January 30, 2019

Dear Applicant:

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Our File #: EECD/004/2019)

On January 17, 2019, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development received your request for access to the following records/information:

"Information notes, decision notes, House of Assembly cards/Q&As/response lines, analyses, and/or other background or briefing materials - in any and all formats, including paper and electronic - related to the 1.6 km school bus regulation. Date range of request is Sept. 1, 2018, to the present."

I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been made by the Deputy Minister for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to provide access to the requested information. In accordance with your request for a copy of the records, the appropriate copies have been enclosed.

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act requires us to provide an advisory response within 10 days of receiving the request. As this request has been completed prior to day 10, this letter also serves as our Advisory Response.

Please be advised that you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the processing of your access request, as set out in section 42 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the Act). A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner.

The appeal may be addressed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
2 Canada Drive
P. O. Box 13004, Stn. A
St. John’s, NL. A1B 3V8
Telephone: (709) 729-6309; Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500

You may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after you receive the decision of the public body, pursuant to section 52 of the Act.

Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.
If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned by telephone at 709-729-7180 or by email at garynoftall@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gary Noftall
ATIPP Coordinator

Attachment
KEY MESSAGES

Education and Early Childhood Development
Centreville Academy Protest re 1.6 km zone
September 17, 2018

Summary:
A protest by members of the school community was held this morning near Centreville Academy to voice concerns about the enforcement of the 1.6 km zone rule of the province’s busing policy. The protesters impeded teachers, students and buses from accessing the school property. The Newfoundland and Labrador School District made the decision to close the school for the day as they could not guarantee safe passage on to school property for the staff and students. EECD has receive no media inquiries on this issue.

Anticipated Questions:

• What is the Provincial Government doing to resolve this situation?

Key Messages:

• We are aware that a protest was held this morning near Centreville Academy impeding students and staff from access to the school.

• We have been informed by the District that the school was closed for the day due to an ongoing blockage to the school entrance and the inability to ensure safe access for students and staff.

• There are two bus routes currently transporting students to Centreville Academy, and the District has been accommodating by providing both of these routes with a courtesy seat stop for approved riders within 1.6 km.

Secondary Messages:

• Our guidelines are in place to ensure the safe transportation of students to and from school. Student safety is of utmost importance to the department, school districts and school administrators.

• Our current policy is comparable – and in many cases – is more favourable than other provinces.

• We are always looking at making improvements to the education system and we have ongoing discussion with the English School District about the 1.6 km zone, which is known as the Family Responsibility Zone.

Prepared by: EECD Communications
Approved by:
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Changes to Guidelines for Courtesy Seating on Buses - Removal of 1.6 KM Rule
October 17, 2018

Summary:

The Provincial Government has removed the guideline “No new bus stops should be established less than 1.6 km from school to accommodate courtesy riders.” from its ‘Guidelines for Courtesy Seating on School Buses’. The decision for courtesy seating bus stops within 1.6 km of a school is at the discretion of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD).

Anticipated Questions:

Why did Government make this change?

Key messages:

- We have removed the guideline that buses cannot stop within 1.6 km to accommodate courtesy riders. The decision for courtesy seating bus stops within 1.6 km of a school is at the discretion of the School District.

- We have consistent dialogue with the District and will continue to collaborate with them to explore and implement safe and feasible options for student transportation on a priority basis.

- Busing policies and guidelines are in place to ensure the safe transportation of students to and from school. Student safety is of utmost importance to the department, school districts and school administrators.

- Our current 1.6 km proximity zone is comparable – and in many cases – is more favourable than other provinces.

Secondary Messages:

- At this time, the District has instituted, on a trial basis, one courtesy stop (per bus route) within the 1.6 kilometre zone - starting with 44 schools (161 bus routes), primarily in the Central region.

- The District has informed us that they have instituted courtesy stops for the majority of the initial 44 schools. If this trial proves unmanageable, generates safety concerns, or interferes with the efficiency of operations, the provision of a courtesy stop will be revisited.

- For the District to roll this out across all 1,100 bus routes is a major undertaking. It will take time to appropriately review and make informed decisions on a priority basis.
1.6km Busing

Hansard May 5, 2016:

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Cape St. Francis. Mr. Speaker, 30 schools in 17 communities, resulting in 37 fewer bus runs servicing the students of Newfoundland and Labrador. I ask the minister: When will the parents be told what are the impacts of these new bussing plans?

MR. KIRBY: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I thought I was up. In case, Mr. Speaker, I we have had double bus runs in this province for some time and we know that, that does present additional challenges for parents. The school district is trying to find the best way to apportion the bussing resources that we have. We are investing millions of dollars in funding into bussing because the price of bussing has skyrocketed, its increasing on an annual basis. That’s the reason why we have double bus runs. That means there will be earlier pickups in some cases and later drop offs in the evening in others, but that’s nothing something that people across this province are unaccustomed to. That is a practice that has been in place for some and under the previous administration in fact.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, the question was when will parents be notified about the changes in bus routes so they can be prepared for it? Is there something they can go online? Is there some information out there that they can find so they’ll know?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite is just as capable of calling the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District to get that information as I am. Parents are getting that information from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District as that information is provided to schools. Parents will have ample time. What is it? Today is May 5, parents will have ample time, ample notification to know in advance of the school year whether they are impacted in any way by the double bus runs that are as a result of the skyrocketing costs of budgeting in this province. That is a simple fact. I can’t give the Member any more information. Parents will be given the information they need in due course.

MR. K. PARSONS: I ask the minister: Will they be consulted or can he name who will be consulted on these decisions?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, parents will be consulted on the apportionment of bussing funds and basically the specific bus runs, the routes and the schedules. They will be consulted on that exactly the same way they were consulted on that when the Members over there sat over here. Exactly the same process for consulting with parents about school busing will be followed as it was when those Members were over here for over a decade.
MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For years, the Member opposite sat in Opposition and pledged and promised to change the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Last week, the minister attempted to blame the school board saying that the rule was a school board policy, but documentation by the minister’s own department clearly states that the rule is the policy of the department.

I ask the minister: Why haven’t you made changes to the 1.6 kilometre busing rule?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

It’s an honour for me to be able to respond. The Member opposite is entitled to his own fantasies, but he’s not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is we do have problems at the beginning of the year with school busing. I never, at any point, tried to say that the 1.6 kilometre rule was a rule of the school district. That is a policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Most of the school busing problems are resolved with the courtesy seating policy at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes parents decline courtesy seating. That happened in one well-publicized instance.

That happens and that’s the choice of parents. They can take courtesy seating. If that doesn’t work for them, they’re welcome to decline it as well.

Hansard: November 22, 2017
Issue: School Busing Safety

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In the last three years we have heard loud and clear from parents about unsafe conditions for their children walking to school. They are calling for a change in the school busing policy so children and youth are not walking on busy roads with no sidewalks or on roads because the existing sidewalks are full of snow. We need action now before another child or young person is injured or killed walking to or from school. I ask the minister will he create a flexible busing policy that allows for situations where the actions of functioning sidewalks puts young serious at serious risk.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as far as I know, are not responsible for sidewalks in municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for sidewalks in their communities. If there are dangerous conditions on roads municipalities should apply to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, or the Minister of Transportation and Works, whichever department to try to get funding in order to fix those sort of conditions. We already have a flexible busing policy, it’s called courtesy seating and most of those problems with school busing are resolved within the first three to four weeks of school, as has been the case this fall. We have a total of one outstanding case at the moment.
Thank you.
MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So I’m asking the minister, is she saying that he has no concerns for the unsafe conditions that exist at this moment. Forget the future, right now at this moment; he has no concerns for the safety of our children?

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I’m a father of a primary school student. I am concerned about the situation in the schools in this province, of course I am. I didn’t say that I was. I don’t appreciate the Leader of the Third Party putting words into my mouth. I said if municipal roads are unsafe they should, municipalities, apply to government in order to get cost-sharing funding like other communities across this province have done. If there’s a particular circumstance that the Member is aware of she should bring it to the attention of a Member of Cabinet or the minister responsible, that way those issues can be resolved rather than throwing those sorts of allegations across the floor of the House of Assembly.

Hansard: October 16, 2017
Issues: 1.6 km policy, Bus Safety, Mobile Extension

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years the Member opposite sat in Opposition and pledged and promised to change the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Last week, the minister attempted to blame the school board saying that the rule was a school board policy, but documentation by the minister’s own department clearly states that the rule is the policy of the department. I ask the minister: Why haven’t you made changes to the 1.6 kilometre busing rule?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour for me to be able to respond. The Member opposite is entitled, Mr. Speaker, to his own fantasies but he’s not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is we do have problems at the beginning of the year with school busing. I never, at any point, tried to say that the 1.6 kilometre rule was a rule of the school district. That is a policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Most of the school busing problems are resolved with the courtesy seating policy at the beginning of the school year. Sometimes parents decline courtesy seating. That happened in one well-publicized instance. That happens and that’s the choice of parents. They can take courtesy seating. If that doesn’t work for them, they’re welcome to decline it as well.

Thank you.
Hansard May 16, 2018

MR. BRAZIL: I ask the minister: Why the sudden push to enforce the 1.6 busing rule while it's currently under review? Can we assume the review has been completed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to answer the question. The policy has not changed. Allow me to repeat that, the policy has not changed. Courtesy busing is still available.

What is happening here today is the English School District is applying consistency across the board, across the province on the 1.6 rule.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

Our understanding from the previous minister was that the 1.6 busing rule would be under review. So while under review, why are you automatically making this a big issue?

We are still asking: Is it under review? If it is, has it been completed? If it isn't, then, obviously, this is going to be the standard and we need to deal with the situation around safety and people travelling on our roads.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will again repeat. The policy remains the same as it has been since some time in the 1970s, Mr. Speaker. There is now going to be consistency applied across the province by the English School District. Courtesy busing is still available.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, the 1.6 distance rule is pretty consistent across the country. I can count probably at least eight provinces or seven provinces that have the 1.6 rule, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the leader of the Official Opposition.

So the thousands of parents who've weighted in, the multitude of municipalities, the number of agencies who have talked about safety here, who've lobbied government to do a review on this, obviously, this has gone on deaf ears.
I ask the minister: Will she look at lobbying the Minister of Education to do a full review on the 1.6 kilometre busing?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I am very confident that the Minister of Education listens very well to what is happening in our province, listens very well to those who are utilizing the system: the parents, the students and stakeholders involved in this. I am very confident he would do that.

Unlike, I would say, the Members opposite who did not do anything under their watch on this issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Your petition, please.

MR. K. PARSONS: The petition of the undersigned: school age children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks and putting the safety of children at risk. Therefore, the petitioners call upon government.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure safety of all children by removing the 1.6 busing policy where safety is an ongoing concern.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this petition to the House now several times. It's a huge issue in my area. I heard the Acting Minister of Education today, the Minister of Natural Resources, talk about 1.6 and trying to get consistency and stuff like that, but I want to explain to the minister that there are a lot of areas in our province where safety should come foremost with regard to anything.

When it comes to our children, safety should be put forth no matter what. I live in an area where there's a lot of traffic. My school is in Torbay, there was a traffic count done showing that there are 17,000 cars a day that travel along this road. These roads have no sidewalks. There is no street lighting there to show there's a crosswalk there, and it's a huge issue.

While the minister today talked a little bit about courtesy busing, it's a very important part of mine, too. I'm talking about children in grade kindergarten to grade four. We really have to consider what we're doing here and the consequences that could happen with small children on these roads.

During this time of year it's not as bad, but in the winter months, Mr. Speaker, snow clearing is not the best. We're putting people out on dirt, gravel roads where ice buildup is a huge problem and safety is the foremost of my concerns. I'm really concerned about the safety of our children. They'll go back and say, you didn't do it or we didn't do it;
somebody do it. It has to be done because something is going to happen. This is about the safety of our children.

Where there are no sidewalks and where there's a lot of high traffic volume, we should have a look at it. I'm not asking to blame anybody or we were going to do it, you were going to do it. I'm asking for it to be looked at. Where there's an area where somebody could be seriously hurt or killed, please look at those areas.

It's about the safety of our children, and that's the reason why I'll continue to present this petition.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to respond to the petition as Acting Minister of Education today.

**MS. COADY:** I did rise in the House today and talk about the fact that there has been no policy change. I want to make sure people understand that there has been no policy change. The fact is courtesy seating will continue. The school board is now applying consistency.

I do respect the Member opposite for bringing forward the concerns. I think, obviously, the minister responsible will listen to those concerns, and it has been said. As has been indicated in the past, we are open to hearing what needs to be done.

I will say that providing a safe and reliable school transportation system always is foremost in the mind of this government. The budget of 2018 invested almost $59 million in school transportation system.

We look at our colleagues across the country, what's happening across the country. We listen to petitions, as was just presented, but we also have to be mindful that $59 million is invested in our busing transportation system. We do have to provide a safe, reliable school transportation system for this province.

**Hansard: May 29, 2018**

**MR. K. PARSONS:** The petition of the undersigned: school age children are walking to school in areas where there are no sidewalks, no traffic lights and through areas without crosswalks and putting the safety of children at risk. Therefore, the petitioners call upon government.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure safety of all children by removing the 1.6 busing policy where safety is an ongoing concern.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this petition to the House now several times. It's a huge issue in my area. I heard the Acting Minister of Education today, the Minister of Natural
Resources, talk about 1.6 and trying to get consistency and stuff like that, but I want to explain to the minister that there are a lot of areas in our province where safety should come foremost with regard to anything.

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During this time of year it's not as bad, but in the winter months, Mr. Speaker, snow clearing is not the best. We're putting people out on dirt, gravel roads where ice buildup is a huge problem and safety is the foremost of my concerns. I'm really concerned about the safety of our children. They'll go back and say, you didn't do it or we didn't do it; somebody do it. It has to be done because something is going to happen. This is about the safety of our children.

Where there are no sidewalks and where there's a lot of high traffic volume, we should have a look at it. I'm not asking to blame anybody or we were going to do it, you were going to do it. I'm asking for it to be looked at. Where there's an area where somebody could be seriously hurt or killed, please look at those areas.

It's about the safety of our children, and that's the reason why I'll continue to present this petition.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to respond to the petition as Acting Minister of Education today.

MS. COADY: I did rise in the House today and talk about the fact that there has been no policy change. I want to make sure people understand that there has been no policy change. The fact is courtesy seating will continue. The school board is now applying consistency.

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I will say that providing a safe and reliable school transportation system always is foremost in the mind of this government. The budget of 2018 invested almost $59 million in school transportation system.
We look at our colleagues across the country, what's happening across the country. We listen to petitions, as was just presented, but we also have to be mindful that $59 million is invested in our busing transportation system. We do have to provide a safe, reliable school transportation system for this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it really ironic today that the Members opposite talked about the fact it's a 45-year-old policy. They had the last 12 years to change that policy. So obviously over those 12 years, Mr. Speaker, they did not see fit that there was a safety issue or any other issue with the 1.6 kilometre busing route. Now all of a sudden it’s a concern for them. I find that ironic.

Mr. Speaker, instead of spending more time just talking about what they’ve been doing or what they have not done over the last 12 years – again, it's important for all of us. This is a policy, if you do a jurisdictional scan across the entire country you will find that a 1.6 kilometre is in line with most of the provinces across Canada. It’s something not unique to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I understand the 1.8 kilometre. I have four grandchildren that are actually going to school in Toronto. I'd like for them to go and research what happens in Toronto, in Ontario as well, when it comes to kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of that. When it comes to looking at where the school board is, it's certainly an issue that the school board is working within the policy that we have.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Potential copyright material

If you wish to obtain a copy please contact the ATIPP Office at (709) 729-7072 or atippoffice@gov.nl.ca.
Information Note
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)

Title: 1.6 Kilometre School Bus Eligibility

Issue: To inform and update the Premier on the 1.6 km school bus eligibility policy.

Background and Current Status:

- Under the Schools Act, 1997, the province’s school boards are responsible for the organization and administration of primary, elementary, and secondary education within their respective districts. This includes, where school boards consider it necessary, the arrangement for a system of transportation of students to and from schools.

- EECD’s school bus transportation policy outlines the conditions under which funding is provided to school boards for school bus transportation services to students attending primary, elementary and secondary schools. Under the policy, funding is not provided to school boards to cover the transportation of students who live within 1.6 km of their zoned neighbourhood school.

- The 1.6 km policy is not a new policy as it can be traced back as far as the 1970s.

- Individuals living less than 1.6 km from the school are in the non-bus eligible zone; it is the parent’s responsibility to determine what is appropriate for safe transportation for those living in this zone. For some this may be walking, others choose to transport their children themselves and, in some areas parents cooperate to establish their own transportation service (car-pooling). Many avail of courtesy seating on buses.

- Once school bus routes are planned to accommodate eligible school bus riders, any remaining seats on the bus can be offered as courtesy seats. This is administered through the school districts with priority given to accommodating the youngest children. Previously, these individuals would have to get on the bus at an existing bus stop outside the 1.6 km.

- In September 2018, EECD removed the guideline “No new bus stops should be established less than 1.6 KM from school to accommodate courtesy riders.” from its ‘Guidelines for Courtesy Seating on School Buses’. The decision for courtesy seating bus stops within 1.6 KM of a school is at the discretion of school districts.

- At this time, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLES) has instituted, on a trial basis, one courtesy stop (per bus route) within the 1.6 KM zone - starting with 44 schools (161 bus routes), primarily in the Central region.

Analysis:

- The 1.6 KM criterion in Newfoundland and Labrador is comparable to the other provinces in Canada.
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<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Maximum Non-Eligible Distance (KM)</th>
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<td>K-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
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<td>Ontario</td>
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<td>British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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- For NLESD to implement courtesy bus stops across all 1,100 bus routes is a major undertaking. It will take time to appropriately review and make informed decisions on a priority basis. If proven unmanageable, generates safety concerns, or interferes with the efficiency of operations, the provision of a courtesy stop will be revisited.

- Initial high-level estimates provided by NLESD indicate that to bus all students in grades K-3 would cost an additional $4.8 million per year and; to bus all students grades K-6 would cost $7.9 million per year.

- School busing is not a door-to-door service; everyone is expected to travel some distance to get to a bus stop. In NL, a bus will not travel up a side road unless students live greater than 500 metres from the main road; in New Brunswick the distance is 1.5 km and 800 metres in Nova Scotia. A courtesy stop at 800 metres would reduce the distance that courtesy seat riders have to travel to avail of a bus stop.

- NLESD also needs to ensure that there are not too many new courtesy stops established or significant deviation from existing routes as students end up on a bus for longer than they should.

**Action Being Taken:**

- EECD has requested NLESD provide a plan to implement a courtesy bus stop inside the 1.6 KM zone across the province.

- EECD has also requested that NLESD provide cost estimate of changing 1.6 km eligibility to 1.0 km.

**Prepared/Approved by:** D. Ross/T. Stamp/B. Evans/B. Gardiner  
**Ministerial Approval:** Received from Hon. Al Hawkins  
**November 27, 2018**
Education and Early Childhood Development
Disruption of Bus Operations – Port au Port
November 27, 2018

Summary:

- In response to concerns raised by a parent of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Port au Port Peninsula in October 2018, the Department and the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District undertook a review of courtesy seating and concluded that a new courtesy stop will be implemented for the school.
- Despite this, on November 19, 2018, some parents blocked school buses from entering the school in protest of the 1.6 km busing policy.
- A representative of the District’s Student Transportation Division visited the school on November 19 to assess the area and to determine a location for the stop. The stop was established that week.
- The results of the review and the visit by District officials were communicated to the parent.

Anticipated Questions:

- We have more parents and schools raising concerns and calling for an end to the 1.6 kilometre policy. The most recent were parents in Port au Port. Will your government do the right thing and get rid of this archaic policy?
- Why do you continue to put the safety of students at risk?

Key messages:

- Transportation of students to and from school is a focus and priority of the Department and we work with the school district, operators and the industry to ensure it is as safe as possible.
- Upon receiving an inquiry from a parent of St. Thomas Aquinas, the department worked with the District to undertake a review of this area for courtesy seating. This review was promptly completed.
- District officials were also in the area and met with the school principal to determine the most appropriate, safe location for the courtesy stop and a new courtesy stop procedure has been implemented.

Secondary messages:

- The review we undertook with the District is in accordance with their School Bus Transportation Handbook, which states, "Based on the size and geographical complexity of the English School District, it is recognized that individual school circumstances will have to be considered in the implementation of these guidelines."
• This is exactly what we have done.
• Our current policy is comparable – and in many cases – more favourable than other provinces.
• The Department has regular discussions with the District and will continue to collaborate with them to explore and implement safe and feasible options for student transportation on a priority basis.
• There are 1,100 bus routes across the province, and for the District to roll this out across all 1,100 routes is a major undertaking. It will take time to appropriately review and make informed decisions on a priority basis.

Prepared by: Communications Divisions
Approved by: DM/Minister
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)
Removal of 1.6 KM Rule re Provincial Busing Policy
November 28, 2018

Summary:

The Provincial Government has removed the guideline "No new bus stops should be established less than 1.6 km from school to accommodate courtesy riders" from its 'Guidelines for Courtesy Seating on School Buses'. The decision for courtesy seating bus stops within 1.6 km of a school is at the discretion of the NL English School District (NLES).

Anticipated Questions:

Why did government make this change? Why don't you abolish the 1.6 km rule completely?

Key messages:

- We have removed the guideline that buses cannot stop within 1.6 km to accommodate courtesy riders. The decision for courtesy seating bus stops within 1.6 km of a school is at the discretion of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLES).

- We have consistent dialogue with the District and will continue to collaborate with them to explore and implement safe and feasible options for student transportation on a priority basis.

- Busing policies and guidelines are in place to ensure the safe transportation of students to and from school. Student safety is of utmost importance to the department, school districts and school administrators.

- Our current policy is comparable - and in many cases - more favourable than other provinces.

Secondary:

- At this time, the District has instituted, on a trial basis, one courtesy stop (per bus route) within the 1.6 kilometre zone - starting with 44 schools (161 bus routes), primarily in the Central region.

- The District has informed us that they have instituted these courtesy stops for the majority of the 44 schools. If this trial proves unmanageable, generates safety concerns, or interferes with the efficiency of operations, the provision of a courtesy stop will be revisited.
• For the District to roll this out across all 1,100 bus routes is a major undertaking. It will take time to appropriately review and make informed decisions on a priority basis.

Completed by: EECD Communications
Approved by: DM/Minister
Education and Early Childhood Development
1.6km Busing Policy – Opposition Statement
January 17, 2019

Summary:

- On January 16, the Official Opposition issued a news release stating that government is not listening to concerns raised by parents regarding the 1.6km busing policy and that “busing restrictions have created a real safety concern for families.”
- The release also states that the opposition will be announcing opportunities for parents to be heard “loud and clear on this important safety matter”, and invites people to contact the opposition to tell them about their experiences.

Anticipated Questions:

- What’s your reaction to the opposition doing consultations with parents?
- Will you conduct consultations on this issue?
- Are you considering making any changes to the 1.6km policy which the opposition claims is putting students at risk?

Key messages:

- Transportation of students to and from school is a focus and priority of the Department and we work with the school district, operators and the industry to ensure it is as safe as possible.
- We have heard from parents and have taken action to address concerns. This past fall, a review was completed and we changed the guideline so that new bus stops can be established within a 1.6 kilometre zone. One courtesy stop per bus route has been added for 44 schools and since that time, other areas of concern brought forward have also been addressed. (St. Thomas Aquinas, Port au Port Peninsula).
- We hear from parents all the time on various issues, we have consistent dialogue with the District and we will continue to collaborate with them to address areas of concern.

Secondary messages:

- Having heard the concerns on the busing policy, we reviewed the guidelines with the District in accordance with the School Bus Transportation Handbook, which states, “Based on the size and geographical complexity of the English School District, it is recognized that individual school circumstances will have to be considered in the implementation of these guidelines.”
- This is exactly what we have done.
• Our current policy is comparable – and in many cases – more favourable than other provinces.

Prepared by: Communications Divisions
Approved by: DM/Minister