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Board takes steps to explain busing criteria

By **DOMINIK KUREK**
 Metroland Media Group

Are you confused about why your child has to walk to school while your neighbour's child is bused?

Last week, the Halton District School Board took steps to clear up some of the confusion over busing policies.

Public school trustees voted recently, to make available to the general public a tool they use for calculating walking distances.

Currently, elementary school students 1.6 km away from the school or farther get bused while secondary school students 4 km or more away from the school are bused.

"It's about saving time and saving energy," said Oakville Trustee Kathryn Bateman-Olmstead, who brought forward a motion. "I spend many hours each year answering questions from parents regarding this issue."

The board uses a Geographic Information System (GIS)-based mapping software, which calculates distance from property line to property line. It is the same maps used by the municipalities.

According to Bateman-Olmstead, calls are usually made by parents, who find discrepancies in distances. A common call is one made by a parent of a child, who walks to school, but seems to live farther away from another student, who gets bused to school.

According to board staff mem-

ber Domenico Renzella, the discrepancies are usually due to property lines. The measurement is from property line to property line, not door to door, and the route is never measured going through another property. Even if a child can cut through a property to shorten the distance, the student would still qualify to ride the bus.

According to Karen Lacroix, general manager of Halton Student Transportation Services, which transports students at all four local school boards, the agency bought a new mapping software.

The organization is currently in transition to a new GIS software.

Though Lacroix doesn't know all the particulars of the new software, she believes it will allow for a public portal where people will be able to see how the busing/walking calculations were made.

If the new software does not allow for such a function, Halton Hills Trustee Gillian Tuck Kutarna asked the transport service to determine what it would cost to provide that function.

Trustees referred another part of the motion to a committee of the whole, to determine whether an adjudication process would be required if discrepancies are still found.

In another motion, trustees asked staff to estimate the cost to reduce the walk-to distances from 1.6 km to 1 km for elementary students and from 4 km to 3.2 km for secondary students.



GILLIAN TUCK KUTARNA

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Q: How can I avoid long wait times when getting my prescriptions filled?

A: In order to avoid long waits here are a few tips to speed things up:

For new prescriptions: When you give your prescription to the pharmacy technician, ensure that all your personal information is accurate. If you have a drug plan let the technician know the details at the time you show your prescription. Giving this information later when you pick up your prescription can result in further delays while the technician refills the prescription.

For prescriptions that do not have repeats left on them: Call in your refill a few days before you take your last pill. Most doctors can take more than 1 or two days to respond to a refill request and many medications should not be missed, even for one day.

For prescriptions either with or without repeats left on them: You can request a refill using the Shoppers Drug Mart Med Ready System: By phoning Shoppers and following the telephone prompts (press 1 then 1) you can enter your prescription number on the telephone keypad to automatically refill your prescription. Refills can also be requested by using the internet at www.shoppersdrugmart.ca and clicking on 'pharmacy' at the top of the page then choosing 'refill your prescription'.

Of course you can always speak to a staff member in person if you have any questions or concerns but these useful suggestions can make your pharmacy experience more pleasurable, convenient and less frustrating.

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Q: How can I avoid injuring my back when I shovel snow?

A: Snow shovelling is considered a fairly strenuous activity and in fact it is a leading cause of back injuries in Canadians.

Here are some helpful hints to prevent injury:

1. Prior to shovelling, perform warm up exercises for 5 to 10 minutes, this will increase your heart rate and improve your circulation to your muscles.
2. Dress in layers. It is always easier to remove layers when warm then add layers because you are too cold.
3. Wear proper foot wear, boots with slip resistant surfaces will reduce the risk of slips and falls.
4. When shovelling, stand with your feet hip width apart for balance and keep your shovel close to your body.
5. Push the snow rather than lift it.
6. Use your legs. Half fill the shovel, bend your knees, keep your back straight and lift with your legs.
7. Avoid awkward snow throwing. Do not throw snow over your shoulder or twist your spine
8. Listen to your body, if you feel pain in your chest, stop right away and contact your physician
9. Muscle soreness can result after shovelling, but should clear in 1 to 2 days.
10. Clear snow as soon as it falls, don't wait until you have too much accumulation.



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www.HomeInspectorsHelp.com
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Q: I have heard a lot about vermiculite insulation in the news recently. How do I know if I have it in my home and should I be concerned?

A: Vermiculite was sold as insulation in bags and typically installed by the homeowner. It was an acceptable material under the Canadian Home Insulation Program (CHIP) (in the '70s and '80s). Thousands of homeowners installed it in their walls and attics.

Some vermiculite came from a mine that contained asbestos. Asbestos can be a concern when particles become airborne and are inhaled over a long period of time. Asbestos is known to cause lung disease, cancer, asbestosis and other serious respiratory illnesses.

It is impossible to determine if the vermiculite in your home contains asbestos without first having it tested.

An AmeriSpec home inspection will identify the possible existence of vermiculite in visible areas of the home. The presence of vermiculite does not necessarily mean that asbestos is present. Laboratory testing is required. You can download a Fact Sheet at www.HomeInspectorsHelp.com



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Q: I've heard about the Tax-Free Savings Account and I am wondering if I should contribute to it instead of RSPs. Can you tell me which would be best?

A: With an RSP, your investment earnings grow on a tax-deferred basis - meaning you don't pay tax until you actually start making withdrawals. You also receive a tax deduction when you contribute to your RSP. With the new Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA), on the other hand, your investment earnings grow on a tax-free basis - meaning you never pay tax, even when you make withdrawals. (You do not however, receive a tax deduction when you contribute to your TFSA.)

Many people are wondering if they should still contribute to their RSP - or just go with a TFSA. In most cases it makes sense to contribute to BOTH. Your RSP is designed for a specific purpose - saving for your retirement. It also offers the ability to make much larger contributions. Your TFSA, is more flexible, allowing tax-free withdrawals at any time for any reason - and the amount withdrawn is added back to your available contribution room the following year.

If you would like a complimentary one-hour consultation, please give me a call at 905-450-1850.

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