



## Media Update

### Busing Information Backgrounder

#### School District No. 23 Transportation Eligibility Limits:

|                                 |               |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Kindergarten to Grade 3:</b> | <b>4.0 km</b> |
| <b>Grades 4 to 12:</b>          | <b>4.8 km</b> |

- 100% of eligible students [4000+] in the School District (including the upper Mission area) who wish to receive transportation services are receiving them as are a significant number of students [approximately 1300] who live inside of our Transportation Eligibility Limits.
- The District transportation/busing guidelines have not changed in many years and are the same as the previous Ministry of Education limits dating back to the 1970s.
- Any excess space on new bus routes is offered to students within the eligibility limits on a priority basis [distance from the school]. Many students are already receiving service, but our current fleet of buses is near capacity as to the number of riders that can be accommodated.
- The School District is continuing to work hard to support student safety while they travel to and from school. Where road conditions and traffic make it unsafe for students to walk to and from school, the District is supporting such parent initiatives as car pooling, 'walking school buses', and utilization of public transportation.
- The City of Kelowna as well as other area local governments are aware of community transportation concerns and have cooperated with the School District wherever possible. The most recent example of this is the creation of our new joint Traffic Safety Officer position to assist with student education and safety improvements.
- Expansion of busing service for additional students inside the transportation boundary would be extremely difficult to provide. District budget and availability of buses are limiting factors. Money to support additional busing would have to come from current educational programs or services. Equity of service around the School District is also an issue. We need to ensure that whatever is done in one area can also be offered to families in similar situations throughout the Central Okanagan.
- The end solution for transportation concerns in the upper Mission area is construction of the new Mission Hills Elementary School to service the growing neighbourhoods of that area. We are currently awaiting confirmation for the Ministry of Education that final design and construction may proceed. If approved in the very near future, we could still open the new school as early as September 2009.

## Background financial information

- Recent Ministry of Education dedicated funding for School District No. 23 busing

|       | <u>SD23<br/>Spending</u> | <u>Ministry<br/>Funding</u> |                                   |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 01/02 | \$2.7m                   | \$2.4m                      |                                   |
| 02/03 | \$2.9                    | \$2.4                       |                                   |
| 03/04 | \$2.7                    | \$2.4                       |                                   |
| 04/05 | \$2.8                    | \$2.4                       |                                   |
| 05/06 | \$3.2                    | \$2.4                       |                                   |
| 06/07 | \$3.1                    | \$2.4                       |                                   |
| 07/08 | \$3.2                    | \$2.4                       | (current difference of \$800,000) |

Total SD23 spending in excess of direct Ministry funding has been \$3.8m over the past 7 years

- Our last internal review of busing in 2005 estimated that lowering the current transportation boundaries by 0.5 km [4.0 > 3.5 and 4.8 > 4.3 km] would result in:
  - 2000 additional students being classified as eligible riders
  - 15 additional buses required (at \$120,000 each this totals \$1.8m)
  - \$750,000 in additional yearly operating costs

These costs will have risen significantly since the 2005 review.

- Before 2002, when transportation funding to school districts was frozen by the Ministry, funding was based on the provincial “walk limits” of 4km and 4.8 km. Since the transportation funding freeze, it has become the Board’s responsibility to allocate funds for the busing of students. The current SD23 transportation boundaries are based on Board policy and budget. It is within the Board’s jurisdiction to alter the transportation eligibility guidelines, but the Board would be responsible for any/all increased costs. Funding for any revised guidelines would have to come from existing District funds.
- Over the past five years, and most recently in 2006, the Board has requested that the Ministry reconsider the funding provided to SD23, as we feel that the District was disadvantaged when funding was frozen in 2002. At that time, the Ministry assured School Districts that a transportation funding review would take place but no changes have been implemented by them to date.
- Currently, Ministry capital funding for new buses is based on a determined need at the 4.0 and 4.8 km boundaries. It is very unlikely the Ministry would provide additional capital funding to buy buses for new routes inside the current boundaries.
- School Districts do not receive the school taxes collected by local authorities. These are forwarded to Victoria, and the Provincial Government allocates funding to Districts. Thus, a building boom in Kelowna with increased property taxes being collected, does not necessarily equate to more funding for SD23.