

October 13, 2016

Ministry of Education  
PO Box 9045 Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC  
V8W 9E2

Attention: Honourable Mike Bernier, Minister of Education

Dear Honourable Minister:

***Re: Student Transportation Funding***

The Mission Public School District (School District No. 75) recently submitted a Transportation Plan to receive the additional funding to support student transportation needs. In considering the options for the plan, the Board discussed the significant cost of providing student transportation in Mission. In the 2015/2016 school year, the School District's transportation costs exceeded \$1 million. This new Provincial funding covers approximately 19% of the total cost of the service, and primarily replaces user fee funding.

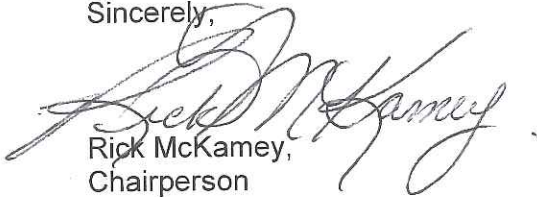
The Mission School District is certainly appreciative of the funding the Ministry of Education has provided to support parents transporting children to school. However, it has come at a cost to other programs funded by the School District. While the increased funding for busing service is appreciated, it has a negative effect on our ability to provide other programming.

The requirement to eliminate the transportation fees levied to parents created an increased demand to provide busing services. As parents no longer have to pay for busing fees out of their pocket, many have registered their children for busing. The increased demand is causing additional financial challenges for our School District as the cost of this increased service exceeds the additional funding received and the School District must divert funding from other areas to support busing. The School District now has a waiting list for busing services, which may trigger the need for additional buses in the near future. If the funding is not sustainable in the future, this of course could lead to a rollback of transportation services, and/or the reintroduction of user fees, neither of which would be welcome.

Our School District informally sought input from stakeholders on the use of these additional funds. First Nations' communities and other rurally located students' families advocated for additional transportation so they could fully partake in extra curricular activities, tutoring and other academic supports, and additional counselling. A number of parents also advocated for additional bus runs for safety issues (eg. bears and wildlife), while others demanded shorter walk limits or transportation to optional programming like French Immersion. Several school Principals hoped for additional supervisors for our long bus rides to improve safety and reduce the chances of bullying. In short, there were many ideas that went far beyond what the fund could offer, but perhaps they demonstrate the broad view of needs that many School Districts face.

Again, we wish to emphasise our gratitude for the additional funds, but hope that future funding announcements will be relayed a little earlier, with some consideration of the hidden impacts of sudden funding. Use of avenues such as the Technical Review Committee might assist the Ministry as it continues to deliberate on funding to support education in the Province. We thank you for your ongoing commitment to improving public education in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick McKamey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

Rick McKamey,  
Chairperson

RM/to

cc: Board of Education  
BCSTA: All Boards of Education  
Angus Wilson, Superintendent of Schools  
Corien Becker, Secretary Treasurer  
Derek Welsh, Assistant Secretary Treasurer