenges. I do not believe you are representing the best interests of students and families in Maple Ridge.

I look forward to your response to the questions in written in bold type in this correspondence.