



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Media Information

February 4, 2008

School Buses Go High Tech to Stop Dangerous Drivers

Kelowna, BC: On Tuesday, February 5, School District No. 23 celebrates **School Bus Safety Week** by inviting the RCMP and media to experience an innovative new technology firsthand. They will have an opportunity to ride a school bus equipped with a camera system to catch motorists who break the law by passing a bus with flashing lights.

“Approximately 22 drivers per day pass through school bus lights,” notes Grant Davidson, Operations Manager for the School District. “Kids trust the lights, which makes them particularly vulnerable.”

Prior to installing the new camera systems, bus drivers were asked to note the vehicle colour and model, the licence plate number, a physical description of the driver and the weather conditions. “It’s difficult for bus drivers to collect all this information when their first priority is to ensure the safety of the children,” says David Misener, School District No. 23 Transportation Supervisor. “We expect that the new technology will greatly assist our drivers and encourage motorists to respect the flashing lights.”

Currently, drivers can be charged a traffic fine of \$50 for the offense of passing a school bus with flashing lights. That may, however, soon change. In April 2007, the Association of School Transportation Supervisors of BC made a presentation to the RCMP advocating an increase in fines and point penalties. In October, a proposal went to a committee of the Solicitor General’s office. A decision is expected this spring.

“We haven’t yet had a tragedy with a child being struck by a motorist as they get on or off a bus,” says Davidson. “We hope this new technology, and possibly tougher laws, will ensure that never happens.”

The District is in the process of equipping the entire fleet with the new cameras. Local RCMP officers are also monitoring motorists for violations.

Media Opportunity:

Date: Tuesday, February 5

Location: Operations Centre, 685 Dease Rd, Kelowna

1:15pm - Bus driver Kelly Blasco will be available to answer questions about her experiences with motorists and the new technology.

2:15pm – Media and RCMP are invited to ride along on her bus route which travels through the Dilworth Mountain area (route #11)

School Bus Safety Week slogan: “Avoid Harm, Obey the Stop Arm”

For comments, please contact:

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