

Keep Ctk buses, parents plead

DAVID LEA
Special to The IFF

Concerned Georgetown parents made their voices heard at a Halton Catholic District School Board meeting Tuesday night, calling on trustees to save local bus services for students.

"We strongly feel that the kids would be put at risk walking, in the winter, as far as 3.9 kilometres to and from school everyday," said Nichole Kase.

"You're talking about some dangerous roads in the winter. The streets are not well taken care of and the sidewalks are even worse."

The problem began during a board meeting on Feb. 20, when the board's 2007-2008 transportation policy exceptions were reviewed and it was announced that the temporary bus services initiated for the Stewart Mill's area of Georgetown would be discontinued as of next September.

The Catholic school board has a policy in place that says every student living within a 3.2 kilometre radius of the school is required to walk unless a walking hazard has been identified.

After the Feb. 20 meeting Oakville Trustee Alice Anne LeMay explained that the construction, that had caused the Stewart's Mill area to be classified as hazardous for students to walk through, had been completed, making the area subject to the regular busing policy.

This decision is not sitting well with local parents like Brenda

Attard, who insist they were not informed that the bus service was temporary when they moved into the area.

Attard is also concerned about what removing bus service will do to local traffic.

"If there aren't any buses then there will be parents driving to the high school, dropping their kids off. That's another congested area, where the high school is, so why not have two buses rather than the 65 parent and student (vehicles) that will be driving to the school?"

Kase also says the time it will take students to walk to school is unreasonable, as the zig-zag route students must take stretches the trip out to as much as 3.9 kilometres in some areas.

"We did time how long it would take to walk to school and it's between an hour and an hour and 15 minutes, if they're not dawdling," said Kase.

"So you're talking about our kids leaving at between 6:30 a.m. and 7 a.m. to get to school on time to prepare for class. I strongly feel that that's unreasonable when compared to a five-minute bus ride."

Kase raised concerns about students' health, which she says would be jeopardized by having to walk to school.

"In the winter months we do have some pretty nasty temperatures in this part of Ontario. As much as we'd like them to dress warmly, these kids are teenagers and they're not going to. They're not going to

wear hats, they're not going to wear mitts so you're talking about frost-bite, you're talking about rain and being at school all day in soaking wet clothing which puts their health at risk," she said.

Kase showed the board she was not alone in her concerns presenting them with a petition containing the signatures of 239 people opposed to the bus service cancellation.

"If we had more time to prepare— like another week— we could have gotten at least double that number of signatures," she said.

While the board is not scheduled to resolve the issue until its April 10 meeting, this did not stop some members from voicing where they stand.

"You can't put a price on a life," said Ed Viana, Oakville trustee. "So I say we leave the bus schedule the way it is for another year and then we'll visit this again."

Board Chair Al Bailey was more diplomatic.

"She (Kase) put a good proposal forward and she made some good points," he said.

"We have to take a look at the board's policies on these things and we have to take a look at the board's budget on these things."

As the board prepares to tackle the issue at their next meeting the concerned parents of Georgetown will wait to see if their arguments have made an impact.

"We pay our taxes and we want our kids bused to and from school safely," said Kase.

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Police blotter

Teens facing robbery charge in theft of iPod

Two male youths are facing charges in connection with a Jan. 13 incident in which an 18-year-old man was punched several times and his iPod stolen while he was walking along Princess Anne Dr.

The man was injured and required treatment at Georgetown Hospital. Halton Police say as a result of

investigation and assistance from the public, a 17 year-old and 16 year-old from Caledon have each been charged with one count of robbery.

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Police are asking for help from the public in identifying who drew swastikas and wrote racial slurs with a magic marker on the walls of a second

floor washroom at Georgetown District High School sometime Tuesday or Wednesday.

The estimate to clean up the graffiti is approximately \$500. Police view the incident as a hate crime.

Anyone with information is asked to call police at 905-878-5511 ext. 2415 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.

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