
Response to Your Concerns Regarding Student Transportation

From Julia Fraser <Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca>

Date Wed 2025-10-08 2:51 PM

To [REDACTED] All Trustees <All-Trustees@sd23.bc.ca>; Jon Rever <Jon.Rever@sd23.bc.ca>; Delta Carmichael <Delta.Carmichael@sd23.bc.ca>; Lise Bradshaw <Lise.Bradshaw@sd23.bc.ca>

Dear Ms. Reid,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your concerns regarding student transportation. I understand how frustrating these ongoing fee increases and service challenges can be for families, particularly when balancing multiple financial pressures and extracurricular commitments such as your son's Hockey Academy program.

Just in case you are not aware, under provincial legislation, student transportation is ultimately a parental responsibility. However, our Board has made a deliberate commitment to continue offering school bus service because we recognize how essential it is for many families across our district. To do so, the district subsidizes student transportation by more than \$4 million each year—funds that could otherwise be directed into classrooms to support student learning.

The fees collected from families offset only a portion of this total cost. Even with the most recent increase, our rates remain below the cost of public transit in Kelowna, where a student bus pass is \$550 per year. The Board works diligently to keep fees lower than that benchmark to ensure that school transportation remains a more affordable option for families.

We also recognize that the current economic climate has placed added pressure on families of all income levels. Staff continue to review both our subsidy programs and service models to ensure that the most vulnerable families are supported and that our approach remains as fair and sustainable as possible.

With respect to your concerns about reliability and the restrictions related to sports equipment, I understand how disruptive those limitations can be. The regulations governing what can be carried on a school bus are set out in the Motor Vehicle Act Regulations, which establish the safety requirements for transporting equipment or luggage. These rules are in place to protect passengers in the event of a collision or other emergency on the bus.

The Motor Vehicle Act Division 35 – Cargo Securement (Section 35.09) states:

- (1) A person must not drive or operate on a highway a bus or school bus that is transporting passengers and carrying luggage or other equipment in the passenger compartment unless the luggage and other equipment
- (a) do not block or intrude on any aisle or exit,
 - (b) are stowed under a seat against a barrier that prevents them from sliding forward in the event of an emergency stop,
 - (c) are carried on a passenger's lap, or
 - (d) are carried in a luggage compartment enclosed on all sides.

Because hockey equipment is often too large to be safely held on a student's lap or stowed under a seat without obstructing aisles or exits, it cannot be transported on school buses under this regulation. This is not a new requirement—it has been in place for many years to ensure the safety of all passengers. While I understand that this is not ideal, the district must comply with these provincial safety standards.

Your feedback has been shared with the Board and senior staff as part of our ongoing review of the transportation program. You are always welcome to attend the Board's Finance and Planning Committee meetings, where Trustees, the Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, and Director of Operations are present to hear from parents directly.

Thank you again for reaching out and for your advocacy on behalf of families. Your input helps guide our ongoing efforts to provide safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation for all students.

Warm regards,

Julia Fraser

Chair, Board of Education

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Warmest Regards,

Julia Fraser

Board Chair & Ex-Officio of All Committees,

Central Okanagan Board of Education

Resolutions Committee Chair,

BCSTA Thompson-Okanagan Branch

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I respectfully acknowledge that I live, work & play on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of the Okanagan People.

From: Jennifer Reid [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 7:52 PM
To: School Board Office <SchoolBoard.Office@sd23.bc.ca>
Subject: Concerns Regarding Rising School Bus Fees

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Dear SD23 Board of Education,

I am writing to express my frustration and outrage with the continued rise in school bus fees. The latest rise to \$525 for the 2025–2026 school year is unreasonable and places an unnecessary burden on families. Since 2021, the fees have increased from \$300 to \$525— that is a 75% increase. This is an unreasonable burden for families, especially when we are already stretched by the rising costs of everything from groceries to extracurricular activities.

In my situation, the frustration is even greater. My son is enrolled in Hockey Academy and is not allowed to bring his gear on the bus - an issue that affected us last year as well. This rule forces me to drive him to and from the rink myself at least twice a week. Realistically, he only uses the bus two or three times a week, yet I am still required to pay the full \$525 fee for this partial service. Worse yet, the service frequently has last-minute cancellations, and we are never reimbursed for the trips we miss.

I want to emphasize that being a “hockey parent” does not mean I have unlimited resources to cover these costs. In fact, the price of hockey has risen by a couple of hundred dollars as well, and like many families, I am struggling to keep up with all the increases. It is especially frustrating to see that Kelowna families are paying significantly higher rates than those in neighbouring school districts. Why are our fees so disproportionate? Parents deserve a clear explanation, as well

as more equitable options, such as reduced rates for partial use. Families in our district should not be penalized simply because of where we live, nor should we be forced to pay full price for unreliable or restricted service. I urge the district to revisit this fee increase, provide transparency around costs, and work toward solutions that reflect fairness and the realities families are facing.

Sincerely,
Jenn Reid